

The background of the slide is a dark, textured surface with a faint, abstract network diagram. The diagram consists of numerous small, light-colored nodes connected by thin, light-colored lines, forming a complex, interconnected web that resembles a molecular structure or a data network. The nodes and lines are more prominent in some areas and fade into the background in others, creating a sense of depth and complexity.

ACTOR-NETWORK THEORY

ANT (SISMONDO, CHAPTER 8)

HM 216



TOPICS

- **What is ‘actor-network theory’?**
- **Why is it interesting?**
- **Examples**
- **What are the major concepts it proposes?**
- **Criticism**

ACTORS/ACTANTS

Bruno Latour, Michel Callon et al

- **Actors** build networks.
 - The activity of **technoscience**, then, is the work of understanding the interests of a variety of actors, and translating those interests so that the actors work in agreement.
 - ... in order to form part of a network, an actor must be **brought to bear on other actors**, so they must be brought together. Moreover, they must be brought together so as **to work together**, which may mean **changing** the ways in which they act.
 - ... the actors of ANT are *actants*, things/people *made to act*.
- (82)





BRUNO LATOUR

Sociologist, Philosopher

1947- 2022

- *Laboratory Life: The Social Construction of Scientific Facts* (1979; with Steve Woolgar)
- *The Pasteurization of France* (1988; French: *Le Microbes: Guerre et Paix*, 1984)
- *We Have Never Been Modern* (1991)
- *Re-Assembling the Social* (2005)

aramis
ou l'amour des techniques



THE ARAMIS PROJECT (FRANCE)

LATOUR: *ARAMIS, OR THE LOVE OF TECHNOLOGY*
(1993)



THE ARAMIS PROJECT

1970- 1987

PRT:PERSONAL RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM

A FAILED PROJECT

QUESTION: WHY DID IT FAIL?

" Here is our mistake, one we all made, the only one we made. You had a hypersensitive project, and you treated it as if you could get it through under its own steam. But you weren't nuclear power, you weren't the army; you weren't able to make the ministries, the Budget Office, or the passengers behave in such a way as to adapt themselves to Aramis's subtle variations, to its hesitations and its moods. And you left Aramis to cope under its own steam when it was actually weak and fragile. You believed in the autonomy of technology."



EXAMPLE 2

THE NANO: WHY DID IT FAIL?
...OR DID IT?

Intention: Ratan Tata (2008)



“...you could not help but notice that there were three or four family members on a scooter, the kid standing in the front, the guy driving the scooter and the wife sitting side saddle holding a little kid. And when you're driving a car, you certainly say, oh my god, be careful, they may slip. Add to that slippery roads and night time too.”



THE EXECUTION

Girish Wagh: Engineer-designer

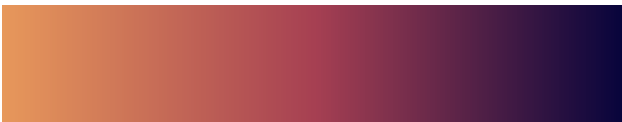
‘...things had to be done by trial and error because the project was challenging all traditional auto engineering concepts. “We were using smart engineering to cut both cost and vehicle weight,” he says. “But a smaller displacement engine and two cylinders meant not enough power so we had to reconfigure the engine capacity.”



RESULTS (2011)

“A cheap car that’s not really cheap. A safe car whose safety has been questioned. A poor people’s car that poor people aren’t buying. That sounds like a failure, certainly.

But really it’s not. It’s par for the course for almost every breakthrough innovation.”







RESULTS II (2017)

“We acted on the Nano. I may be the only one to say, Ratan Tata was visionary in launching the Nano and we followed and I am glad we did because the success of Renault today in India is mainly because of the success of the Kwid.” However, this is a bit ironic because the Nano failed to reach similar levels of success.’

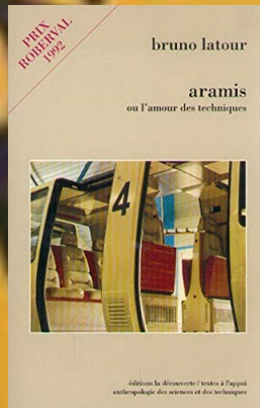
(Carlos Ghosn, chairman and CEO, Renault-Nissan)



EXAMPLE 3...

THE IBM 7090

CONCEPTS: SCIENCE & TECH ACCORDING TO ANT



ACTANT/ACTOR



Black boxes



TRANSLATION

TECHNOSCIENCE

ANT: CRITICAL QUESTIONS



- ✓ **What about cultural practices?**
- ✓ **Is there Really no Difference Between Human and Non-Human Actors?**
- ✓ **...and if there is, is the object/ Nature whatever the scientist says it is?**
- ✓ **What about Conflict? Challenges to Scientific Claims?**