

Introduction into **Actor Network Theory**

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Bruno Latour

- French sociologist and philosopher
- Science & Technology Studies (STS)
- Creator of ANT
- School of post-structuralism
- www.bruno-latour.fr



Social constructionism

„Social constructionism explores the ways how social reality and single phenomena are constructed.

...how people create social phenomena, institutionalize it and propagate it to new generations through traditions.“ – Wikipedia

- Post-structuralism: language isn't only describing reality, it is creating reality
- Use in Gender Studies & Cultural Studies
- ANT brings this into Social Science

Actor Network Theory

- More method or practice
- Since the 80s
- Qualitative
- Used to explain scientific and technological innovation, now used in other fields too
- Use of human vocabulary for technical and natural phenomena => neutral language
- Focus on observations, tries to ignore preexisting (constructed) knowledge at the beginning



„Explanans“ and „Explananda“

Explanans:

(L) Every time, when a fiber with the strength r is stressed with the weight K , the fiber tears.

(C1) This is a fiber with the strength r .

(C2) The attached weight is minimum K .

Explananda:

(E) The fiber tears.

– Example by Karl Popper from Wikipedia



Diversity and Integrity

„One argument is, that social innovation are forms of connections between heterogeneous networks. The other, that human society, nature and technology are admixed in a way, that it is not possible to understand one side without the other in any social studies.“

– *Ingo Schulz-Schaeffer, 2000: 208*

Explaining through networks

Why? → Activity- and structure-oriented observations

How? → Combination of two perspectives:

1: the observer follows the actants, to find out how they define and connect different things to explain the world.

2: the observer follows the translations, through which the actants are defined

→ change steadily between those two perspectives

Symmetry

Ideas of asymmetry:

- Object / Subject
 - Society and Technology
 - Society and Nature
- Determinism

ANT tries symmetry

- of actants (actors): no presupposed characteristics of actants - social, natural or technological
- of vocabulary: use of human vocabulary for technical and natural things → neutral language



Case study

Problem of keeping doors closed

- 1) No door closer
- 2) Doorman
- 3) Automatic door closer
- 4) Add hydraulic ram
- 5) Sensor controlled

“Those door closers play the role of a very coarse, illiterate and relatively dull doorman” (Latour 1996a: 68)

Critics

- Also in ANT there is social construction
- Real problems are hard
- „Everything is connected with everything somehow“ → sociotheoretical holism is as true in his universality as it is uninteresting

ANT in Graz

- KF Graz: Ulrich Ermann
- FH Joanneum: Heinz Wittenbrink
- No course in UGO

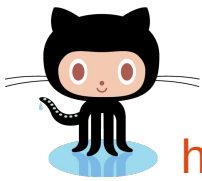


Read more...

- www.bruno-latour.fr
- Schulz-Schaeffer, I. (2000). Akteur-Netzwerk-Theorie. Zur Koevolution von Gesellschaft, Natur und Technik. In Weyer, Johannes (Ed.), Soziale Netzwerke. Konzepte und Methoden der sozialwissenschaftlichen Netzwerkforschung. (pp. 187-211). München u.a.: Oldenbourg. Retrieved from <http://www.uni-due.de/imperia/md/content/soziologie/akteurnetzwerktheorie.pdf>
- Wikipedia

Thank You!

Try to look at a the whole interconnected world, rethink and overcome the social artifacts and be aware of your human preconditions as far as you can.



<https://github.com/skasberger/technical-english-in-human-geography>



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Sources

Genral Sources:

- Schulz-Schaeffer, I. (2000). Akteur-Netzwerk-Theorie. Zur Koevolution von Gesellschaft, Natur und Technik. In Weyer, Johannes (Ed.), Soziale Netzwerke. Konzepte und Methoden der sozialwissenschaftlichen Netzwerkforschung. (pp. 187-211). München u.a.: Oldenbourg. Retrieved from <http://www.uni-due.de/imperia/md/content/soziologie/akteurnetzwerktheorie.pdf>
- Wikipedia de & en

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- Source: <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sozialkonstruktivismus>
- Author: Wikipedia
- Date: 2013-06-09

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Sources

Slide 5: Explanans and Explananda Example

- Source: https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deduktiv-nomologisches_Modell
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- Date: 2013-06-05

Slide 6: Quote Networks

- Schulz-Schaeffer, I. (2000). Akteur-Netzwerk-Theorie. Zur Koevolution von Gesellschaft, Natur und Technik. In Weyer, Johannes (Ed.), Soziale Netzwerke. Konzepte und Methoden der sozialwissenschaftlichen Netzwerkforschung. (pp. 187-211). München u.a.: Oldenbourg. Retrieved from <http://www.uni-due.de/imperia/md/content/soziologie/akteurnetzwerktheorie.pdf>

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Slide 9: Quote Bruno Latour

- Latour 1996a: 68

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