

'Living with mess: in, out of, and indifferent to Actor Network Theory'

Friday June 17th 2011
Birkbeck College, London

A one-day conference exploring alternative and creative approaches to the theory-practice divide, with:

Professor Marilyn Strathern, Anthropology, University of Cambridge
Professor Annemarie Mol, Social and Behavioural Sciences, University of Amsterdam
Professor John Law, Sociology, Open University
Professor Andrew Barry, Geography and the Environment, University of Oxford

“If this is an awful mess ... then would something less messy make a mess of describing it?”

Must method be extracted from practice, or is method to be applied to practice? Must we exclude, unconsciously or not, what is ‘not relevant’ in order to shape what is? What is at stake in such exclusions? The four speakers appearing in the workshop show that another way is possible – that not only can method be specific to the particular field of study, but also, and perhaps counter-intuitively, that this is a potentially more successful and rewarding approach than trying to apply a pre-formed theory to practice, or of simply extracting the former from the latter.

If you've ever wondered how to think in terms of processes, flux, change, feedback, or simply mess, then this event is for you.

The workshop, being organised by the School of Law, is open to all post-grad students in the Bloomsbury consortium. The four speakers – each out-standing scholars and well known in their respective fields and beyond – will show, by discussing their own work in the morning, how it is still possible to develop new tools for scholarship, and to think in challenging and creative ways. Whilst each has developed their own methods of working, they have in common having passed through, or at least nearby, Actor Network Theory, and this will serve as a starting point for a more general discussion in the afternoon.

Attendance is free, but please contact David Jennings if you wish to participate:
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