

Paris REDO workshop

April 2015

This document presents the conceptual framework, detailed program, and suggested readings for the REDO project's workshop in France, April 22 – 26, 2015.

Framework

We have invited Bruno Latour to respond to many of our papers, and all REDO scholars are encouraged to relate to his work or way of thinking, even if critically (compository), to make our discussions with him as relevant and interesting as possible. Suggested readings regarding Latour's work and other closely related contemporary scholars are provided below.

The REDO workshop in France is more or less focused on the following question: Are the ritual or ritualized practices we are studying effective, and what do we mean by this? In other words: What type of effects might we expect these practices to have, do they indeed have them, and how can we evaluate these effects?

A first issue relates to the *social effectiveness* of these practices. Can they be said to further certain ideological or practical agendas (such as "reassembling democracy" or environmental protection) by bringing about or contributing to changes in the functioning of institutional bodies or in the way people feel, think and act in their everyday lives? This issue is at once conceptual (what counts as "change?"), methodological (how are such "changes" to be determined?), and empirical (do these "changes" indeed take place?). It raises questions concerning the potential of different (bodily, symbolic, legislative, etc.) modes of collective expression, and their emergence in different (political, civic, personal, etc.) spheres of action.

A second issue relates to the *ritual effectiveness* of these practices. Are they successful as rituals (or instances of ritualized behavior), and what exactly might such "success" entail? This obviously implies a theory (or two) regarding the distinctive qualities of ritual or ritualized action as such: what it is, what it does, etc. This issue is important for religious studies scholars. The Eucharist is not just a shared meal, but a ritual communion, a large-scale spontaneous memorial is not just a public assembly but a ritual one (or is it?), a pilgrimage is not just a walk, but a ritual journey, some protest actions are not just demonstrations of dissenting convictions but highly ritualized ones, many festival performances are not just displays but ritual events, etc. What makes for the "ritual" quality of these practices, and what consequences does it have?

It is hoped that by addressing these two issues we will be better equipped to ask (and hopefully answer) the question that lies at the heart of the REDO project: in what manner might the ritual effectiveness of the practices we are studying contribute (or not) to their social effectiveness? In other words, how can ritual (help to) save the planet?

Workshop program

Wednesday April 22

- 14:00 – 16:00 Methods discussion
Facilitator: Michael Houseman
- 16:00 – 16:30 *Pause*
- 16:00 – 18:00 Methods discussion
Facilitator: Jone Salomonsen

Thursday April 23

- After dinner Editorial meeting

Friday April 24

- 9:00 – 9:15 Framing the morning (Michael Houseman)
Facilitator: Greg Delaplace
- 9:15 – 10:00 Paper presentation and discussion - Graham Harvey:
“Indigenizing by the assembling actors of Riddu Riddu’s ritual”
- 10:00 – 10:45 Paper presentation and discussion - Samuel Etikpah:
“The Mother River and Kundum Festivals in Ghana: Ritual Narrativity and Social Effectiveness”
- 10:45 – 11:15 *Pause*
- 11:15 – 12:00 Paper presentation and discussion - Donna Seamone:
“Eco-Agri-Pilgrimage to the Corn Maze Cross-Species Performance: What Does the Showing and Doing Do?”
- 12:00 – 12:45 Paper presentation and discussion - Greg Brzozowski:
“The Festive Politics of Recognition: Pluralised ritual-like Performances of the Polish Woodstock Festival”
- 12:45 – 13:00 General discussion of festivals papers
- 13:00 – 14:30 *Lunch*
- 14:30 – 14:45 Framing the afternoon (Sarah Pike)
Facilitator: Emma Gobin
- 14:45 – 15:30 Paper presentation and discussion - Marion Grau:
“Pilgrimage, Migration, and the Reconstruction of Nature-culture in Norway”
- 15:30 – 16:15 Paper presentation and discussion - Jens Kreinath:
“Implications and Applications of the Actor-Network Theory: Individual Religiosity and the Infrastructure of Shared Pilgrimage Sites in Hatay, Turkey”
- 16:15 – 16:45 *Pause*
- 16:45 – 17:30 Paper presentation and discussion - Tony Balcomb:
“The War of the Trees – An Analysis of an Indigenous Mass Greening Movement Amongst the Shona in Southern Zimbabwe using Actor Network Theory”
- 17:30 – 18:00 *Pause*
- 18:00 – 19:00 Publications discussion for all REDO project members

Saturday April 25

- 8:45 – 9:00 Framing the morning (Jens)
Facilitator: Marika Moisseeff
- 9:00 – 9:45 Paper presentation and discussion - Paul-Francois Tremlett:
“On the Efficacies of Objects: Reflections on Ritual, Iconoclasm and Heritage at Occupy Democracy”
- 9:45 – 10:30 Paper presentation and discussion - Sarah Pike:
“Bone on Bark: Protest Rites and the Boundaries of Precarious Bodies”
- 10:30 – 11:00 *Pause*
- 11:00 – 11:45 Paper presentation and discussion - Kjetil Hafstad:
“Das Böse”
- 11:45 – 12:30 Paper presentation and discussion - Gitte Buch-Hansen:
“Chthonic Eating Disorders and the Eucharist. How to do Things With Food – or: How Food Does Things With Us”
- 12:30 – 14:00 *Lunch*
- 14:00 – 14:15 Framing the afternoon (Graham)
Facilitator: Anne-Christine Taylor
- 14:15 – 15:00 Paper presentation and discussion - Michael Houseman:
“Tripping Down the Path of Self-Discovery. Contemporary Practices of Ritual Dancing”
- 15:00 – 15:15 *Pause*
- 15:15 – 17:15 Paper presentations, film and discussion
Jone Salomonsen:
“Two Forms of Love? Massacre and Theology July 22, 2011”
Ida Marie Høeg:
“The terror attacks on Norway – 22 July 2011: Negotiating national identity in interreligious funerals”

Documentary film
“July 22 Examined”
- 17:15 – 17:30 *Pause*
- 17:30 – 18:15 Paper presentation and discussion - Morny Joy:
“Toward New Ontologies: Exploration in Religious Studies and Comparative Religion”

Sunday April 26

- 8:00 – 9:00 Breakfast editorial meeting
- 9:00 – 10:45 Discussion
Facilitator: Jone Salomonsen
- 10:45 – 11:00 Discussion on future workshops
Facilitator: Jone Salomonsen

Recommended interdisciplinary readings

1. Bruno Latour

(a) “How to make sure Gaia is not a God of Totality? with special attention to Toby Tyrrell’s book *On Gaia*” (2014). Latour has suggested that the REDO group read this discussion paper in particular.

(b) “Six Gifford Lectures” (2013). The discussion paper is thematically related to these lectures, which includes a critique and re-composition of the theological concepts of nature/culture (religion), human/God.

Interview of Latour <http://figureground.org/interview-with-bruno-latour/>

Overview of Latour’s work <http://wikis.la.utexas.edu/theory/page/latour-metaphysics-and-ontology-and-implications-research>

2. Karen Barad, Jane Bennett and Jeffrey Alexander

We recommend that you know of the works of these three scholars :

- **Karen Barad** (non-bifurcated ontologies/ epistemology), “Nature’s Queer performativity” (2012),

<https://tidsskrift.dk/index.php/KKF/article/viewFile/51863/95446>

- **Jane Bennett** (democracy in a new key), “The Force of Things: Steps toward an Ecology of Matter” (2004),

<http://www.staff.amu.edu.pl/~ewa/Bennett,%20The%20Force%20of%20Things.pdf>

- **Jeffrey Alexander** (performance, ritual and dark politics), “Cultural Pragmatics: Social Performance Between Ritual and Strategy” (2006), introduction chapter *Social Performance* (with Giesen & Mast):

http://is.muni.cz/el/1423/jaro2012/SOC403/um/ALEXANDER_GIESEN_MAST_Social_performance.pdf#page=47

Extra readings

Bruno Latour

The work of Bruno Latour has had a galvanizing effect on many disciplines in the Social Sciences and the Humanities – beginning with his work in STS (Science and technology Studies), to his recent book: *Modes of Existence* (2013), which has been described as a turn towards a “material or practical metaphysics.” *Rejoicing* (2002/2013) is a theological essay on the essence of being addressed by/to faith, which according to Latour is comparable only to being addressed by love. The following is a short list suggesting some extra readings that might be helpful to your papers and as preparation for our meeting in France. These also include a number of his influences as well as other contemporary scholars who are working along the same lines. Their work is often labelled under headings such as: the new materialism, or actor-network theory (Barad, Bennett).

Relevant books by Latour

- *An Enquiry into Modes of Existence: An Anthropology of Moderns*, Harvard, 2013.
- *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory*, OUP, 2005.
- “Introduction”, *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy*, MIT, 2005.
- *Rejoicing. On the Torments of Religious Speech*, Polity Press 2013

Here is the link to Latour’s homepage, where you find plenty of online articles on different topics: <http://www.bruno-latour.fr/> There are also a number of helpful *YouTube video recordings* available

Influences on Latour

- Gilles Deleuze (and Felix Guattari), see the Rhizomes section of *One Thousand Plateaus* (1987) for an early model of network theory.
- Michel Serres, *Conservations on Science, Culture, and Time. Michel Serres interviewed by Bruno Latour*, University of Michigan Press, 1995.
- Isabelle Stengers, *Thinking with Whitehead: A Free and Wild Creation of Concepts*. Harvard, 2011. Though recently Latour has written critically of her latest work. See: <http://www.bruno-latour.fr/sites/default/files/93-STENGERS-GB.pdf>
- Alfred North Whitehead, *The Concept of Nature* [the 1920 Tanner Lectures], Prometheus Books, 2004 Reprint.

Other relevant books on ontology/methodology and democracy in a “Latourian” take

- Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Half-way: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter*, Duke, 2007.
- Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*, Duke, 2010.
- William Connolly, *Fragility of Things: Self-Organizing Processes, Neo-Liberal Fantasies, and Democratic Activism*, Duke, 2013. He is critical of aspects of Latour.
- Steven Shaviro, *The Universe of Things: On Speculative Realism*, University of Minnesota, 2014. (Post-Humanities perspective).

Some accessible essays by feminist scholars discussing Latour:

- Susan Hekman. 2008. "Constructing the Ballast: an Ontology for Feminism," Chapter 3 in *Material Feminisms*, ed. S. Alaimo & S. Hekman, Bloomington: Indiana U. Press: 85-119.
- Karen Barad, 2008 "Posthumanist Peformativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter comes to Matter", Chap 4 in *Material Feminisms*, ed. S. Alaimo & S. Hekman, Bloomington: Indiana U. Press 120-154. online:
<http://humweb.ucsc.edu/feministstudies/faculty/barad/barad-posthumanist.pdf>
- Isabelle Stengers, 2008. "Experimenting with Refrains: Subjectivity and the Challenge of Escaping Modern Dualism." *Subjectivity* 22: 38-59.

Ritual Cultural Sociology (in addition to Ritual Studies)

- Jeffrey C. Alexander, *Performative Revolution in Egypt: An Essay in Cultural Power*, Bloomsbury Academic, 2011 ; *Performance and Power*, Polity, 2011 ; *The Dark Side of Humanity*, Polity, 2013 ; *Iconic Power, Material and Meaning in Social Life*, Polity, 2012.
- Ronald Grimes, 2014, *The Craft of Ritual Studies*, Oxford