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When Nicole Nelson asked me to write a short piece on Latour and [my] work with him and Michel Callon on articulating Actor Network Theory, I have to admit that I was a bit embarrassed. First, because I don't have much of a memory. Secondly, because this is not really how I remember my first years at CSI.

When I arrived at the end of 1983, Bruno Latour had been there at Michel Callon's initiative for a year, but they had begun their collaboration a few years earlier. In particular, they had translated and published, or were in the process of doing so, several collections of articles¹ in the history and sociology of science and in the history of technology from journals such as *Social Studies of Science and Technology and Culture*, in an attempt to evangelize, without much success, the French social sciences to the nascent field of STS. These collections nevertheless constituted the breviary of the young researchers who were in transit at the time at CSI. They had also published their article on Leviathan, which proposed nothing less than to re-found sociology on a new basis.²

However, I did not feel - and I suppose I was not the only one - that I was participating in the elaboration of a theory in the sense of a more or less closed set of hypotheses and concepts aiming at proposing an explanation of the world or at least of certain phenomena. What we shared was rather something like a way of looking at and describing the world that was characterized by a kind of a priori agnosticism as to the nature and intensity of the forces at work and an equal attention to humans and non-humans, according to the established expression of the time. It did not arouse so much astonishment or discussion, in contrast to the outraged reactions of some outside researchers. The reason for this may be that all those who came to the CSI at that time came from a wide variety of backgrounds (engineering, history, business schools, development studies, urban planning, etc.), in short, everything imaginable except sociology: for better or for worse, we were therefore not encumbered by the conceptual and theoretical equipment of the social sciences.

Beyond this diversity of origins, the variety of research objects was no less surprising for a research center that had no more than six or seven permanent members in the mid-1980s: Lucien Karpik was interested in lawyers, Antoine Hennion in baroque music, and with Cécile Méadel in advertising; Michel Callon was developing co-word analysis with Jean-Pierre Courtial, Serge Bauin and Geneviève Teil, and with Philippe Larédo and Philippe Mustar an analysis of research policies and their relationship to innovation; Vololona Rabearisoa was working on indicators of links between science, technology and the market; a conscientious objector in civic service, Pierre Lagrange, was tracking down flying saucers and ufologists; Bruno Latour was finishing his book on Pasteur, collaborating with Françoise Bastide on the semiotics of scientific texts and writing *Science in Action*; Geof Bowker was combing the

¹ (Callon & Latour, 1982, 1985) ; (Latour, 1985)

² (Callon & Latour, 1981)

Schlumberger archives; Dominique Vinck was interested in the coordination of scientific work and I myself was persisting in following various energy technologies in what were called developing countries. Other "friendly" scientists diversified this panorama; among them, John Law, who had established strong relations with Michel Callon and spent time at CSI, occupied a special place; I still remember the surprise and fascination that reading and discussing his work on Portuguese navigation in the 15th and 16th centuries had aroused in me.

The openness to disciplines and research themes was maximal and Bruno Latour was from the beginning the artisan of exciting meetings with an ability to detect researchers and works with which it could be fruitful to engage in a discussion and to formulate questions that made the dialogue possible. The first meeting of this type that I was given to attend had for theme "Visualization and Knowledge" and was held in December 1984 in Paris. A year later, it led to the publication of a very beautiful issue of *Technical Culture* entitled "Les 'vues' de l'esprit"³, which in itself was a kind of ironic antiphrase: in French, the expression "c'est une vue de l'esprit" (it's a view of the mind) means the unrealism of a proposition and its exclusive anchoring in the head of the person who utters it; conversely, the object of the meeting was to restore on a certain number of cases the chain of all the intermediaries - organizations, tools, instruments... - which allow us, at a given moment, to see the world as we see it. For me, it was an intellectual firework display mixing anthropological approaches, cultural history, history of science, history of art, management, STS, ethology, philosophy, a mixture that may seem "natural" today but that only Bruno's very original point of view made it possible to assemble at that time. The long introduction⁴ he wrote for this issue of *Culture Technique* allows us to grasp the depth of field that was his: Great Divide, inscription, immutable mobiles, all these themes are arranged in this text, one of the conclusions of which, taken up in his later work, is that the modern world is, for the time being, a "view of the mind".

A universe of abundance, therefore, which could have drifted towards a form of splintering but which held together in an enthusiastic collective for a good ten years. However, we were not, as I perceived it, building THE theory of the network actor. It is not that theoretical discussions were absent, but two things deserve to be noted.

First, these discussions were most of the time anchored in the analysis of concrete cases, empirical studies not only produced internally but also by other authors that we invited to our seminar and that we put through our mill, the author being invited to speak only once one of us had presented his work. Michel Callon and Bruno Latour had a great capacity, in different styles, to translate the analysis of an author into their own universe of thought, which often left the authors themselves a little uncertain, especially when after a "shifted" answer on their part - shifted with respect to the proposed rewriting - Bruno's very particular laughter resounded. It seems that our seminar did not have a very good press outside the ISC.

Then, we were all very different, differences in age, gender, training, interests, intellectual power, ambition, way of situating ourselves in the academic world and way of conceiving the relationship between empirical and theoretical work. We were carried along by the enthusiasm of Michel and Bruno and we shared the feeling that it was exciting, necessary

³ (Latour, 1985)

⁴ English version: (Latour, 1986)

and urgent to be interested in all these topics; but we did not want to and could not all individually pursue the same project. John Law had an ironic way of accounting for some of these differences and even, one might say, asymmetries by referring to Michel Callon, Bruno Latour, and Antoine Hennion as the Big White Men, to whom some of us, including myself, contrasted the Small Brown Women. But these differences also crossed the camp of the Big White Men. This is probably why we did not manage to pronounce the term actor-network theory until after it had really become established in the academic landscape. It was John Law who, from an inside-out position, did an important job of synthesizing all the work developed at the CSI at the time and coined the term ANT⁵ from the term actor-network used by Michel Callon in his analysis of the electric vehicle in order to designate the agency with which certain entities are endowed through a set of translation operations. Little used but emblematic of the work developed by Callon, Latour and Law and more generally of the CSI, the expression has met, for mysterious reasons, a certain success. Internally, other expressions circulated at the time, from the sociology of translation, to the anthropology of science and technology, to the sociology of mediation, marking the plural and fluctuating character of the intellectual project(s). Amusingly, both of them were in a way obliged to assume this during the colloquium that John Law organized in Keele and which led to the publication of a volume entitled Actor Network Theory and After : While Michel Callon finally appropriates it and submits it to the “test of the market”⁶, Bruno Latour engages in a brilliant execution of the expression⁷ - of which nothing remains at the end - which, by contrast, allows him to re-specify what it is supposed to refer to but which it unhappily masks.

What did this period of effervescence represent in the end? What did it lead to?

None of the "founding fathers" wanted to run the store, if we can put it that way. Bruno Latour has explained this in an article in which he returns to the path that led him to the investigation of modes of existence, which he has made THE project he has been pursuing since almost forever⁸:

“If my readers have the impression that this new book on modes of existence comes in the wake of work in the sociology of science and technology, as if, after undertaking empirical studies, I had returned to philosophy at a more advanced age, this is simply an optical illusion. Science in Action, a book that I wrote in between these two phases, was published in 1987; at the very moment when I was writing up the investigation begun in 1986 into the various regimes of veridiction. By following the circulation responsible for the production of facts and the construction of machines, one can read Science in Action not only as an application of ANT – which it undoubtedly is – but also as a detailed study of three regimes of truth: scientific reference, technological machinations and, opposed to both of them, the Evil Genius of Double-Click information. In fact, two distinct events occurred: on one hand, my encounter with Isabelle Stengers and, on the other hand, the unexpected success of the so-called ANT. This success and the ensuing disputes delayed the publication of the other project, although I continued to pursue it.”

⁵ (Law, 1992)

⁶ (Callon, 1998)

⁷ (Latour, 1998)

⁸ (Latour, 2013) p.297

Michel Callon, in an interview with Alexandre Mallard to be published in *Sociologica*, makes a similar move by describing his irresistible attraction to markets and the path that led him from innovation to markets.

In any case, both of them display an immoderate taste for theoretical elaboration.

At the same time, this particular way of looking at the world has circulated, been transformed, multiplied, pluralized, and has generally escaped the control of its initiators, who nonetheless continue to be designated as references, tutelary figures under whose protection each of them places himself. This is especially true for Bruno Latour - the Matthieu effect - who is credited with notions or arguments developed by Michel Callon.

To come back to the starting point, it seems to me that ANT at the CSI represented a snapshot in a continuous flow of transformations and recompositions, as if - I hope you will forgive me for this daring comparison - the ISC had constituted a kind of original soup where elements temporarily grouped together by affinities, exchanged properties, and ended up constituting new individualities, at the same time linked by a common history but clearly distinct.

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