

Abstracts

Sven Opitz

New Collectivities: The Cosmopolitical in Bruno Latour and Ulrich Beck

Bruno Latour and Ulrich Beck draw on the notion of cosmopolitics for conceptualizing new forms of collectivity. This article analyses how, in doing so, both authors conceive of the social and the political as co-constitutive. It shows that their approaches mirror each other: According to Latour the fabrication of planetary collectivity in the context of Gaia hinges on the distinction between friend and enemy. He thus emphasizes a cosmopolitical constitution of the social. For Beck, new collectives emerge under the universalizing influence of world risks. As opposed to Latour, he states a social constitution of the cosmopolitical. At the same time, a reversal of this contrast can be observed sporadically: While Beck takes into account the possibility of antagonistic risk conflicts, Latour ponders over feedback mechanisms designed to redirect ecological effects back at those who have caused them. Such techno-aesthetic procedures would generate the experience of collective connectedness in an earthly milieu. The paper shows that in each approach moral considerations play an important role in calibrating the oscillatory movement between a weak and a strong concept of the political.

Niels Werber

The Last Κατέχων or: The Evil of Differentiation. Latour, Luhmann, Schmitt

Twenty years ago, Bruno Latour launched a fundamental polemic against the sociology of Niklas Luhmann. No contrast seemed to be greater than the discrepancy between laboratory studies and system-theory. However, my article not only demonstrates that Latour has increasingly adapted basic tenets of the sociological theory of differentiation, but that they are in fact indispensable for his political theology of nature. In spite of the ANT-rhetoric of interconnectedness, Latour develops a model of differentiated societal trajectories just in order to surmount these differentiations spectacularly in his speculations on Gaia. At crucial points, his dialectic of differentiation and dedifferentiation resorts to concepts of Carl Schmitt. The result is a political theology of the Anthropocene, which inherits Schmitt's decisionism and bellicism.

Lars Gertenbach

Politics – Diplomacy – Decisionism. On the Political in the Recent Works of Bruno Latour

This article discusses the concept of the political in Bruno Latour's work. Given the numerous ambiguities and divergent interpretations regarding the significance of his political theory, the paper systematizes the various arguments of his more recent writings. The paper argues that Latour's argumentation revolves around three particular forms of the political: politics as a mode of existence, diplomacy and decisionism. At first the article deals with the Inquiry into Modes of Existence since it lays the groundwork for the identification of politics as a specific mode of existence. Subsequently, the second part discusses the relationship between diplomacy and politics as a mode of existence, whereas the third part concentrates on the relationship between diplomacy and decisionism. Although these three forms of the political are linked to

different tasks, they are fundamentally intertwined. Hence, special attention is given to the tension between the cautious and considerate art of diplomacy and a more militant, bellicose decisionism associated with Carl Schmitt. The last part of the article discusses the ambiguities regarding the role of sociology and the distinction between politics and the political in Latour's recent works.

Urs Stäheli

The Right to Silence: From a Politics of Connectivity to a Politics of Disconnectivity?

This article discusses the role of connectivity and disconnectivity in Latour's political thought. The presupposition of Latour's understanding of politics is the theoretical, political and normative valorization of connectivity. This article problematizes this valorization of connectivity by using acts of silence as a template to elucidate the political and theoretical problems that Latour's envisioning of the universal inclusion of new actants and their assembly into new collectivity has. The article argues that a non-representational notion of politics has to take seriously such political forms that seek to break with the imperative of connectivity and with the ideal to become a visible part of a network, assembly or collectivity. ANT's slogan "follow the actor" is not sufficient to trace such forms of politics that consists in fading away, hiding or falling silent.

Henning Laux

Hybrid Organisations. Political Challenges at the Interface between Science and Biophysical Nature

This paper reconstructs for the first time Bruno Latour's multiple contributions in the area of political sociology with an integrative process model and an ecological guiding principle. On this basis, the crossing between politics, science and biophysical nature is specified through the concept of hybrid organisation. Finally, the empirical evidence is analysed by means of two case studies: The German Ethics Council and Climate Change Conference. The discussion makes apparent that the democratization of nature has already begun.

Ute Tellmann

Political Ecology, Calculation and the De-Materialisation of Thing-Politics

This article discusses the relation between political ecology and economy in Latour's writings. Its vantage point is the observation that Latour grants a prominent role to calculation, measuring and valuing for explicating what the matter of (cosmo-)politics is about. I argue that the prominence of calculation is an effect of a bad amalgamation between political ecology and economy. It produces theoretical effects that undermine Latour's own aims, notably the aim to think a material politics and a political materiality. The article reconstructs the conceptualization of political ecology in Bruno Latour's and Isabelle Stengers' works and traces how it gets connected to a notion of economization developed by ANT with problematic outcomes. It calls for a broader interpretation of the notion of the milieu in order to save Latour's thing-politics from the effects of dematerialization.