

The second ATACD colloquium was held in Rotterdam, 17-18 April, 2008. Organised by partner V2_ Institute for Unstable Media, the colloquium was distinguished by two evenings of artistic work engaging with topological understandings of space. The first, hosted by Piet Zwart Institute, had the exclamatory title 'The Map is not the Territory?!', and featured a number of projects focused on mapping as a critical artistic investigation. The second, 'Test_lab: Topology', featured a presentation by ATACD partner Tiziana Terranova, outlining key concepts in topological thinking.

The business of the colloquium itself was focused on the inter-related topics of Evolution, Interaction, Communication. There were three keynote presentations, by speakers with different disciplinary backgrounds: Lars Spuybroek, Architect and Professor of Architectural Design, Georgia Institute of Technology; Josep Perello, Departament de Fisica Fonamental, University of Bracelona; Fabian Muniesa, Centre de Sociologie de l'Innovation (CSI), Ecoles des Mines de Paris. The three talks revealed some common concerns but also highlighted the difficulties – and promise – of interdisciplinary research. The movement of ideas across disciplines was described as contamination by one partner, while another remarked that cross-disciplinary discussion makes each discipline confront its hidden assumptions or blind spots.

Each speaker addressed one of the themes – Evolution, Interaction and Communication – but one focus across all three was the issue of how to understand agency. Muniesa described a network as an association that 'raises' agency; Perello insisted that it was appropriate to focus on rules not agents; while Spuybroek proposed that structure itself can become 'alive'. The relations between local and global knowledge, individuals and populations, and the importance of time horizons all emerged as key concerns.

All speakers also seemed to imply that topology is in some sense a demonstrative science, concerned with the capacity to generate possibilities or solutions. There was considerable discussion of the role of models in this regard, and this will be a theme taken up in the next colloquium. On this occasion we merely asked: What is a model? It was suggested that while a model is not a metaphor, it may be used as such. Spuybroek used the beguiling phrase of an 'analogical computer' to describe a practical device that organizes continuity. Is a model a description or an explanation or both? Perello suggested that a model starts as a description but can be used to make descriptions; as a descriptive prediction, a model can be improved in experimentation, and it

emerges as an explanation of sorts. The use of such models in practice complicates things further, as Muniesa illustrated in the example of financial markets. He asked participants to consider the proliferation of indicators, and their use as markers of performance. Do such markers also make, for example, markets?

Each of these presentations can be viewed on the ATACD website, along with details of the next colloquium.

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