

SOCIOLEGAL MODEL MAKING

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A Proposition

2017

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IF WE APPROACH SOCIOLEGAL RESEARCH as if it is itself a social phenomenon, then we can begin to reframe it through design-based practices such as model-making, improving its quality and rendering it more of a communal resource.

We sociolegal researchers are distinguished by our commitment to approaching law as a fundamentally social phenomenon.¹ Many of us understand law as having the potential to act as a ‘communal resource’. By this we mean that law can support relations that are trusting, stable and, therefore, productive. It can do this by provoking participation different forms of social life, and by facilitating the expression and co-ordination of values and interests are central to those forms of social life.²

Despite our social understanding of law, we sociolegal researchers tend to approach our sociolegal research individualistically. We do not share our process. Nor do we tend to share the products of that process in ways that are particularly accessible to non-specialists.

If we want our work to be widely appreciated and to be useful, this needs to change. Making things visible and tangible can help.

This project is about getting us, sociolegal researchers, to use physical models to discover and show (to ourselves, to others) how we are approaching our research and why we are approaching it (in this way); and to imagine alternatives.

1. Cotterrell, R. (1998) ‘Why must legal ideas be interpreted sociologically?’, *Journal of Law and Society*, 25 (2), pp. 171-192, p. 183.

2. Cotterrell, R. (2008) *Living Law Aldershot*: Ashgate; Perry-Kessaris, A. (2015) ‘Approaching the econo-socio-legal’ *Annual Review of Law & Social Science*, 11(16), pp. 1-18.

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3. <http://amandaperrykessaris.org/modelmaking>

4. <https://vimeo.com/album/4228144>

5. Twitter @aperrykessaris #sociolegalmodel

MAKE YOUR RESEARCH VISIBLE AND TANGIBLE

Visit to the Sociolegal Model Making project repository — *A Site*³ — where you can download and print:

A Guide — a simple introduction to three types of model making;

A Space — a mat on which to display your models;

A Context — an essay on the theory and practice informing the project; and

A Portfolio — a visual summary of the project development process.

See before you try via the Sociolegal Model Making video collection.⁴

Share your experiences whenever and however you can.⁵

A model 'acts as an anchor to reality - stopping the theory and discussion drifting off in a tide of dry, academic discussion; tethering it to something we can not only see, but feel, approach and assess ... [I]t provides a point of entry for accessing the same content from different perspectives.'

Clare Williams, event participant, 2017.

