

Science Matters: What It Is and What It Is Not

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1 Science Matters Is an Attitude

[Science Matters \(SciMat\) is an attitude \(or concept\)](#), like the case in any new discipline when it first emerges. For example, Philosophy (in Ancient Greek time) is based on the attitude that the world/universe could be understood with rational thinking, without appealing to superstitions. History of Science is the attitude that the history of science should be studied seriously and systematically. SSK is based on the attitude that sociology can be used to provide a new (or better) understanding of science.

[The attitude of SciMat is just one sentence: “Science is to understand Nature”](#) [Lam, 2008, p. 4]. Nothing more and nothing less. (This sentence is equivalent to saying “Everything in Nature is part of science”, the slogan used in SciMat.)

2 What Is New in this Attitude?

With this said, let us point out what is new in this attitude (for some people): [SciMat includes all things related to humans, the humanities in particular, in its studies](#). Here are the explanations.

The humanities. SciMat differs from the thinking of many people on this issue. That humans are made of atoms means it is a material system, and thus is part of Nature. We do *not* agree that one can draw a line separating the human-dependent disciplines into two parts: That social systems are part of science while (some) humanities disciplines are not. For example, since the observation and interpretation of bee dances are part of science then why the review of a ballet performance written by a dance critic is not science? The dance critic could be doing her/his research at the empirical level, but every scientific study involves the empirical level.

3 SciMat Is Neutral on Research Methods

In all disciplines, over time, some particular research methods may be favored by some of the practitioners. But why some particular methods should be precluded, a priori, to be used in a particular discipline? The aim is to understand Nature, and whatever method that works (subject to ethical considerations, etc.) could be tried [Lam, 2011, p. 19]. If a method does not work, we could modify or improve it, or abandon it for the time being.

SciMat never claims that some particular methods (from so-called Natural Sciences or otherwise) must be used in investigating Nature, which include humans and human societies. It also does not say some particular methods (such as those used by sociologists) should be excluded. A method works only after it has been applied and is shown to work. In other words, [SciMat is neutral on methods](#).

4 A Word on Terminology

In SciMat, the word Science is used to mean all kinds of scholarly enquiry, including those from Sociology, Art Studies as well as Physical Sciences, while Science in the narrow sense adopted by others is written with quotes, “Science”.

Reference

- Lam, L. & Burguete, Maria [2008] “Science Matters: A unified perspective,” in *Science Matters: Humanities as Complex Systems*, eds. Burguete, M. & Lam, L. (World Scientific, Singapore).
- Lam, L. & Burguete, Maria [2011] “Arts: A Science Matter,” in *Arts: A Science Matter*, eds. Burguete, M. & Lam, L. (World Scientific, Singapore).