

Actor Network Modelling

Due: 2025-09-26 @ 11:59 EDT **Weight:** 15% **Submitter:** Individual

Overview

The goal of this assignment is to understand your position in an Actor Network. By sketching your own actor network, you should see relations of different types: human to human, human to concept, human to artifact (or technology), concept to concept, technology to concept, etc. By placing yourself (or de-punctualising¹ yourself) in an actor-network, you should be able to understand the heterogeneous bits that comprise you as actor-network and hold you in your actor network.

You will analyze some of those relationships to consider where the power lies, what gives the power, and how power is maintained or resisted. You might think of power as defined by the affordances of an actor—if an actor demands something of another actor, it claims some degree of power in the network.

Requirements

Objectives

- Provide a substantive actor network that places you (or an aspect of you) in a network that demonstrates what you regard as important socio-technical relations. You might consider mapping an Actor Network that showcases part of your life—you as learner, or in an online gaming community, or as an athlete or family member.
- Start with a focus question or statement to guide your network creation. You can frame this question/statement as you like, relevant to the overall objective of the assignment noted above. For example:
 - How does my role as an athlete shape my worldview?
 - How does music shape my family dynamic?
 - Why am I so committed to education?
 - What challenges have I overcome to persist as an engineering student?
- The network should refer to you now rather than you in the past (i.e. do not focus on something from high school or prior relations, except to explain the present).
- Label important relations (with affordances or other language representing relationships) to explain not just that they are connected but the nature of that connection.
- Write responses to the three prompts below focusing on different actors and relations for each prompt. You can structure this writing in three distinct sections, i.e. the writing does not need to be integrated.
 1. Examine one ordering of the network that has maintained stability for some time. Explain how you or other actors (human or non-human) are locked into roles. Then explain how such locking-in helps maintain stability or leads to punctualisation. Do you have a quality or preference (“resistance”) that has been hidden as a result of punctualisation? After establishing this, analyze why the system has such enduring stability (consider, for example, who/what has the power and why).
 2. Analyze one change in your network within the last twelve (12) months. How did the changed relation reveal itself? Did it lead to greater awareness of other actors or relations? What are the implications? A simple example would be that a broken screen on my phone might suddenly lead to my awareness of that technical actor (my phone), but also my contacts whom I cannot reach and the means for reaching them which is dependent on that phone; the repair people whose work routines or supply chain are affected by material shortages, the glass of the phone, and so on.
 3. Analyze one non-human actor that has power over you in some way, perhaps due to its affordances or because it works with you to consolidate a “product” of some kind, or has a role in an important relationship with another human actor. Note that a “product” can refer to something conceptual, like a

¹ See the [ANT Vocabulary](#) list to help with specific language of Actor Network.

role you tend to play in your life as well as a physical thing. How and why is power maintained? What resistances in you were overcome and why did you allow that?

- Note, the prompts may guide you to add actors and relations to your network to enrich your analysis.

Constraints

Constraints define the limits of any work. Usually in engineering work, constraints are rendered in language such as “must” and “shall” for constraints with no flexibility, and “should” for constraints that can be resisted *with good reason*. Occasionally, “may” is used to denote flexibility. With these definitions, the assignment:

1. **Must** include a topic statement/question that guided the creation of the network.
2. **Must** include a visual representation of an Actor Network that is no greater than a single letter-sized page.
3. **May** include hand-drawn or electronically rendered visual representation, as long as it is easily legible.
4. **Must** include the student’s name at the top of the document.
5. **Must** have readable font no smaller than 11-point for in the representation or in the written work.
6. **Must** be submitted through Quercus as a .pdf file
7. **Must** name the file by the format as follows:
 <UTorID>—ANT
 e.g. irishrob—ANT
8. **Must not** exceed 1000 words of text (excluding words in the visual representation).

Criteria

For the criteria listed here, “more” is considered better. As in Praxis, “criteria” allow for comparison of one thing against a standard or against other similar entities.

1. Quality of the Network

A quality network balances sufficient detail to show relations of interest, sufficient breadth to integrate ‘heterogeneous bits’, and aspects unique to you (as opposed to conventional elements shared by anyone in the course). Note: beyond simple legibility, quality of the network does not refer to your artistic abilities.

2. Thoughtful Analysis of Relations

Quality analysis will both describe the two entities in the relation and also explore the nature of the relation by considering such factors as affordances, power (who/what has it, how it flows, what maintains it, why?), resistances and their causes, and/or punctualisations that tend to hide relations.

3. Coherence and Clarity of Written Expression

The written components are relatively short; therefore, the challenge is to be concise yet substantial.

Quality writing has three attributes. It is:

- clear in its argument (see pre-course video),
- well supported by your evidence (note that in this case your primary evidence is your own representation), and
- accurate in expression (appropriate vocabulary, accurate use of grammar).