

THE ACTOR-NETWORK THEORY AND THE QUESTION OF POWER: RETHINKING AGENCY AND STRUCTURE

Ivica Mladenović*, Srđan Prodanović

Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory, University of Belgrade, Serbia

ORCID iDs: Ivica Mladenović
Srđan Prodanović

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4304-3778>
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3444-6989>

Abstract

The Actor-Network Theory (ANT) represents a significant shift in the social sciences, challenging the traditional divide between structure and agency. Developed by Bruno Latour, Michel Callon, and John Law, ANT posits that both human and non-human entities actively shape social reality through interconnected networks. The passing of Bruno Latour in 2022 invites a critical reassessment of ANT's legacy and its applicability to present-day sociotechnical transformations. This paper traces the evolution of ANT, highlighting its theoretical foundations and methodological implications. Special focus is given to the ANT's role within the contemporary study of science, technology, and society, placing it in the context of the debates against epistemological relativism and the limited understanding of power relations. At the same time, the paper will show the advantages of ANT in explaining the dynamic interactions of heterogeneous actors while highlighting the limitations of the approach in dealing with issues of inequality. It will be argued that a better understanding and application of ANT must be achieved in conjunction with the ideas of critical social theories.

Key words: Actor-Network Theory, Agency, Sociotechnical Systems, Power Relations, Bruno Latour.

ТЕОРИЈА АКТЕР-МРЕЖЕ И ПИТАЊЕ МОЋИ: ПРЕИСПИТИВАЊЕ АГЕНСНОСТИ И СТРУКТУРЕ

Апстракт

Оспоравајући традиционалну поделу између структуре и агенсности, теорија актер-мреже (АНТ) је довела до значајних промена у друштвеним наукама. Осмишљена од стране Бруна Латура, Мишела Калона и Џона Лоа, АНТ инсистира на томе да и људски и нељудски ентитети активно обликују друштвену реалност кроз међусобно повезане мреже. Смрт Бруна Латура, једног од најзна-

* Corresponding author: Ivica Mladenović, Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory, University of Belgrade, Kraljice Natalije 45, Belgrade, Serbia | ivica.mladenovic@ifdt.bg.ac.rs

чајнијих представника АНТ-а, 2022. године, подстакла је критичко преиспитивање наслеђа АНТ-а и њене применљивости на савремене социотехничке трансформације. Овај рад прати еволуцију АНТ-а, истичући њене теоријске основе и методолошке импликације. Анализирамо допринос АНТ-а савременим студијама науке, технологије и друштвене организације, истовремено разматрајући критике које се односе на њен епистемолошки релативизам и недостатак фокуса на динамику моћи. Такође, разматрамо релевантност АНТ-а у објашњавању флуидних интеракција између хетерогених актера, као и ограниченост у анализи системских неједнакости. На послетку, заступамо нијансирану примену АНТ-а која интегрише увиде из критичких друштвених теорија, док истовремено задржава своју хеуристичку вредност у проучавању сложених мрежа.

Кључне речи: Теорија актер-мреже, Агенција, Социотехнички системи, Односи моћи, Бруно Латур.

INTRODUCTION

Actor-Network Theory (ANT) is often presented as a milestone in the post-structuralist turn within the social sciences, yet its legacy calls for renewed consideration. Emerging in the late 20th century, this theoretical framework, pioneered by scholars such as Bruno Latour, Michel Callon, and John Law, sought to dismantle rigid distinctions between social structures and individual agency. Rather than taking ANT as a settled theoretical project, this article approaches it as an open field of inquiry whose relevance must be reconsidered in light of today's social, technological and ecological conditions. ANT proposes that actors – whether human or non-human – participate equally in the construction of social realities through complex networks of interactions (cf. Akrich, 1992; Callon, 1986b; Callon 1998; Callon, 2006a; 2006b; Latour, 2005; Latour, Akrich & Callon 2006; Muniesa, 2015; Law, 1992; 2009; Law & Hassard, 1999). In this light, ANT challenges traditional sociological paradigms that often prioritise macro-level structures or micro-level individual actions. Rather than reducing context to mere linguistic interactions, ANT underscores the material and relational nature of networks. As Callon (2008, p. 320) argues, “Context cannot be reduced, as in semiotics, to pure world of words and interlocutors; they are better conceived as contextual and material assemblages.” Its radical redefinition of agency and its commitment to symmetry between human and non-human actors have fuelled both its influence and the controversies surrounding it (Guggenheim & Potthast, 2011; Schinkel, 2007; Collin, Livian & Thivant 2016).

The passing of Bruno Latour in 2022 marks a critical juncture in evaluating the applicability of the ANT in its current form. It is recognised that the academic works of Latour have significantly impacted the development of contemporary understandings of the interrelation between science, technology, and society (Latour, 1987; 1993; 1996; 1999; 2005). However, in the wake of the passing of Latour, the relevance of ANT in

addressing contemporary issues has been reassessed. This reassessment in the wake of Latour provides a critical juncture that allows for recognition of the academic works of Latour while at the same time engaging in critical thought regarding the evolution of the ANT. However, there exist identifiable issues in the ANT that have led to the argument that the extension of the applicability of the ANT has the potential of compromising the coherence of the analytical tool (Collins & Yearley, 1992; Callon & Latour, 1992). This is particularly evident when the ANT is applied in the reproduction of normative social orders, in which the dynamic interplay of power relations has the potential of requiring analytical tools that have a critical focus on systemic inequalities (Whittle & Spicer, 2008).

The ANT, has without a doubt left its mark in terms of its impact in the social theory and research domains, especially those dealing with sociotechnical issues in contemporary society (Cresswell et al., 2010). The innovative way in which it approaches actor entanglements has proved invaluable in analyzing the impact of rapid technological changes. With technology constantly redefining the world, there is a pressing need for strong theoretical frameworks that can help us understand these changes. The way ANT is able to illuminate actor interactions, including heterogeneous elements, is of paramount importance in analyzing these changes (Callon, Laredo & Mustar, 1997; Munro, 2009).

The heuristic potential of the theory must therefore be clearly differentiated from the limits of the theory, including the relative underdevelopment of the theory in dealing with the issues of power and domination. Thus, the re-evaluation of the scope and applicability of the ANT could provide an opportunity for the elucidation of the heuristic potential of the theory, addressing the limits of the theory at the same time. Although the ANT may no longer hold the leading role in the innovation of theory in the field of social sciences, the maturity of the theory, evidenced by its presence in the discourse over the past decades (Fariás, Blok, & Roberts, 2020), provides an opportunity for the critical evaluation of the legacy of the theory, including the positive and negative research paths that the theory has taken, and the theoretical and methodological pitfalls that the theory has encountered over the years, including what was once revolutionary in the theory.

In this article, our aim is to provide a systematic reconstruction of the foundational principles of ANT, explaining some of its key concepts such as the symmetry between humans and non-human actors, its relational ontology, and its focus on tracing associations to understand how the network functions (Latour, 1996). Through this explanation of its foundational concepts, the novelty and challenge that ANT provides to conventional sociological thinking will become apparent. Beyond its theoretical underpinnings, we will explore ANT's applicability to pressing global challenges, such as climate change, technological transformation, and the ongoing reshaping of social and political orders. In particular, we will address the

persistent criticism that ANT inadequately accounts for power dynamics and structural inequalities. This critique raises significant questions about whether ANT can effectively address the entrenched asymmetries in contemporary ‘illiberal’ social systems or support the mobilisation of collective resistance (Whittle & Spicer, 2008).

In recognising the limitation of this, we shall explore the possibility of extending ANT’s heuristic strengths in terms of the ability to explore connections and focus on the significance of the marginalised or overlooked actor in relation to an engagement with domination, hierarchy, and oppression. At the same time, we shall explore the possibility of ANT’s framework being aligned with the emancipatory potential of social science in terms of re-imagining agency, action, and justice in an increasingly interconnected world. By bridging the gaps between ANT’s innovative analytical tools and the normative concerns of critical theory, this article aims to contribute to a more nuanced appreciation of ANT’s potential as both a theoretical and methodological resource for addressing the challenges of our time.

Over the past two decades, ANT has entered the Serbian and regional scholarly debate through works that introduced Latour’s ideas into sociology, philosophy and political theory, and positioned them within local academic conversations (Petrov, 2015; Filipović, 2012; Birešev, 2012; Spasić, 2007; Janković, 2023; Mladenović, 2025). These contributions have opened an important space for ANT in the region. This article upon their findings but also tries to take a somewhat different route. Rather than revisiting that reception or offering another introduction to the field, it asks a more direct question: what can still be done with ANT today? This article examines how ANT can be brought into a productive dialogue with the question of power and the structural conditions of agency, addressing a dimension that has often remained implicit or underdeveloped in ANT.

The text develops a line of inquiry that has remained largely unexplored in both the international and regional literature: whether ANT, without abandoning its core commitments to relationality and the tracing of associations, can be mobilised to address questions of power, domination and collective agency. By approaching ANT from this angle, the article seeks to show that its analytical tools remain relevant for thinking through the sociotechnical and ecological tensions of the present.

RE-EXAMINING THE FOUNDATIONS OF ANT

Before developing the line of argument pursued in this article, it is useful to revisit several ideas that have shaped ANT, with an emphasis on those aspects that remain conceptually relevant for the discussion ahead. While ANT offers a relational ontology of agency, the analysis developed here argues that its conceptual framework can strengthen our understating of the relational nature of constraints surrounding agency and social en-

gagement. Revisiting ANT's core propositions is therefore not intended as a comprehensive synthesis, but as a way of identifying the conceptual elements that enable, as well as those that limit, ANT's capacity to address questions of power, domination and collective agency. With this in mind, the following section outlines the key principles of ANT that remain necessary for the argument developed in this article.

The origins of ANT can be traced back to the late 1970s and the works of the French philosopher Michel Serres. His philosophy of relations introduced the concept of 'quasi-objects,' which aimed to dissolve the atomism of the traditional distinction between subject and object (Crocker, 2021, p. 195). In other words, Serres' genuinely innovative idea was that agency could be attributed not only to living beings but to any entity that provokes a reaction from another entity (ibid.) within a specific network of relations. A striking illustration of this perspective can be found in his book *The Parasite*: "the ball isn't there for the body; the exact contrary is true: the body is the object of the ball; playing is nothing else but making oneself the attribute of the ball as a substance" (Serres, 2007, p. 226).

Another major impact Serres left can be seen in his approach to translation. In this case, translation is not just the transfer of words from one language to another; Serres argues that translation is always a little indeterminate and disruptive, and in this indeterminacy and disruption, the seeds of new knowledge are sown. Disruptions and noise in the process of translation, according to Serres, do not represent obstacles but rather the very foundation of communication, capable of generating entirely non-linear innovations in interpretation and the semantic resources available to us. This fluidity of boundaries – between subject and object, the living and the non-living, the 'original' and the 'translation' – profoundly influenced the future creators of ANT, particularly Bruno Latour.

The critical moment for establishing the term 'actor-network' occurred with the publication of *New Directions in Social Studies of Technology* (1987), where the philosophical insights of Serres were formally developed by three key authors – Michel Callon, John Law, and Bruno Latour – who, for the first time, used the term 'actor-network.'¹ At its in-

¹ Latour did not initially use the term 'Actor-Network Theory' (ANT) in the aforementioned collection, as the theoretical framework was still in its formative stages and had not yet been consolidated under a single label. The early works associated with ANT – such as Callon's "Some Elements of a Sociology of Translation" (1986) and Latour's "Science in Action" (1987) – laid the groundwork for what would later be termed 'Actor-Network Theory,' but without explicitly naming it as such. It was only in the early 1990s that ANT became widely recognised as a theoretical approach, largely due to its increasing influence within Science and Technology Studies (STS). However, Latour himself remained deeply ambivalent about the term, expressing reservations about its conceptual implications and widespread misinterpretations. In *On Actor-Network Theory: A Few Clarifications* (1996), he explicitly addresses his dissatisfaction with the label, arguing that all three components of the term – 'actor,' 'network,' and 'theory' – carry misleading connotations that distort the intentions behind ANT.

ception, ANT focused on the study of technology, departing from earlier approaches to this subject, especially those found in the sociology of science.

Prior to the emergence of ANT, sociologists studying technology tended to overemphasise the role of social influences in understanding the impact of technology on society. Within this perspective, structural inequalities and the interests of social groups were seen as the key determinants of how technology was applied. For example, the establishment of the Fordist model of production involved the reorganisation of machinery to increase efficiency and profit, based on an asymmetric approach to what classical Marxism calls the means of production. In this view, objects were always subordinated to the intentions and interests of human subjects.

By contrast, ANT proponents emphasise that humans and objects jointly construct reality through their mutual interactions, making it impossible to step outside this network of relations to identify some causally superior determinant, such as ‘social structure’ or the ‘Fordist phase in the development of capitalism.’ This marks a departure from some of the key concepts of modernity:

Instead of attaching poor phenomena to the solid hooks of Nature and Society, we let mediators produce natures and societies, we reverse the direction of the modernizing transcendences. Natures and societies become the relative products of history. However, we do not fall into immanence alone, since networks are immersed in nothing. We do not need a mysterious ether for them to propagate themselves.

(Latour, 1993:128)

A useful illustration can be found in the early, now-classic works of some of the key authors of ANT. For instance, Michel Callon, in his effort to demonstrate ANT’s general thesis on the co-evolution of society and technology – where the mutual dependence of different entities such as people, technologies, institutions, and natural elements is emphasised – offers an intriguing example of the development of the electric vehicle (Callon, 1979). In 1973, the French company EDF (Électricité de France), which specialises in electricity production, proposed a plan for an electric vehicle (VEL), defining not only its technical characteristics but also the social universe in which this mode of transport would operate. EDF had a vision for a world where electric vehicles would dominate the roads instead of the conventional internal combustion engine vehicles. This was inspired by the desire to combat urban pollution and noise. In the process of realising this goal, EDF involved various actors in the network, including the car manufacturer Renault, various government ministries, local transport authorities, and scientists. Each actor contributed to the realisation of the *Véhicule Électrique Lourde*.

However, the process towards the actualisation of the network was not smooth. For instance, Renault was involved in the network for the manufacture of the bodywork for the VEL but later withdrew from the network.

It opposed EDF and set out to realise its own vision for the future of the automobile industry. According to Serres' argument, EDF had to deal with challenges in the process of reconciling the various actors' interests in the network. This hindered the actualisation of the actor network. In the end, the VEL network was only actualised to a limited extent as a commercial vehicle powered by lead-acid batteries.

It is undeniable that the measure of success in translation will differ from one translation to another, and the outcome of such an endeavor cannot be foreseen in advance (Callon, 1986a). In *The Pasteurization of France* (1988), Bruno Latour seeks to explore the ways in which the scientific accomplishments of Louis Pasteur transcend the boundaries of the laboratory to impact French society and its institutions. In the book, Latour uses the framework of actor network theory to explore the complex relationships between science, politics, and society to demonstrate that the success of Pasteur was not only due to scientific innovation but also to the power to mobilise a network of actors that included microbes, institutions, and social movements. Pasteur's success lay not only in his ground-breaking description of the genesis and spread of microbes through laboratory analysis but also in his ability to organise and maintain a complex network of supporters who defended his findings and demonstrated their practical significance. Accordingly, ANT suggests that the success of translation involves engaging the power of action within society (without any ontological grounding of the success in a theory of the subject or inherent properties of the actor). According to ANT proponents, a scientist is always politically active in relation to the network within which research takes place.

Similarly, another ANT classic, John Law (1986), examines the success of colonial Portugal not as the product of skilful politics and strategy but as the result of contingent factors that produced relatively unpredictable outcomes within the network. In the case of Portuguese expansion, Law analyses how ships, navigation methods, the experience of available sailors, political institutions, ocean currents, winds, and weaponry together created the conditions for Portuguese exploration and the conquest of new territories. For example, navigational instruments like the astrolabe were crucial for accurately determining the position of ships on the open sea, but these instruments alone were not sufficient; they functioned as part of a network that included sailors' knowledge, the stability of ships, favourable weather conditions, and the political support of the Portuguese crown. All these entities were integrated into new ships that ultimately facilitated (and demanded) the development of long-distance control networks, which would eventually consolidate into colonial domination. As Law observes:

Nevertheless, when the commission scratched its head and considered what kinds of elements it could hope to put on a vessel which would subsequently retain their shape and power, the answer, though it would not have been posed in these terms, must have been

obvious. It was documents, devices, and drilled people. They would hold their form. They would act as they should at a distance so long as they were properly chosen and placed at the right location within an appropriately designed structure.

(Law 1986, p. 254)

These now-classic examples illustrate some of the key epistemological premises of ANT, which over the years have garnered both praise and criticism in equal measure. As we have emphasised, macro-structures do not exist as a category within this type of theory. However, caution is needed here: this is not merely a continuation of the longstanding debate between advocates of methodological realism and individualism but rather a rejection of any explanatory categories that possess ontological status and consequent causal power beyond the specific situations that constitute the network.

Thus, the ‘individual’ – if understood in its philosophical definition as having an intrinsic nature that must necessarily manifest – is just as much a fiction as class or any other form of realist approach to social phenomena and processes. If we carefully examine the examples provided by the pioneers of ANT, we see that it represents a relatively novel approach to social science. Specifically, it begins from the assumption that it is impossible to have knowledge about a social situation before it happens. The intentions of collective entities such as EDF and Renault, or individuals like Louis Pasteur, always encounter resistance and noise when translated into discourses, plans, and implementation strategies. This noise, therefore, should not be treated as an epistemologically insignificant residue within the network of relations because, according to ANT proponents, doing so risks overlooking what is genuinely innovative in the network.

The politics created *in situ* between people, things, existing knowledge, and institutions thus has epistemological primacy over all traditional categories in the arsenal of sociologists and social theorists. Consequently, there is no asymmetry in knowledge between laypeople and ANT researchers, provided we assume that researchers do not possess knowledge about categories that direct the actions of the groups under study. The only meaningful difference lies in the fact that ANT researchers have no assumptions about what they are studying and instead meticulously map all relations between people, things, existing knowledge, and institutions to uncover how the politics of translation generates emergent outcomes that may elude various nodes within the same map.

This is perhaps the most far-reaching idea we find in ANT. Flattening society into a map entails several epistemological commitments that should be systematically outlined:

1. Equal focus on relations and nodes. Within ANT, understanding emergent outcomes requires following the extensive interconnectedness of localised nodes. Thus, ANT can effectively de-

- scribe processes of social change without resorting to metaphysical divisions between structure and the agency of action;
2. Nodes are open to all kinds of actors. As we have seen, ANT insists that humans, things, knowledge, and institutions can all be 'equal' nodes within a given network;
 3. Abolition of sharp boundaries between expert and lay knowledge. ANT rejects the notion that experts possess a privileged understanding of the network compared to ordinary participants;
 4. Rethinking social critique. Social critique should not be thought of in terms of intellectuals informing the public or pointing out processes and phenomena that go beyond the cognitive capabilities of 'ordinary actors,' by using concepts like social structure or intrinsic properties of actors. Social critique is an ongoing process of working together with all actors in the network, constantly discovering new relationships and actors.

In the following sections, these aspects will be discussed in greater detail, as this framework often provides the key insights into the social-theoretical possibilities of ANT.

EGALITARIANISM OF RELATIONS AS A FORM OF EMANCIPATION

Traditional theories of sociology have long emphasised the importance of social relations, which they define in different ways. Marxist, structural-functionalist, and Bourdieusian perspectives all, at least partly, employ relational perspective, but are typically more epistemically committed to more enduring structural configurations, such as class positions, institutional functions, or relatively stable fields and habitus. Whereas these approaches can be seen as effectively demonstrating that social actors cannot be conceptualised without reference to their relational networks, these approaches do, however, assume a certain degree of structural continuity and reproduction in these relations. ANT, by contrast, offers a much more radical vision of relationality in its rejection of predefined macro-structural entities, its treatment of human and non-human actants as equivalent, and its emphasis on social order as emergent rather than structural. From this perspective, entities such as 'class,' 'institution,' or 'actor' do not precede relations but are continuously assembled through them. As a result, the specific configuration of relations between actors is often overlooked unless it conforms to preconceived notions of systemic conflict or cohesion (Dubois, 2007). However, Latour (2005) challenges the traditional understanding of macro structures, arguing that 'macro' does not denote a larger domain that encapsulates micro-interactions like a Russian doll but is rather another localised site equally embedded in relational networks. As he states:

Macro no longer describes a wider or a larger site in which the micro would be embedded like some Russian Matryoshka doll, but another equally local, equally micro place, which is connected to many others through some medium transporting specific types of traces. No place can be said to be bigger than any other place, but some can be said to benefit from far safer connections with many more places than others. This move has the beneficial effect to keep the landscape flat, since what earlier, in the pre-relativist sociology, was situated 'above' or 'below' remains side by side and firmly on the same plane as the other loci which they were trying to overlook or include.

(Latour 2005, p. 176)

The macro is embedded within the micro, and vice versa. Consequently, it is hardly surprising that social hierarchies become increasingly difficult to discern (Dubois, 2007, p. 147). ANT, however, disrupts this paradigm by asserting that no entity – whether a social class, institution, or individual – exists independently of the relations that constitute it. Instead of positing stable entities that interact according to fixed laws, ANT suggests that entities emerge as effects of the networks in which they are embedded. This proposition holds that no actor, regardless of their status as human or nonhuman, ever acts independently of the relational network that constitutes them (Latour, 2006). According to the arguments of Michel Callon and Bruno Latour, power is not an attribute but an entity that flows across the network and is constantly renegotiated and re-distributed (Callon & Latour, 1981; 2006). The relational ontology requires a rethinking of the very idea of emancipation not in terms of the liberation of an oppressed entity but in the re-arrangement of the network that differentially distributes agency.

A prominent example of the ANT approach to relationalism is clearly illustrated in the history of pasteurisation, as previously mentioned but in a different context. Until Louis Pasteur's involvement in it, the dominant paradigm in microbiological studies did not consider microbes to play an active role in disease causation. Pasteurisation has been shown to fundamentally alter the relational configuration between scientific knowledge, institutional advocacy, and economic practice, resulting in the revolutionisation not only of medical science but also of public health policies and economic practices (Latour, 1988). This phenomenon is described by ANT proponents as the disproportionality of change, wherein slight modifications in relational configurations can result in significant transformations (Latour, 2005). All of these points underscore the importance of understanding the relational character of interactions rather than pre-defined entities.

The implications of this approach go beyond the laboratory. ANT suggests that social movements, political struggles, and economic changes be studied as processes of relational reordering (Latour, 2010). Feminist and decolonial perspectives on traditional sociology, which see the study of patriarchy and colonialism as flawed, find resonance in this perspective.

Instead of viewing patriarchy and colonialism as entities, feminist and decolonial perspectives focus on the relations that sustain these entities (Dubois, 2007). Thus, the process of emancipation cannot be envisioned as the destruction of the entity of patriarchy and colonialism. Instead, emancipation must involve the careful process of disrupting the relations that sustain patriarchy and colonialism.

It is in this sense that the radical egalitarianism of relations in ANT reveals the emancipatory potential of this perspective. ANT's rejection of the primacy of entities and the prioritisation of relations lead to the rejection of the macro/micro division of the social. A strike by workers in a factory, the resistance of an indigenous community against the appropriation of their lands, and online feminist campaigns become the center of the social when they are studied in the context of the relational potential of the actions. The performativity of social actions becomes the center of the social. Power relations are no longer static entities but processes of relational arrangements that can be disrupted and reconfigured (Latour, 2005).

Nevertheless, although ANT provides a fascinating approach for the comprehension of the distribution of agencies, the approach has received criticism for the perceived failure of ANT to address the issue of inequalities in a satisfactory manner (McGee, 2014). For example, although ANT provides a fascinating approach for the comprehension of the dynamics of the relationships between the actors in the networks, the approach has received criticism for the perceived failure of ANT to address the issue of the relative stability of certain relational structures in comparison with others. Thus, if the implications of ANT are generalised for the political domain, the issue of irreversibility – the relative stability of certain relational structures in comparison with others – would be more apparent and would require more thorough theorisation (Latour, 2005).

A relevant example is provided in order to explain the manner in which capitalism acts as an exceptionally strong network, where economic, legal, and technological relationships are closely interconnected, thus making systemic change extremely difficult (Latour, 2010). The modern financial system, with its complex relationships between banks, digital technology, financial institutions, and multinational corporations, represents an exemplary case of the manner in which power is sustained through an extensive network of relationships that are difficult to change (McGee, 2014). Although the ANT makes it feasible to identify these relationships, there is no prescriptive approach offered for breaking these relationships.²

² In that regard, even though it is difficult to speak of proper points of continuity, there is at least a way to reduce tension between ANT and conventional sociological approaches if we position ANT as specific perspective suitable for the study of extremely contingent situations. Thus, ANT could be seen as providing a scalless map that informs us about number of human and non-human actors and the richness of the

This brings us to pertinent questions about the potential of ANT in helping us bring about emancipatory politics. If all relations are considered equally important, how do we account for inequalities in these relations? Some scholars have tried to bring about a synthesis of ANT with critical theory to account for inequalities. By using the works of theorists like Nancy Fraser and Judith Butler, these scholars argue that although ANT is a useful methodological tool, it must be complemented by a normative critique of power (Fraser, 1989; Butler, 2010).

Nevertheless, despite these challenges, ANT provides a useful lens for imagining alternative forms of social change. Its emphasis on the importance of agency serves as a reminder that no social order is ever entirely stable; in fact, hegemonic forms always contain the seeds of potential disruption (Latour, 2005). Even in the most seemingly intractable situations of dominance, ANT directs us toward the often invisible networks and actors that can provide the levers for change (Latour, 2010). Be they in the struggle for the environment, in the rise of the digital resistance, or in the fight for racial justice, ANT directs us beyond the more obvious sites of conflict and toward the complex networks of power and how they might be overcome.

Ultimately, the relationality of the actors and networks of ANT is both a methodological approach and a vision of how the world ought to be. ANT challenges more hierarchical models of society in favor of a more fluid and nuanced approach. However, in order for this vision of society and change to reach its full emancipatory potential, it must be more engaged with the question of power and constraint. This is not to say that ANT's core principles are wrong; rather, they must be built upon and expanded. Thus, just as ANT argues that power is relational, so too must emancipation be understood as a continuous and iterative process by which the networks that make up our world are reconfigured (Latour, 2005). By taking this approach, we are not limited by static notions of oppression and resistance; instead, we are able to see the performative and always potentially changing nature of the social world. It is in this openness to relational change that ANT provides not only a useful lens for analysis, but a potential for change itself.

TOWARD THE 'PARLIAMENT OF (HUMANS AND) THINGS'

The ANT essentially subverts the existing hierarchies in sociological thought with its uniquely egalitarian framework that not only pertains to human agency but also to human and non-human agency. This essentially repositions the theory in a different framework that requires a reeval-

relations, while other 'non-flat' approaches to theory could provide understanding of how results of these contingent affect the historical and material foundations of the given normative order;

uation of agency that is no longer limited to human intentionality. Instead of viewing the world as solely the result of human interactions and constructs, the ANT suggests that material objects, technological infrastructures, and even abstract concepts all play a role in the development and evolution of networks (Latour, 2005). This argument is furthered by Latour's concept of a 'parliament of things,' which essentially challenges the conventional understanding of political representation and agency in a world where technological and environmental factors increasingly play a role in the development of human societies (Latour, 1993).

Agency in the ANT is not anthropocentric, nor does it rely on the conventional understanding of human intentionality. While human agency is certainly goal-oriented and motivation-driven, the same cannot be said for non-human agency. However, the influence that these non-human actants exert is through their ability to shape the outcome of interactions and impose constraints upon them. Latour suggests that there is a difference between 'centralised' influence that pertains to human consciousness, and 'relational' influence that pertains to the influence that objects, technology, and environmental factors exert upon human interactions (Latour, 1987). This is particularly relevant to technological systems wherein infrastructures such as roads, surveillance systems, and even technological networks impose a certain set of actions upon human beings without the need for direct human intervention. In the same way, environmental factors such as climate change and pollution 'act' in a way that alters the political and economic agendas that must be addressed (Latour, 2004). According to Latour, 'we have never been modern,' a statement that suggests that the entanglements that exist between human and non-human agency within the ANT framework have been a reality for quite a while (Latour, 1993).

This relational ontology finally culminates in the idea of the 'parliament of things,' an idea that has profound implications for the traditional understanding of political representation. Within the context of Latour's ontology, political bodies have traditionally focused on the representation of human voices, while non-human actors have been conceptualised as passive actors waiting to be governed. The idea of the 'parliament of things' reverses this trend by positing that non-human actors need to be represented within the political sphere, not necessarily through the articulation of their voice but through the manner of their representation. The point here is not that rivers or climates have the capacity to speak for themselves but that it is the task of scientists, engineers, activists, or political bodies to represent rivers or climates within the political sphere (Latour, 1998; 2005). The melting of Arctic ice, CO₂ levels, or biodiversity loss cannot speak for themselves, but it remains the case that the manner of their representation is undoubtedly significant (Latour, 2018).

This reconceptualisation of the nature of representation fits well within the current developments in environmental politics. As the Anthro-

pocene – the time period during which human activity dominates geological processes – progresses, the limitations of traditional forms of democracy become clear. The traditional form of representative democracy assumes a political community consisting of human citizens only, but the ecological crises of contemporary times clearly illustrate that this form of politics is inadequate for dealing with crises of planetary scale (Latour, 2018). Who speaks for disappearing glaciers, rising sea levels, or collapsing ecosystems? The notion of a ‘parliament of things’ suggests that these non-human entities must have a recognised political presence, mediated through scientific expertise, activist intervention, and new institutional mechanisms that acknowledge their agency. The rise of environmental courts, climate litigation, and legal frameworks that grant personhood to rivers and forests (as seen in cases like the Whanganui River in New Zealand) can be interpreted as nascent steps toward implementing Latour’s vision (Latour, 2018).

However, the notion of representation in the ‘parliament of things’ has faced substantive challenges. Firstly, there has been a major issue with the legitimacy of the intermediaries. It has been observed that scientists, policymakers, and activists have not always been able to agree on the representation of the ‘interests’ of the non-human entities. This has led to the emergence of different narratives and debates (Latour, 2018). Another major issue that has faced the ‘parliament of things’ is the issue of the representation of non-human entities through scientific expertise. It has been argued that this form of representation has the potential of leading to the emergence of technocratic governance, in which experts have the final say in the decision-making process (Latour, 2005). Another issue that has faced the ‘parliament of things’ is the issue of representation and the existing inequalities in society. How can the already marginalised sections of society be prevented from becoming even more marginalised in the face of the ‘parliament of things’? This has led to the emergence of the tension between the pursuit of a more inclusive form of governance and the need for democratic legitimacy (Latour, 2018).

Furthermore, the question of the practical achievement of the ‘parliament of things’ still has to be addressed. How can the criteria of relevance be defined if all actants are to be included in the political domain? Some processes in the environment/technology will produce more immediate effects than others, making it necessary to prioritise. It is not easy to equally represent all relations as relevant in a political space that is not infinite (Latour, 2004). Another risk that might arise is that of paralysis, as the complexity of the interweaving of human and non-human concerns might prevent political action.

However, the imperatives of the Anthropocene require a reassessment of the extent of political participation. The prominence of climatic disasters, the political potency of environmental movements, and the grow-

ing recognition of non-human rights suggest that political participation is becoming more expansive. A theoretical justification for this perspective is offered by the ANT, which posits that agency is no longer solely the domain of the human actor but is instead distributed through complex networks that integrate individuals, objects, and systems (Latour, 2005). Accordingly, the ‘parliament of things’ is no longer merely the product of utopian fantasy but a tool that has the potential to inform the construction of institutions that might cope with the complexity of the Anthropocene.

The general implications of such an approach go beyond environmental politics. Thus, for example, in the field of technology, the advent of artificial intelligence, algorithmic governance, and digital infrastructure gives rise to the same kinds of questions in terms of agency and representation. Indeed, do artificial intelligent systems and algorithms, which are increasingly intervening in human decision-making processes, deserve some form of political consideration? Who is responsible when the results of algorithmic processes are discriminatory or reinforce social inequalities? The idea of the ‘parliament of things’ suggests that these technological actors, like ecological ones, must be made an explicit part of the political debate rather than seen as simply neutral actors (Latour, 2018).

Bruno Latour’s idea of the ‘parliament of things’ challenges us to think about democracy in fundamental ways by questioning the distinction between human and non-human actors in politics. Latour argues that politics should not just involve deliberation among humans but should be an ongoing process of translation, mediation, and negotiation among an heterogeneous multitude of actors (Latour, 2018). The expansion of political agency is not at the expense of the actions of humans but recognises the interdependencies that characterise our contemporary world. The question is not how to implement this broad view of politics but how to do so in such a way that justice and equity are maintained (Latour, 2004).

But the idea of the ‘parliament of things’ is not just an intellectual provocation. It is an urgent call to action. As the limits of anthropocentric politics are revealed by ecological and technological crises, alternative models of politics are no longer just desirable but necessary. Latour’s idea is already becoming reality in emerging models of law and other forms of intervention. The challenge is how to develop and embed this in structures that recognise the agency of non-human actors and develop more just and equitable socio-political formations.

BEYOND ANTHROPOCENTRISM

A critical aspect of ANT is its reconfiguration of representation within governance. Bruno Latour challenges entrenched anthropocentrism, which traditionally excludes non-human entities from political deliberation, arguing that such an approach fails to recognise their active role in shaping collective life

(Latour, 2005). He famously asserts that “objects too have agency” (ibid., p. 63), emphasising that glaciers, carbon emissions, and renewable energy infrastructures are not passive elements of the political landscape but exert real influence on decision-making processes. This is best exemplified in climate politics, as evidenced by melting ice caps, increases in CO₂ concentrations, and desertification, which all lead to concrete outcomes that require political intervention. Even though these issues do not communicate in a traditional sense, there is a need to interpret their outcomes.

However, this approach has not been without its problems. According to Collins and Yearley (1992), the emphasis on symmetry in ANT can have the unintended consequence of undermining the critical difference between human agency and the behavior of inanimate objects. The authors argue that this kind of approach can only lead to a form of epistemological relativism, whereby the distinct nature of human agency is obscured by an overemphasis on heterogeneous networks. Along similar lines, Amsterdamska (1990) has argued that ANT has been overly descriptive, but not sufficiently explanatory. While it can provide a rich account of actor interactions, it has not been able to offer a sufficiently rich account of the structures of power. Latour (1996) has sought to counter these arguments by arguing that ANT has not sought to attribute agency to non-human actors, but rather to shed light on their contribution to the production of sociotechnical systems. This, he argues, allows for a more nuanced understanding of social phenomena, thus avoiding the dualisms that often accompany a split between the social and the technical.

The incorporation of non-human actors within political decision-making processes has shown certain normative and procedural difficulties. The mediating nature of all forms of representation, be it through science, law, or technology, has led to the need to ensure that such mediating processes do not remain arbitrary or exclusive but rather appropriate to the interests of all involved actors. Latour has acknowledged this issue, arguing that “there is no such thing as a direct voice of nature; it is always mediated through an interpretive process” (Latour, 2004, p. 63). This has led to questions of legitimacy, who represents the interests of non-human actors and how to balance multiple claims of representation.

In this respect, the concerns that Latour seeks to address intersect with the ideas of John Dewey in his democratic philosophy, especially as outlined in his work *The Public and Its Problems*, published in 1927. Dewey defines the public as a dynamic and emerging concept that is built on the recognition of the consequences that create the need for publics. Moreover, Dewey rejects the idea of fixed political structures and institutions in favor of a dynamic and interactive model of politics in which various actors, both human and non-human, engage in the shaping of political processes. In this respect, democracy is a dynamic and continuous process of building publics around issues of contest (Dewey, 1927). However,

Latour takes this argument a step further in that publics must be built around actors that encompass both the human and non-human entities that have a significant effect on the realities of politics and ecology. Dewey observes that “we lie, as Emerson said, in the lap of immense intelligence” (ibid., p. 214), which underscores the interconnectedness of the non-human and the human in the shaping of social realities.

The similarity between ANT and Deweyan democracy lies in the shared emphasis on relationality and the absence of hierarchical structure. While the latter bases its theory of democracy on its theory of communication, the former bases its theory of knowledge construction and network maintenance on its theory of translation. The translation process, following the work of Michel Callon (1986a), can be understood as a process of persuasion that takes place in four stages: problematisation, intersement, enrolment, and mobilisation. Within this process, actors in the network have certain roles to play. Both ANT and Deweyan democracy place great emphasis on the role of mediation in the construction of equitable political representation, thus positioning ANT as an extension of Deweyan democracy.

However, while ANT’s flat ontology is theoretically compelling, its practical implementation presents significant challenges. The erasure of hierarchical distinctions between experts and non-experts, while conceptually attractive, risks neglecting structural power imbalances. In practice, access to resources – whether laboratories, funding, or media platforms – often determines whose interpretations and representations prevail. Latour himself acknowledges these asymmetries, stating that “the universalists defined a single hierarchy. The absolute relativists made all hierarchies equal. The relativist relativists, more modest but more empirical, point out what instruments and what chains serve to create asymmetries and equalities, hierarchies and differences” (Latour, 1993, p. 113). This raises the crucial question of whether ANT’s commitment to relationality obscures deeper structures of domination, failing to fully account for entrenched inequalities in political and scientific representation (Whittle & Spicer, 2008).

Moreover, the concept of the ‘parliament of things,’ although theoretically provocative, is uncertain in terms of its practicality. In scenarios that require swift decision-making, such as natural disasters or pandemics, there are often insufficient timeframes for the complex negotiation and translation that ANT emphasises. Yet, the comprehensive framework that ANT provides could produce unique findings for such specific scenarios. The inherent contradictions between the theoretical ambitions and the operational requirements that the ‘parliament of things’ might require highlight the fact that, although ANT represents an important intervention in the epistemological and political hierarchy, there is still work that needs to be done for ANT to be operationally viable.

Despite the tensions that the ANT framework represents, the concept itself represents an intriguing framework for thinking differently about

governance in the context of ecological and technological change. Whether the specific domain is environmental law, AI ethics, or planetary governance, the essential problem that needs to be solved is the way in which we can move beyond the anthropocentric and think differently about the role that non-human entities play. The work that Latour envisions demands an exploration of these possibilities not simply as an academic or theoretical possibility, but rather as an operational necessity in the context of the crises that we are facing.

CONCLUSION

It can be argued that if ANT has achieved a lasting contribution to social theory, it has been in its ability to show that agency is not an inherent quality of individual entities but rather a product of relational configurations. By abandoning the attempt to make a hard and fast division between the human and non-human actor, ANT has fundamentally transformed the way social scientists think about networks of influence, the materiality of power, and the fluidity of the sociotechnical. Yet, even though this relational approach has opened up a rich set of new insights, it has also highlighted a series of important limitations, not least of which has been a relative neglect of the persistence of structural domination, historical inequality, and the institutional forces that govern the way networks settle and endure over time.

Perhaps one of the most important and lasting criticisms of ANT has been its radical commitment to a form of symmetry, a commitment that, while intellectually exciting, has often neglected to account for the asymmetries of political and economic power. By seeking to place all actors within a network on an equivalent level of agency, ANT has often downplayed the material constraints and forces of coercion that underpin hierarchical relations. Marxist theorists, alongside Bourdieusian theorists of social space and critical social scientists, have highlighted ANT's relative neglect of these issues, arguing that ANT's attempt to abandon the idea of overarching structure has led it to overlook the very forces that underpin issues of exploitation, alienation, and systemic inequality (Mladenović, 2025). The ways in which capital reproduces itself, how institutional forces govern exclusion, and the ways in which historical inequality has accumulated around issues of class, gender, and race, these forces often simply vanish within ANT's ontology.

In the focus on the politics of representation that is encapsulated in ANT's idea of the 'parliament of things,' there is an urgent need to consider the legitimacy of the mediatory role that ANT assigns to various agents. While Latour's framework has opened up the boundaries of political participation to include the non-human domain, it has not addressed the urgent need to consider the criteria by which the representation of the non-human

world is mediated. Thus, the challenge is not just to consider the non-human world but to consider the political and knowledge regimes that mediate the representation of certain voices, whether human or non-human.

In spite of the various criticisms that it has attracted, ANT is an intellectual project that remains relevant in the contemporary world. It has forced social scientists to rethink the concepts of causality, agency, and the materiality of knowledge. It has provided novel avenues for understanding complex phenomena by following the injunction of ANT to ‘follow the actors.’ However, if it is to remain relevant in the face of the various crises that confront the world today, it must transcend mere description to offer a more situated understanding of power and domination. This would require an urgent need to consider the criteria by which certain networks succeed while others fail, and the agents that benefit from the survival of certain networks at the expense of others.

The objective, therefore, is not to abandon ANT but to improve it and expand its scope. Through the incorporation of concepts from political economy, decolonialism, and feminism, it is argued that ANT has the potential to produce a more comprehensive theory of domination that does not simply follow connections but seeks to investigate the processes by which power is concentrated. Through an examination of ANT in relation to power and agency-structure relations, the present discussion seeks to contribute to the ongoing quest to transcend reductive dualisms while maintaining the core principles of ANT. In doing so, ANT has the potential to evolve from a method of observation into a tool for intervention, helping us not only to describe the world as it is but also to imagine the networks of resistance and transformation that might remake it.

REFERENCES

- Akrich, M. (1992). The description of technical objects. In W. Bijker & J. Law (Eds.), *Shaping technology/building society: Studies in sociotechnical change* (pp. 205–224). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Birešev, A. (2012). Politička ekologija Bruna Latour [The political ecology of Bruno Latour]. *Filozofija i društvo*, 23(1), 112–125.
- Butler, J. (2010). Performing agency. *Journal of Cultural Economy*, 3(2), 147–161.
- Callon, M. (1979). L’État face à l’innovation technique: le cas du véhicule électrique. *Revue française de science politique*, 29(3), 426–447.
- Callon, M. (1986a). Some elements of a sociology of translation: Domestication of the scallops and the fishermen of St Brieuc Bay. In J. Law (Ed.), *Power, action and belief: A new sociology of knowledge?* (pp. 196–233). London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Callon, M. (1986b). The sociology of an actor-network: The case of the electric vehicle. In M. Callon, J. Law, & A. Rip (Eds.), *Mapping the dynamics of science and technology: Sociology of science in the real world* (pp. 19–34). London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Callon, M. (1998). The laws of the markets. In M. Callon (Ed.), *The laws of the markets* (pp. 1–57). Oxford: Blackwell.

- Callon, M. (2006a). Les réseaux sociaux à l'aune de la théorie de l'acteur-réseau: Entretien avec Michel Ferrary. *Sociologies pratiques*, 2(13), 37–44.
- Callon, M. (2006b). Sociologie de l'acteur-réseau. In B. Latour, M. Akrich, & M. Callon (Eds.), *Sociologie de la traduction: Textes fondateurs* (pp. 63–101). Paris: École des Mines.
- Callon, M. (2008). What does it mean to say that economics is performative? In D. MacKenzie, F. Muniesa, & L. Siu (Eds.), *Do economists make markets?: On the performativity of economics* (pp. 311–357). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Callon, M., & Latour, B. (1981). Unscrewing the big Leviathan: How actors macrostructure reality and how sociologists help them do so. In K. Knorr-Cetina & A. Cicourel (Eds.), *Advances in social theory and methodology* (pp. 277–304). London: Routledge.
- Callon, M., & Latour, B. (1992). Don't throw the baby out with the bath school! A reply to Collins and Yearley. In A. Pickering (Ed.), *Science as practice and culture* (pp. 343–368). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Callon, M., & Latour, B. (2006). Le grand Léviathan s'appriivoise-t-il? Dans B. Latour, M. Akrich et M. Callon (dir.), *Sociologie de la traduction: Textes fondateurs* (pp. 11–32). Paris: École des Mines.
- Callon, M., Laredo, P., & Mustar, P. (1997). *The strategic management of research and technology: Evaluation of programs*. Paris: Economica International.
- Collin, P. M., Livian, Y. F., & Thivant, E. (2016). Michel Callon et Bruno Latour: La théorie de l'acteur-réseau. In T. Burger-Helmchen (Ed.), *Les grands auteurs en management de l'innovation et de la créativité* (pp. 157–178). Caen: EMS Éditions.
- Collins, H. M., & Yearley, S. (1992). Epistemological chicken. In A. Pickering (Ed.), *Science as practice and culture* (pp. 301–326). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Cresswell, K. M., Worth, A., & Sheikh, A. (2010). Actor-network theory and its role in understanding the implementation of information technology developments in healthcare. *BMC Medical Informatics and Decision Making*, 10(67). <https://doi.org/10.1186/1472-6947-10-67>
- Crocker, S. (2021). "As soon as we are two there is a medium": Michel Serres' philosophy of relations. *Media Theory*, 5(1), 186–200.
- Dewey, J. (1927). *The public and its problems*. New York, NY: Holt.
- Dubois, M. (2007). La construction métaphorique du collectif: dimensions implicites du prêt-à-penser constructiviste et de la théorie de l'acteur-réseau. *L'Année sociologique*, 57(1), 127–150.
- Fariás, I., Blok, A., & Roberts, C. (2020). Actor-network theory as a companion: An inquiry into intellectual practices. In *The Routledge companion to actor-network theory* (pp. xx–xxxv). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Filipović, B. (2012). Bruno Latour i teorija aktera-mreže [Bruno Latour and Actor-Network Theory]. *Filozofija i društvo*, 23(1), 129–149.
- Fraser, N. (1989). *Unruly practices: Power, discourse and gender in contemporary social theory*. Oxford: Polity Press.
- Guggenheim, M., & Potthast, M. (2011). Symmetrical twins: On the relationship between actor-network theory and the sociology of critical capacities. *Goldsmiths Research* (online).
- Janković, S. (2023). Pierre Bourdieu et Bruno Latour [Pierre Bourdieu and Bruno Latour]. In I. Mladenović, Z. Zarić, & M. Urošević (Eds.), *Pjer Burdije – radikalna misao i praxis [Pierre Bourdieu – Radical Thought and Praxis]* (pp. 474–506). Beograd: IFDT.
- Latour, B. (1987). *Science in action: How to follow scientists and engineers through society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

- Latour, B. (1988). *The Pasteurization of France*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Latour, B. (1993). *We have never been modern*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Latour, B. (1996). On actor-network theory: A few clarifications. *Soziale Welt*, 47(4), 369–381.
- Latour, B. (1998). To modernize or to ecologize? That's the question. In N. Castree & B. Willems-Braun (Eds.), *Remaking reality: Nature at the millennium* (pp. 221–242). London and New York: Routledge.
- Latour, B. (1999). On recalling ANT. In J. Law & J. Hassard (Eds.), *Actor network theory and after* (pp. 14–25). Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Latour, B. (2004). *Politics of nature: How to bring the sciences into democracy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Latour, B. (2005). *Reassembling the social: An introduction to actor-network theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Latour, B. (2006). *Changer de société, refaire de la sociologie*. Paris: La Découverte.
- Latour, B. (2010). *An inquiry into modes of existence*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Latour, B. (2018). *Down to Earth: Politics in the New Climatic Regime*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Latour, B., & Woolgar, S. (1979). *Laboratory life: The construction of scientific facts*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Latour, B., Akrich, M., & Callon, M. (2006). *Sociologie de la traduction: Textes fondateurs*. Paris: École des Mines.
- Law, J. (1986). On the methods of long-distance control: Vessels, navigation, and the Portuguese route to India. In J. Law (Ed.), *Power, action and belief: A new sociology of knowledge?* (pp. 234–263). London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Law, J. (1992). Notes on the theory of the actor-network: Ordering, strategy and heterogeneity. *Systems Practice*, 5(4), 379–393.
- Law, J. (2009). Actor-network theory and material semiotics. In B. Turner (Ed.), *The new Blackwell companion to social theory* (pp. 141–158). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Law, J., & Hassard, J. (Eds.). (1999). *Actor network theory and after*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- McGee, K. (2014). *Bruno Latour: The normativity of networks*. London: Routledge.
- Mladenović, I. (2025). Beyond the network: A critical inquiry into the limits of the actor-network theory. *Bulletin of the Institute of Ethnography SASA*, LXXII(1), 247–268.
- Mol, A. (2002). *The body multiple: Ontology in medical practice*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Muniesa, F. (2015). Actor-network theory. In J. D. Wright (Ed.), *International encyclopedia of the social and behavioral sciences* (2nd ed., pp. 80–84). Oxford: Elsevier.
- Munro, R. (2009). Actor-network theory. In S. R. Clegg & M. Haugaard (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of power* (pp. 125–139). London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Petrov, A. (2015). *Bruno Latour*. Beograd: FMK.
- Schinkel, W. (2007). Sociological discourse of the relational: The cases of Bourdieu and Latour. *The Sociological Review*, 55(4), 707–729.
- Serres, M. (2007). *The parasite*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Spasić, I. (2007). Bruno Latour, akteri-mreže i kritika kritičke sociologije [Bruno Latour, actor-networks and the critique of critical sociology]. *Filozofija i društvo*, 18(2), 43–72.
- Whittle, A., & Spicer, A. (2008). Is actor-network theory a critique? A pragmatic sociology of translation. *Organization Studies*, 29(4), 611–629.

ТЕОРИЈА АКТЕР-МРЕЖЕ И ПИТАЊЕ МОЋИ: ПРЕИСПИТИВАЊЕ АГЕНСНОСТИ И СТРУКТУРЕ

Ивица Младеновић, Срђан Продановић

Институт за филозофију и друштвену теорију, Универзитет у Београду, Србија

Резиме

Рад анализира развој, епистемолошке претпоставке и методолошке домете теорије актер-мреже (АНТ), коју су утемељили Бруно Латур, Мишел Калон и Џон Ло. Полазећи од идеје да друштвена стварност није производ ни искључиво људских деловања ни структурних одредница, већ резултат односа између људских и нељудских актера, рад преиспитује значај ове теорије у савременим друштвеним наукама, нарочито у контексту технолошких, еколошких и политичких трансформација. У првом делу рада аутори реконструишу историјски развој АНТ-а, указујући на утицај филозофије односа Мишела Сера и појма „квази-објеката“ који је омогућио проширење концепта агенсности на нељудске ентитете. АНТ се у том смислу одваја од класичних социолошких приступа који почивају на опозицији структура–деловање, предлажући „равну онтологију“ у којој се друштвени поредак схвата као ефекат привремено стабилованих односа између хетерогених актера. Кроз примере из науке и технологије, приказује се како АНТ приказује процес превођења интереса различитих актера у стабилне мреже моћи и знања. У другом делу рада, аутори се усредсређују на кључно питање: како АНТ третира односе моћи и да ли може да понуди аналитички оквир за разумевање структурних неједнакости. Док теорија актер-мреже укида хијерархије између микро и макро нивоа анализе, критичари указују да њена симетрична логика често занемарује историјске и материјалне аспекте доминације. С тим у вези, рад сугерише да је неопходно проширити АНТ кроз дијалог са критичком теоријом, као и са феминистичком и постколонијалном теоријским апаратима, како би се допунила анализа процесима акумулације, неједнаке моћи и трајности институционалних структура. Посебно поглавље посвећено је Латуровом концепту „парламента ствари“, који радикално преиспитује границе политичког представљања. Латур предлаже укључивање нељудских актера – технологија, инфраструктура, екосистема – у политичку расправу, не као симболичких субјеката, већ као делатних сила чији ефекти захтевају институционално препознавање. У доба климатских промена и технолошке аутономије, овај приступ отвара могућност за редефинисање демократије као процеса превођења и посредовања између људских и нељудских ентитета. Међутим, у раду се истичу и ограничења овог концепта: питање легитимности оних који говоре у име нељудских актера, као и опасност од технократске редукције демократије. У закључку се наглашава да је основни допринос АНТ-а у померању фокуса са унапред задатих структура ка процесима стварања и одржавања односа који производе друштвене ефекте. Међутим, њен нагласак на симетрији и описивању односа, без анализе трајних механизма доминације, чини је теоријски ограниченом. Аутори, из тог разлога, предлажу да се АНТ надогради увиђајима из политичке економије и критичке социологије, како би постала не само метод посматрања већ и средство интервенције у сложене социотехничке и еколошке мреже данашњице. На тај начин, АНТ може задржати своју хеуристичку вредност, али и стећи критички капацитет да анализира како се моћ конституише, репродукује и потенцијално преображава у условима глобалне кризе модерности.