

*From Machiavelli to
the Sultans:
Power Networks
in the Ottoman
Imperial Context*

Demetrios Stamatopoulos

University of Macedonia

The concept of social networks has for some decades now constituted a particularly useful theoretical and methodological tool, especially in sociological approaches to history. This article attempts to distinguish the functionality of what I refer to as power networks within the framework of an empire, specifically the Ottoman Empire. My major aim, however, is to propose how two parallel debates, which are being conducted both explicitly and implicitly in studies internationally, could be brought together: in other words, how useful are the discussions concerning previous empires to understanding or interpreting a contemporary phenomenon which a number of highly perceptive observers have characterized as “empire”?¹

Before concluding that networks can provide the touchstone for the solution of traditional problems of social theory (mainly that of structure–subject relations), it is necessary to look at the origin of the concept. First of all, the concept of networks is balanced on a tightrope between the realms of politics and scholarship, and as a result has a particular semantic content capable of annulling its advantages. Its scholarly origins may be traced to the development of sociometric analysis by the representatives of the Gestalt tradition in psychology, as much as to the structural-functional approach as elaborated by Harvard researchers in the nineteen thirties and the social anthropologists of the Manchester School in the post-war period.² At any rate, the concept’s sanction was connected with the flowering of informatics and communication studies in the US, and with the development of the school of first-order cybernetics at Palo Alto in particular.³

However, the term passed quickly into political parlance in the nineteen sixties, enriching the critique then being directed against the hierarchical, vertically structured party organizational model. The concept was used to describe a horizontal form of direct democratic organization, which would enable the unmediated political involvement of social subjects. It had the advantage of simultaneously connecting the normative demand for the formation of new democratic political institutions with contemporary investigations being carried out in the social sciences, investigations which contributed to the formation of a dominant epistemological paradigm based on the concept of space.⁴

It is not possible here to extend the analysis to the fundamental relationship between the predominance of the epistemological paradigm of space and the growth of communication studies or semiotics.⁵ However, its effect on the renewal of the social sciences was decisive during the first post-war decades. Space became the epicenter of the interest of many scholars, especially in the context of wider interdisciplinary research programs. There is a wealth of examples: one could start with geographic determinism of Fernand Braudel in his early work⁶ and arrive at the epistemological model of Gaston Bachelard⁷ and the “archaeology of knowledge” of Michel Foucault.⁸ Generally speaking, modern theoretical thought took as its fundamental problem the relationship between the historical perspective and the concept of space. This was due primarily to the necessity of repositioning the issue of the origins and exercise of power as it was understood by post-structuralism’s most important representatives.⁹

On the basis of the terms of opposition between the proponents of its two major contemporary theoretical currents, the realists and constructivists, the networks approach is both legitimate and requisite. According to the former, approaching the concept of networks through applied mathematical and sociological models enables an investigation of the internal structure of power relations and tendencies in the formation of leadership elites in both pre-modern and modern societies.¹⁰ From the standpoint of the latter, the usefulness of the networks concept can be shown in analyses of hybrid epistemological objects. The networks constitute the invisible web, permeating three traditionally discernible scientific fields: that of facts (epistemology), power (social sciences) and discourses (rhetoric).¹¹ Usually, the realists are inclined to take the concept’s use in a strict sense, while the constructivists as a metaphor.¹² Arguably, it is not accidental that these two opposing schools converge, both theoretically and methodologically, in their research programs on network analysis. This is due to the inability of the realists to attribute, without theoretical consequences, the reduction of the social phenomena to the language of mathematics, thus ignoring the production of meaning’s process and the practical-communicative agency. Nor can the constructivists complete their attack on the truth criteria of the dominant epistemological paradigms by reducing social phenomena to the form of language code. The reality of social networks constitutes the field most capable of reshaping the lost unity of the subject’s praxis and the rise of political entities and power relations.

Machiavelli as Metaphor: Some Theoretical Explanations

Although they are the inheritors of the long tradition which identifies the development of networks with democratic political involvement, Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt do not seem to have understood that establishing a correspondence between the normative-political use of the concept

and its scholarly validity is not easy. Arguably, they do not address it as a fundamental theoretical problem. The concept of networks, or rather that of “network power” and the corresponding “network production”, which are critical for the elaboration of the authors’ argument, appear at various points in *Empire*. The former concept surfaces when they identify it as one of the decisive elements in the formation of the US (with reference to the American constitution and the ‘founding fathers’), arguing that “power can be constituted by a whole series of powers that regulate themselves and arrange themselves in networks”.¹³ The latter concept appears when the authors deal with a subject more familiar to them,¹⁴ namely, the analysis of the post-Fordist/post-Taylorist models which held sway in the West after the oil crises of the nineteen seventies.¹⁵

Negri and Hardt’s insistence on the rise of network organization of political and economic space should not be seen as accidental. Inspired by the historical synthesis of Polybius in his *The Rise of the Roman Empire*, as reformulated in the republican vision of Machiavelli,¹⁶ which holds the imperial model as historically incarnated in Rome to be a synthesis of the three Aristotelian systems of government (monarchy or principality, aristocracy and democracy), they attempt to find basic correspondences with contemporary “de-territorialized” (as they call it) empire.

It is worth recalling here that Machiavelli’s explanatory approach to Polybius is found in the idea that if a state wishes to deter its progressive decline, it should include at the basic level the three primary regimes, whose definition Aristotle had provided in his *Politics*. If the state (and its prince) were to avoid the degradation of monarchy to tyranny, of aristocracy to oligarchy, and democracy to mob rule, it had to amalgamate the basic principles of fundamental forms of government on a unified constitutional basis. As Machiavelli explained:

*I maintain then, that all the forms of government mentioned above are far from satisfactory, the three good ones because their life is so short, the three bad ones because of their inherent malignity. Hence prudent legislators, aware of their defects, refrained from the adopting as such of any one of these forms, and chose instead one that shared in them all, since they thought such a government would be stronger and more stable, for if in one and the same state there was principality, aristocracy and democracy each would keep watch over the other.*¹⁷

Machiavelli declared that even if the ancient Sparta of Lycurgus constituted an ideal example of this type of political synthesis, Rome was an unsurpassed model of a mix of monarchic, aristocratic and democratic governance. This was precisely because Rome did not confine its dominion to the narrow limits of the city-state; on the contrary, it expanded its frontiers, identifying them with the borders of the then known world. If the secret of Rome’s longevity is to be found in its sophisticated structure, the secret of Rome’s territorial expansion and metamorphosis into empire is to be found in the management of internal juxtapositions and conflicts between plebeians and patricians. These two processes are essentially identified with each other.

In Negri and Hardt’s work, Machiavelli’s governmental model functions, therefore, as a metaphor to describe the emergence of a modern imperial structure, which they do not necessarily equate with any modern state or national entity (such as the United States).¹⁸

If, in their interpretational approach, Negri and Hardt have no difficulty identifying the executive/military superiority of the Western world as a whole (the monarchical part of the imperial structure),

as well as the privileged holders of economic, social and cultural capital (the new “senate” or “parasitical aristocracy” in their words),¹⁹ then one should be in a position to investigate the space in which unmediated representation of social and economic interests occurs (the democratic dimension of the system). Convinced that politics in contemporary parliamentary democracies has been irreparably undermined, the two authors employ networks as a theoretical substitute for a latent expression of “democratic” control enforced by social subjects (in spite of their over-determination of class) against the peremptoriness of statesmen (the operators of the political field), although the latter participate in the organization of networks which they would transform, from their point of view, into cliental or lobby networks.²⁰

It is clear, therefore, that the writers’ use of the term “empire” as a metaphor presupposes the incorporation of the networks approach, seen through an axiological prism that has been shaped by the political tradition in which they participate. Refraining from taking a stance regarding this problem for the time being, it is evident that this theoretical “arbitrariness” is less useful in the search for the possible relation between “democratic social organization” and networks (this is the task of political scientists and the main responsibility of active citizens) than in describing the potential role that networks can play in the organization of imperial space. Are social networks rendered more necessary when an imperial political structure emerges owing to their ability to contribute to the homogenization of the social, cultural and economic diversity that inevitably characterizes empire?

Accordingly, the main goal here is to find a way to link the two levels of analysis, the normative-political and the descriptive-scholarly. In pursuit of this goal, it is necessary to consider two key questions. On the one hand, it is necessary to explore whether the concept of networks is useful in decoding the collective social entities (such as class or social group)²¹ of the past, or in connection to questions of analysis of social systems or social change. On the other hand, it is important to ask whether there exists a connotation of the term “networks” in the context of the organization of political space in former and in emergent empires.

In addressing the first issue, namely the analytical potential of networks in dealing with empires, a number of examples from the Ottoman Empire will be looked at. Before doing so, however, it is necessary to provide some clarification of a theoretical nature.

Imperial space is by its very nature structured in terms of networks: it develops from a center with shifting frontiers. The concept of frontier is viewed negatively by empire: it does not correspond to some ‘no man’s land’ which characterizes the sliced and serial space in the age of nation states.²² There is no ‘no man’s land’ separating imperial space from the world of the ‘barbarians’— only ‘Great Walls’.²³

The ‘barbarians’ can invade imperial space at any moment without automatically destroying its sovereignty however. This is also the reason why, even when the ‘barbarians’ reached the walls of Rome or Constantinople, Beijing or Vienna, the empires in question did not collapse; empires collapse only when their centers collapse. In this case, collapse is absolute not when it comes from some external threat (as in the case of Moscow in 1812 for example), but when it represents the completion of a process of internal decomposition, making it impossible for the empire to guarantee stability over the enormous territories incorporated during its expansion,

and when its legitimating ideology can no longer penetrate the various populations which have come under its sway.²⁴

As imperial time conflates past and future in the present dimension of the ruling prince's body, sovereignty is essentially 'spaced'. This means that space, as opposed to time, constitutes the main element in the structure of empire as long as space engulfs time, invalidating all possibilities of social, cultural and, especially, political evolution.²⁵ The dynamics of the evolution of time is annulled, while space becomes homogeneous and continuous.²⁶ This constantly allows the empire to present itself as 'ecumenical'; nothing can dispute its sovereignty over the entire 'ecumene', as long as the beginnings and furthest reaches of time are unified in a messianic incarnation: the person of the emperor.

This is the ultimate cause of the theoretical arbitrariness of Negri and Hardt: it should not be reduced to a superficial comparison between 'ecumenical' empires of the past and world sovereignty being imposed today by the modern Rome. Rather, it is based on a fundamental re-composition of the space-time relationship. The withdrawal of ideological forms of historical progress, connected with the culmination of the value-demands of the Enlightenment, signals the absorption of the time horizon by space, or rather, *internalizes* social subjects' experience of time while at the same time the latter are interspersed as exchangeable and replaceable in an homogenized global landscape completely ruled by commercial relations. Time is transmuted into an esoteric experience and ceases to function as the field in which utopia exists: the ultimate restoration of religious discourse should be interpreted as evidence of this phenomenon.

Only in this way can the connection between empires and major monotheistic religions be firmly grasped, although all empires were not necessarily monotheistic or monoreligious. God is the sole potential external observer of a system internally complete at both the spatial and temporal levels.²⁷ Consequently, an analysis of power networks is absolutely necessary when discussing empires, precisely because it relates to the issue of the constitution of structural relations on the basis of the sovereignty of the spatial paradigm.

On the Core-Periphery Structure

The vast territory of empires cannot remain unconsolidated and dispersed. Precisely for this reason, empires reproduce themselves in peripheral hubs that display an internal hierarchy analogous to that of the center. This relationship between core and periphery constitutes a key element of imperial political structure.²⁸ Correspondingly, it is a structural feature of the development of networks.²⁹

At this point, it is worth noting how the relationship between center and periphery in past empires has been interpreted in international studies of empire. In his thorough *Revolutions, Nations, Empires*, Alexander Motyl points out that when we refer to empires we should keep in mind that they are not so much "states" as "systems". These systems are substantially supported by the operation of a sovereign structure, that of core-periphery.³⁰ This structure regulates sovereignty-subordinate relations between core and peripheral elites. Motyl reproduces and adopts the ideas of Johan Galtung, who maintained that in typical empires, the center performs the work

of exclusive political mediator for the periphery and as a result excludes the possibility of interaction between peripheries. More specifically, Galtung noted that:

There are four rules defining this particular interaction structure (viz., between center and periphery in an empire):

1. *Interaction between center and periphery is vertical;*
2. *Interaction between periphery and periphery is missing;*
3. *Multilateral interaction involving all three is missing;*
4. *Interaction with the outside world is monopolized by the center, with two implications:*
 - a. *Periphery interaction with other centers is missing;*
 - b. *Center as well as periphery interaction with periphery nations belonging to other center nations is missing.*³¹

In commenting on Galtung's thesis, Motyl does not deny the possible existence of interaction between the peripheries of an empire. He does reject, however, the idea that the center is indispensable in mediating such interaction, particularly those forms he considers "significant", such as political consultations, military cooperation, and security arrangements.³² If one examines an empire exclusively from the perspective of the political structures which the empire itself recognizes as valid, then one would have to agree with Galtung (as well as Motyl). Nevertheless, this approach fails to explain why the periphery at some moment of its own choosing succeeds in defecting from the center.

Motyl further elaborates on Galtung's structuralist approach by placing it within the framework of systems theory. Nonetheless, this approach still fails to account for a range of social or political-ideological relations which an empire's subjects can establish among themselves, outside and beyond the vertically hierarchical political structures which define empire. The study of networks is conceptually useful for it allows us to discern a series of horizontal forms of social and political organization, regardless of whether these were legitimized by the center or not.

According to Motyl, networks were essentially organized as having as their basic node the empire's center; due to his specialization, he observed that Moscow and Saint Petersburg for example constituted the epicenter of all road, railway and transportation networks in Tsarist Russia as well as the Soviet Union, a fact that obviously impacted decisively on the maintenance and extension of the core elite's strength. However, while we accept Motyl's astute observation as regards empires generally (organization of communication networks around a central node-capital), we should also point out that power networks are not organized monopolistically by the center: the equivalent participation of the leading regional elites is necessary.

This is why, in times of crisis, these networks have the potential to become autonomous from control by the center, constituting a lever of important political and constitutional change. This is so largely because they favor the shift of hegemony between social groups or classes. However, we should stress that the networks concept cannot replace the theoretical value of conceptual tools such as class, social group, elite, community, or social mobility. What the concept of networks can achieve is to lend real content to the abstract nature of these concepts, offering a potential field for description of social agents' activities in relation to social, political, and cultural structures.

In particular, its usefulness can be demonstrated in the investigation of the terms on which a concrete social group manages to impose hegemony at the political and social level. Networks, however, do not constitute a 'metonymy' to reveal social or political agents; on the contrary, they are the *result* of agents' actions. The network cannot be identified with the social class or the elite; rather, it constitutes a preferential means of communication by which members of social classes, groups and elites can reorganize the terms of dominance/sovereignty or subordination.

Networks cannot ultimately define a political or ideological entity because they represent an elemental form of social organization. More precisely, they tread a tightrope between the political and the scholarly, because they initially develop at the primary level where communicative relations first emerge from social relations. A network form of organization may be discerned at various levels: from the family³³ and commercial networks in pre-capitalist societies to networks of bridge building gangs in the Balkans or to Masonic lodges. In most instances, the concept is defined by the particular researcher's focus on one level of social formation, where the content of the agents' actions (activities) remains recognizable. Moreover, the analysis of networks may help the observer-researcher discern the emergence of different structures for viewing the world and different or competing interests or 'concerns'.

The literature relating to social networks has accumulated enormously in recent years.³⁴ While most studies have tended to focus on the analysis of interpersonal networks,³⁵ a considerable number of approaches have dealt with questions concerning the formation of cliques³⁶ and policy networks.³⁷

As has been stated, this article will not focus on networks in general but on that category of networks involved in the management of politics, where networks function as accumulators of political power, permitting them to become the privileged purveyors of symbolic capital. Consequently, the basic problem dwelt with here is that of defining the preconditions necessary for the conversion of social networks, be they interpersonal, familial, or interest networks in general, into power networks.³⁸

If we wish to distinguish power networks in a stricter methodological sense from family networks, cliques, political parties, or even commercial networks, we could say that a combination of some or all of the preceding might, under certain well-defined conditions, represent power networks.³⁹ Ideally:

1. Their activity extends to two or more peripheries of the empire. Activity is not defined by a one-way center-periphery relationship where the power exercised by the two sides is disproportional;
2. Their activity reorganizes potential power relations at the local as well as central level;
3. They are organized in hubs of relatively equal power vis-à-vis e overall functionality of the network;
4. They include members from both the central and the peripheral elite; and
5. They form a 'space' in the sense that they may function as producers of social space by controlling information which the center cannot always process. The inability of an empire to control the space over which it theoretically rules is apparent in such cases.

Consequently, power networks should be positioned in the wider category of social networks, and the main question regarding them is the precondition for the transformation of a social network

into a power network. If the relation of periphery–periphery exists, then we must search for additional factors which determine the network’s character, such as preferential position at the moment of social system’s collapse, access to income and resources, participation in the constitution of new political horizons and alternatives to those of the center. In the case of the revolutionaries of the Morea, for example, who did not have a clear picture of what constituted a nation-state since the concept was only taking shape at roughly the same period in the West, their conflict with the center made the creation of a modern constitutional structure possible.

Generally, the network’s sociopolitical power is derived from the accumulation of economic and cultural capital. However, the accumulation of economic as well as cultural capital requires the internal differentiation of the network and its expansion beyond the boundaries of the family enterprise. This expansion may take place either in the direction of political figures in order to ensure maximum long-term financial returns, or in the direction of privileged arbitrators of cultural capital.

The Case of the Orthodox Millet in the Ottoman Empire

The imperial phenomenon is particularly complex and extensive, thus making it difficult to draw firm conclusions about the type of social constitution which it represents. The overwhelming majority of imperial morphemes appeared and consolidated outside the borders of Europe. The question becomes more complicated if we consider the theoretical proposals that have been formulated in recent years regarding the categorizations for classifying historical empires, such as continental and overseas empire, predatory and developmental empire,⁴⁰ and scattered and territorially contiguous empire.⁴¹ The Ottoman Empire is usually assigned to the second of the above dipoles.

Although the Ottoman was certainly not a direct descendant of the Roman Empire, a certain level of caution is required here, given that it represented for centuries a model of “Oriental/Eastern Despotism” for the producers of Orientalist discourse in the West. Nevertheless, it is very difficult to correlate the basic elements of its constitutional structure with those of the Polybian model. The empire was ultimately based on the authoritarian rule of the sultan, although new power centers – such as the harem – slowly emerged which served to ‘decentralize’ the decision-making process. The empire also upheld a constitutional structure that rendered the formation of a hereditary aristocracy impossible, although the state was itself transformed into a field of political conflict between two de facto ‘aristocratic’ categories: the *devşirme* and *sipahi* officials. Another aspect of the Ottoman Empire was that it built its requisite legitimizing consent via the protection that the state provided for small landlords, although individual property rights on cultivated lands were guaranteed only in the mid-nineteenth century.

However, beyond these contradictory conjunctions (in the context of the Western Canon), the Ottoman state was characterized by its successful management and control of periphery elites.⁴² Certainly, Charles Tilly was right to claim that there are no empires “compatible” with democratic governance, given that the latter involves the distribution of citizenship rights. Yet, empires recognized some degree of regional autonomy, mostly among provincial elites, which were useful for the detachment of surpluses from subject peoples for use by the empire’s own core population.⁴³

Beyond these particular features, however, the Ottoman Empire possessed a number of distinctive characteristics: while it constitutes an example of an Islamic empire, there coexisted within it adherents of other monotheistic religions. Of course these religious communities, known as millets, progressively acquired institutional status and were recognized by the Ottoman state as mechanisms of social and political control. The special nature of these communities further complicated the process of controlling the peripheries from the center, since it involved not only the management of interests, extraction of surpluses and crisis management, but the control and management of symbols as well.

In the nationalistic mythology of the Balkan peoples in particular, the degree of autonomy enjoyed by these communities has been overstated and for obvious reasons. The policy of 'national awakening' was easier to justify had there been a long period of 'self-government' by its leading forces previously.

Clergy, notables and tradesmen (and occasionally units of irregular armed forces) constituted the main social groups that jointly shaped power networks within Ottoman space. The dominant networks of the Orthodox millet were substantially defined by the relations developed between these groups and Ottoman central power, as well as with local representatives of the Ottoman state.

I will make use of two examples from the Ottoman Empire.⁴⁴ The first concerns the emergence, through networks, of a dominant sociopolitical structure, while the second concerns the role of network organizations in the dissolution of the Empire. Before proceeding, however, we should note some general characteristics relating to the formation of leadership elites in the Ottoman Empire.

An examination of the Orthodox millet involves an analysis of political-ideological relations on the margins of the Ottoman state and, more specifically, a consideration of how its leadership elite emerged. This emergence, Theda Skocpol has proposed, was not only the sum of the influences wrought by international interventions, such as the Great Powers and their bases of support in the Ottoman Empire, including in this case the Constantinople Patriarchate.⁴⁵ It must also have resulted from conditions different to those obtaining in a modern nation-state.⁴⁶ In such cases, particularly in semi-peripheral regions, the leadership elite developed as a result of its ability to participate in various state mechanisms and the state's coffers) and was in a position to compel political figures to adapt its policies, thus possessing "relative autonomy" in Skocpol's terms.⁴⁷ In empires, and particularly in the Ottoman version, the leadership elite of the millet formed on the margins of the state machinery under the asphyxiating control of imperial political personnel. This 'peripheral' position of the millet depended not only on its level of legal compliance but was the necessary prerequisite for both the Phanariot families as well as the most dynamic elements of the bourgeois class to establish networks of power and influence. Interference by the Great Powers was considerable, but was limited by internal 'filters', mainly the need for the leadership elite and its sub-groups to maintain and extend their influence networks.

Bearing in mind all the above, we will now proceed to an analysis of the second example, which concerns the important question of sociopolitical transition related to the declaration of the Greek Revolution in the Peloponnese in March 1821.

The role of the Philiki Etairia (or Friendly Society) and the theoretical construct which informed it at least initially, were both instrumental in the Uprising. The society began as a self-protecting

network for those involved in amassing commercial capital,⁴⁸ and who were being confronted by a range of consequences as a result of the economic crisis after the Napoleonic Wars.⁴⁹ After 1818, a series of distinguished families joined the Etairia's ranks, thus contributing to the development of the pre-revolutionary crisis. The case of the Deligiannes family is one of the most interesting and noteworthy. This family's source of legitimacy and power was not based solely on its ability to function as a mediator at the level of tax collection; it derived also from the family's representation of the interests of the imperial royal family in the Peloponnese, specifically those of Beyhan Sultana, the sister of former Sultan Selim III. This family led a coalition of interests in the regions of Messenia and Karytaina, which constituted Beyhan Sultana's *malikâne* or tax farm, granted to her for her lifetime. What then drove a family with such close ties to the Ottoman center to pursue a course involving revolution and armed struggle?

In answering this question, interpretative models of the type used in the 'national awakening' context should probably be excluded, particularly when one considers the family's prominent role in expunging the klephts of the Morea in 1805–1806.⁵⁰ An analysis of the internal tensions among the family's elders may provide the solution, however. The privileged relationship of Deligiannis family members to the center-capital compelled their major rival, Sotirakis Lontos, to seek a balance of power by forming another network that had the discreet support of the decentralized political state established by Ali Paşa of Ioannina. Rivalry between these two potential power networks led to the mutual annihilation of the leaders of both clans, which sought privileged alliances with opponent interest groups among Ottoman political personnel in Istanbul (Sotirakis Lontos was executed in 1812 and Ioannes Deligiannes, his main calumniator, in 1816). This internecine feud only ended with the signing of an agreement in 1816 by the other leading families of the Morea.

However, the agreement, as well as the period leading up to 1821 in general, was characterized by the leading presence of another prominent Peloponnesian family, the Perroukas. What advantages did this family have over the Deligiannes family? In my estimation, the Perroukas family managed to establish a more powerful and disseminated network, while at the same time taking advantage of the mutual weakening of its Deligiannes and Lontos rivals. The three Perroukas brothers, who were based in Corinth, Patras and Constantinople, formed a network of influence, which the Deligiannes family could not match. While the Deligiannes family had managed to do away with Sotirakes Lontos by allying themselves with the local administrator (*vali*) and by virtue of the protection afforded by Beyhan Sultana, it also managed to retain its position and fortune even after the execution of its leader in 1816. Nevertheless, it still could not compete with the Perroukas family. Ultimately, however, it was the Perroukas family's success in acquiring the right to maintain a permanent representative (*vekil*) in Constantinople that prodded the Deligiannes family into joining the Etairia, a network of a very different type and one whose dynamics they were naturally unable to control.⁵¹

Therefore in this case the vertically built core-periphery relationship, represented by the dependence of the notable family of Deligiannes on the Ottoman palace, was substantially disturbed by a network of the Lontos clan, which we would say was constructed 'horizontally' (Epirus–Peloponnese): namely, it offered the possibility of the extension of Ali Paşa's influence in the Peloponnese, whose semi-independent state-entity had come to dominate in the margins

of the Ottoman periphery. Although the Ottoman state immediately intervened, repressing the 'centrifugal' forces that had emerged, the dynamics released because of this consolidation of a 'horizontal' network (that is one independent from the core-periphery structure) created the terms for the integration of the notable's clans into a conspiratorial network with revolutionary characteristics, which emerged when the tradesmen networks of solidarity struck from the economic crisis of 1815.

Another interesting example of interrelations between periphery-periphery in the Ottoman Empire is the case of the enormous land holdings the Orthodox Patriarchate gradually acquired in the Danubian Principalities and the two monastic communities of Mounts Athos and Sinai. The acquisition of these lands or "dedicated monasteries" had begun during the era of the Moldovlach rulers of the seventeenth century, before the Phanariot families began occupying the thrones of Moldovlachia, which intensified the process of land transfer.⁵² The reason why the Moldovlachians had to resort to this policy of land transfer is by no means unrelated to the extended migrations of Vlach-speaking populations from the greater Epirus region and Western Macedonia to Constantinople, Bucharest, Iași, Constanța, and Sibiu. The important role played by Epirotes in organizing this particular network, which was involved in the exploitation of ecclesiastical revenues, is apparent from the fact that the enlarged holdings of the monasteries of Epirus and Moldovlachia were those that submitted to the control of the Constantinople Patriarchate and the other patriarchates of the Orthodox East. This gave the elite among those supporting the monasteries of the Orthodox Patriarchates de facto control of the enormous income flowing from the principalities. This also meant, of course, control of the elections to the Orthodox patriarchal sees in the east, such as Jerusalem, Antioch and Alexandria. In this way, a migratory movement connecting two peripheral regions of the Ottoman Empire progressively transformed into the strongest power axis of the Orthodox millet.

The cases of the pre-revolutionary Peloponnese and the monastic properties in Moldovlachia offer excellent examples not only of the significance of the development of a network within the wider imperial space (characterized by multi-faceted interaction between many peripheries with participation by the center, a type not included in Galtung's model but partially accepted by Motyl). They also afford an understanding of how organizations of networks of traders, elders, or clerics transform themselves into genuine power networks.

Conclusion

To return to our original question: on the basis of the above how might the two discussions be linked? How might the answer to the value of networks at the descriptive-scholarly level provide a hermeneutic path to answering the critical question relating to their normative-political dimension?

In order to transform into power networks, networks of migratory movements or networks for the exploitation of tax revenues had to broaden their influence beyond that of the top-down relationship between center and periphery. They had to organize the interests of core interest groups and peripheral elites, which were not visible from the empire's center. At this point, we should consider how networks are being developed within the imperial space currently under construction.⁵³

In one sense, empire is the model for the domination of space over time, and of self-referentiality over external reference. In reality, what is now being labeled as “empire” is nothing more than the integration of a process involving the domination of the paradigm of space.

There are two basic concepts concerning network theory which could prove valuable and suffice for an approach to collective historical formations in empires like that of the Ottomans:

a) The concept of *centrality*, which can be exceptionally helpful in investigating the relationship between the network and the structures of political authority.⁵⁴ This relates to the division of power within a network, where one must define the focal and peripheral points of the process of power accumulation.

b) The concept of the *clique*, which can objectify the means by which interest groups are formed, particularly on the periphery of an empire.⁵⁵ This concerns the nature of relations between the members of the network and in particular whether they communicate directly or indirectly through intermediaries.⁵⁶ This feature naturally determines the degree of dependency of one member on another.⁵⁷

In the two examples to which we have referred, it is worth noting that the action of these groups is not limited to the management of economic interests. Rather, their entrance into the political realm presupposes multiple sources of power. At the same time, they defend their sources of income by allying themselves with the center. In addition, their dispersion across imperial space may allow their management of cultural capital to gradually undermine the foundational characteristics of imperial domination. As a consequence, the action of cliques and the networks of interests they compose are likely to be transformed into power networks that subvert the centrality of imperial space. A dynamic perspective of networks must take into account their substantial connection to the cultural factor and the continuous contradictions to which the activities of the network’s agents can give rise.

Arguably, past networks – at any rate those that shaped the terms for the development of political activity – consolidated and assisted the organization of the interests of those in society already in possession of some economic capital (as in the case of merchants and elders) or cultural capital (as in the case of clerics). Arguably, the social and political aristocracy of an imperial society is formed within power networks. Although networks may be organized and operate in a horizontal, “democratic” fashion, this in no way means that they always contribute to democratic social organization. The history of empires has demonstrated this, and I fear that the future will continue to bear this out.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2000.
- 2 John Scott, *Social Network Analysis. A Handbook*, London: SAGE Publications, 1991, p. 7.
- 3 On the series of annual conferences by the Josiah Macy Foundation held between 1946 and 1953, which led to the formation of the cybernetics circle with Norbert Wiener as the leading figure, see Steve J. Heims, *The Cybernetics Group*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991.
- 4 The view which represents the high point of this process is Henri Lefebvre's 1974 classic *La production de l'espace* (*The Production of Space*, transl. Donald Nicholson-Smith, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), a book that unfortunately has exercised a positive influence on the theoretical and methodological investigations of those fields where space is in any event the major conceptual focus (such as archaeology, geography, city planning, and architecture) but which has had a negligible effect on the formulation of leading tendencies in historical research. In his book, Lefebvre, confronting in a decisive manner the process of dissolution and reformation of urban space by capital in the post-industrial era, proceeded to a complete theoretical elaboration on the concept of space, its intellectual and symbolic representations, and approaches to space as these are actually experienced. For Lefebvre, exchange and information networks develop with modern structures of political hegemony to impose on space and time a new hierarchy upon their subjects, as well as to reestablish the social space shattered by the complete domination of the consumerist model.
- 5 For an indication of this relationship, see Panajotis Kondylis, *Der Niedergang der bürgerlichen Denk- und Lebensform: die liberale Moderne und die massendemokratische Postmoderne*, Weinheim: VCH, 1991.
- 6 F. Braudel, *La Méditerranée et le Monde Méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II*, Paris: A. Colin, 1966².
- 7 Gaston Bachelard, *La poétique de l'espace*, Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1957.
- 8 M. Foucault, *L'archéologie du savoir*, Paris: Gallimard, 1969. This is full of topological metaphors.
- 9 For an overview of this discussion and the connections made by sociological/philosophical analyses with the concept of space (chiefly in the works of M. Foucault, J. Habermas, M. Mann, and A. Giddens), see Cole Harris, "Power, Modernity, and Historical Geography", *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 81:4 (1991), pp. 671–683.
- 10 The group of scholars involved with the journal *Social Networks*, with L. C. Freeman as their leading figure, is a representative example of such an academic circle.
- 11 Most characteristically, the theoretical analyses of Bruno Latour, the French epistemologist, who has commented that the dominant distinction between "global" and "local" offers a definition of networks as intermediary arrangements: "Les deux extrêmes, le local et le global, sont beaucoup moins intéressants que les agencements intermédiaires nommés ici réseaux", Bruno Latour, *Nous n'avons jamais été modernes: essai d'anthropologie symétrique*, Paris: La Découverte 1997, p.166. Especially enlightening for the internal differentiation of the constructivist camp, between the proponents of systems theory (strong constructivism) and the culturalists (weak constructivism), is the discussion between Niklas Luhmann and N. Katherine Hayles, in William Rasch and Cary Wolfe (eds.), *Observing Complexity*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000, pp. 111–136.

- 12 For a criticism of the metaphorical use of the concept by Barry Wellman, see Charles Whetherell, "Social Networks Analysis of Historical Communities: Some Questions from the Present for the Past", *The History of Family* 1:1 (1996), pp. 97–121, especially p. 98.
- 13 M. Hardt and A. Negri, *Empire*, p. 162.
- 14 As is evident in their earlier collaborations (*Labor of Dionysus: a Critique of the State-Form*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994) and chiefly by Negri's theoretical research in the 1960s and 1970s.
- 15 M. Hardt and A. Negri, *Empire*, pp. 294–297. On the cultural consequences of these socio-economic changes, see Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Durham: Duke UP, 1991. The basic objective of the post-Fordist experiments could be summarized as follows: dissolution of the production process, both spatially and temporally. If flexible forms of paid labor give us a picture of this dissolution in *time*, a picture of the dissolution in *space* is provided by the splintering of production forms associated with the factory, i.e. the break-up of large production units into smaller ones oriented towards the individualization of consumption. Both the former and the latter presuppose the spread of forms of network organization (the development of information technology is an important, but not the only, parameter here) that recreate the unity of disseminated nodes, whether these are production units, urban centers, or centers for research and teaching. See David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, London: Basil Blackwell, 1989, pp. 141–197, Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1996, pp. 151–172.
- 16 See "Discorsi sopra la prima deca di Tito Livio" in Niccolò Machiavelli, *Il Principe e altre opere politiche*, introduzione di Delio Cantimori, note di Stefano Andretta, Milano: Garzanti 1989² and an English edition, N. Machiavelli, *The Discourses*, London: Penguin, 1970. For the way in which Machiavelli avoids the impasses created by Polybius' model, see the exceptionally insightful introduction by P. Kondyles, in Niccolò Machiavelli, *Works*, Athens: Kalvos, 1984 (in Greek), vol. I, pp. 49–50.
- 17 N. Machiavelli, *The Discourses*, p. 109.
- 18 At any rate, the two writers observe that the "Polybian" synthesis does not take place in classic terms: in spite of the formation of a "mixed constitution", there has also been the emergence of a "hybrid constitution", hybrid in the sense that it actually comes about in de-territorialized sovereignty. However, "de-territorialized" sovereignty does not necessarily mean "de-spaced". Empire cannot exist without the freezing of time and the domination of the spatial paradigm; otherwise, this modern phenomenon cannot be considered an "empire". This is an idea recently formulated by Eric Hobsbawm, presented on the occasion of his award of an honorary doctorate by the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, but also in E. J. Hobsbawm, "The End of Empires", in Karen Barkey and Mark von Hagen, *After Empire: Multiethnic Societies and Nation-Building. The Soviet Union and the Russian, Ottoman, and Habsburg Empires*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1997, pp. 12–16.
- 19 M. Hardt and A. Negri, *Empire*, p. 316.
- 20 Indeed, the authors come back to the concept's elaboration, reflecting that the emergence of the post-modern empire could be considered as a synthesis "of the three 'bad' forms of government rather

than the 'good' forms" (ibid., p. 316). The tyranny of an authoritarian global suppressive force and the speculative aristocracy of entrepreneurs and corporate forces (the valuable deduction of the social forces which should undertake the task of "democratic control") have constructed the new imperial morpheme.

- 21 As Stephan Fuchs claims: "Networks consist of relations, not nodes," in *Against Essentialism: a Theory of Culture and Society*, Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2001, p. 256.
- 22 Nicos Poulantzas, *L'état, le pouvoir, le socialisme*, Paris: PUF, 1978.
- 23 Here, 'barbarians' does not come under the rules of 'political correctness'; the concept refers to all peoples who were placed 'outside' empire and underscores the fundamental dichotomy between the 'civilized' and the 'uncivilized' on which the Empire grounded its sublimity. In the case of the Ottoman Empire in particular, the discussion on the nature of borders is connected to Paul Wittek's famous thesis on the expansion of the early Ottoman state as the result of the action of "holy warriors" (*ghāzī*), new converts to Islam. The space of borders is not delimited and empty but, on the contrary, nebulous and inhabited by a human mass that came from the 'barbarian' world (*Turan*). They, however, had undertaken the holy mission to spread of *Dar al-Islam* (the "world of Islam") against *Dar al-Harb* (the "world of war" of the infidels). Consequently, this model, which juxtaposes the civilized and 'barbarian' world, is differentiated: the early Ottoman represents a pattern of "intermediary" civilization which turns the 'barbarian' world against the 'infidel' world while simultaneously civilizing it through conversion to Islam. The borders of the Ottoman state are fluid because the empire continues to expand. For this reason its borderland is described in the sources as the "ever-victorious frontier" (*serhadd al-manşūra*), see Colin Heywood, "The Frontier in Ottoman History: Old Ideas and New Myths", in his *Writing Ottoman History. Documents and Interpretations*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002, p. 240. Certainly, Heywood differentiated the Ottoman case from the Roman *limes* or the "Great Wall" of China. Although he sees parallels between the Ottoman border and the Habsburg *Militärgrenze* and the Polish and Muscovite zones of Cossack settlement erected to protect against the Golden Horde and its successors, there are differences: the delimitation of the frontier, which he discusses in the Roman and Chinese context, is valid only from the perspective of the dominant imperial ideology of confrontation with the 'barbarians', even if their borders were often liquid and indefinable. As such they were easily and always penetrated by successive 'barbarian' invasions. In any case, the longevity of the Ottoman Empire's "extension frontier" was limited by the Treaty of Karlovitz (1699). The official acceptance of the coexistence of a neighboring empire put an end to the expansive process that presupposed the adoption of the "*ghāzī* state" mentality. The peace treaty with the Habsburgs delimited a model of borders that is consistent with the apprehension of space in modernity. For this crucial issue, see the important contribution of Rifaat A. Abou-el-Haj, "The Formal Closure of the Ottoman Frontier in Europe, 1699–1703", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 89:3 (1969), pp. 467–475.
- 24 A. G. Hopkins, "Back to the Future: From National History to Imperial History", *Past and Present* 164 (1999), pp 198–243.
- 25 This may be easily confirmed by reference to the means by which time is organized by the chronographers in the case of the Byzantine Empire. See for this Apostolos Karpozelos, *Byzantine Historians and Chronographers*, Athens 1997–2002, (in Greek). According to Hardt and Negri, "Empire exhausts

historical time, suspends history, and summons the past and future within its own ethical order. In other words, Empire presents its order as permanent, eternal, and necessary." *Empire*, p. 11.

- 26 The modern state also homogenizes its dominion's space while marking it off from the outside world. However it simultaneously and systematically classifies and fragments its interior. Thus, in the modern state space becomes homogeneous but not continuous. For an analysis of the state's infiltration of its territories (by means of communication networks such as railways and roads) as constitutive term of the passage to the modernity, see the thorough analysis of Kostas Kostis, "The Formation of the State in Greece, 1830–1914" in Faruk Birtok and Thalia Dragonas (eds.), *Citizenship and the Nation-State in Greece and Turkey*, New York: Routledge, 2005, pp. 18–36, especially pp. 21–22.
- 27 Here we draw on Niklas Luhmann's relevant observations on scholastic and Protestant theological works in his *Observations on Modernity*, transl. William Whobrey, Stanford: Stanford UP, 1998, pp. 51–52.
- 28 See the comparative perspective of Karen Barkey, "Thinking about consequences of Empire", in Karen Barkey and Mark von Hagen (eds.), *After Empire, op. cit.*, pp. 99–114.
- 29 S. Borgatti and M. Everett, "Models of core/periphery structures," *Social Networks* 21 (1999), pp. 375–395.
- 30 Alexander Motyl, *Revolutions, Nations, Empires: Conceptual Limits and Theoretical Possibilities*, New York: Columbia UP, 1999, p. 124.
- 31 Johan Galtung, "A Structural Theory of Imperialism", *Journal of Peace Research* 8 (1971), pp. 81–117 (89), cited by Alexander Motyl, *op. cit.*, pp. 121–122.
- 32 Motyl, p. 122.
- 33 See, for example, the most recent formulation by Maria-Christina Hatzioannou, *Family Strategies and Commercial Competition*, Athens: MIET, 2003 (in Greek).
- 34 For the most recent review of theoretical approaches to the analysis of social networks, see Scott's, *Social Network Analysis*. Also of interest is the theoretical approach by Barry Wellman, "Network Analysis: Some Basic Principles", *Sociological Theory* 1 (1983), pp. 155–200. He attempts to use the analysis of networks in the theoretical foundation of the concept of social structure. On this topic, see also Barry Wellman and S. D. Berkowitz (eds.), *Social Structures: A Network Approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988.
- 35 See, for example, J. A. Davis and S. Leinhardt, "The Structure of Positive Interpersonal Relations in Small Groups," in Joseph Berger, Morris Zelditch and Bo Anderson (eds.), *Sociological Theories in Progress*, vol. 2, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972.
- 36 See, for example, the extremely interesting work by L. C. Freeman, "Cliques, Galois lattices, and the Structure of Human Social Groups," *Social Networks* 18 (1996), pp. 173–187.
- 37 Of course, in this case analyses are found within the theoretical framework of contemporary political theory, which does not mitigate on their usefulness in understanding historical social formations. On

this category of network analyses, see Mark Bevir and R. A. W. Rhodes, "Analyzing Networks: from Typologies of Institutions to Narratives of Belief," *Επιστήμη και Κοινωνία* [Science and Society] 10 (2003), pp. 21–56 (in Greek), which maintains a constructivist/anti-foundationalist view of political networks, based on the concepts of tradition, narration, and the "Everyday Maker", i.e. a decentered view which locates analysis in the role of individuals as producers of meaning within networks. In any case, there is no reason to use the concept of networks to recycle the terms of old battles: functionalists/structuralists versus subjectivists or realists versus constructivists. The concept of networks can be shown to be useful not only because the observer-researcher is able to diagnose the point of intersection between individual actor and event (interest or difference), but also because he can reexamine their relation within the wider framework offered by the spatial dimension.

- 38** Here we follow the distinction proposed by Willy van Poucke into three different sorts of networks: sentiment, interest, and power networks in his "Network Constraints on Social Action: Preliminaries for a Network Theory", *Social Networks* 2:2 (1979–1980), pp. 181–190.
- 39** L. C. Freeman, "Cliques", pp.179–182.
- 40** A. G. Hopkins, "Back to the Future", p. 206.
- 41** A. Motyl, "From Imperial Decay to Imperial Collapse: the Fall of the Soviet Empire in Comparative Perspective" in Richard J. Rudolf and David F. Good, *Nationalism and Empire: the Habsburg Empire and the Soviet Union*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992, pp. 15–43.
- 42** Molly Greene, "The Ottoman Experience", *Daedalus* 134:2 (2005) pp. 88–99.
- 43** Charles Tilly, "How Empires End", in Karen Barkey and Mark von Hagen, *After Empire*, pp. 1–11 (7).
- 44** For general histories of the Ottoman Empire, see Halil Inalcik, *The Ottoman Empire: the Classical Age, 1300–1600*, transl. by Norman Itzkowitz and Colin Imber, New York: Praeger Publishers, 1973 and Stanford Shaw and Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, 2 vols., Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1976/1977.
- 45** Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: a Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1979, pp. 24–33.
- 46** For various definitions of the modern state, see Christopher Pierson, *The Modern State*, London: Routledge, 1996, pp. 5–34.
- 47** On the problem of "relative autonomy" in relation to the Ottoman state, see John Haldon, "The Ottoman State and the Question of State Autonomy: Comparative Perspectives", in Halil Bertay and Suraiya Faroqi (eds.), *New Approaches to State and Peasant in Ottoman History*, London: Frank Cass, 1992, pp. 18–108. On the nature and particularities of the Ottoman state during its first centuries, see Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.
- 48** For the trade networks in the Ottoman Empire during the "classical age", see Halil Inalcik and Donald Quataert (eds.), *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300–1914*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994, pp. 179ff.

- 49 On this subject, see the articles by V. Kremmydas, "The Economic Crisis in the Greek Territories at the Beginning of the 19th Century and its Influence on the Revolution of 1821," *Mnimon* 6 (1976/77), pp. 16–33 (in Greek), and G. Hering, "On the Problem of Revolutionary Uprisings at the Beginning of the 19th Century," *Ta Istoriká [Ta Istorika]* 13:24–25 (1990), pp. 105–120 (in Greek). On the organization and formation of the Philiki Etairia, see George–Demetrios Frangos's classic work *The Filike Etairia, 1814–1821: A Social and Historical Analysis*, New York: Columbia UP, 1971.
- 50 See John C. Alexander, *Brigandage and Public Order in the Morea, 1685–1806*, Athens: Paragoge, 1985.
- 51 D. Stamatopoulos, "Party Factions in the Pre-Revolutionary Peloponnese (1807–1816): The Role of Lala's Turkish-Albanian as a Factor of Political Differentiation," *Istor* 10 (1997), pp. 185–233 (in Greek); A. Fotopoulos, *The Notables of the Peloponnese during the Second Ottoman Occupation, 1715–1821*, unpublished Ph.D., Athens, 2001 (in Greek).
- 52 D. Stamatopoulos, *Reform and Secularization: Towards a Reconstruction of the History of the Ecumenical Patriarchate*, Athens: Alexandraia, 2003 (in Greek), pp. 37–38.
- 53 This conceptual structure is especially critical for the organization of social networks in an empire as "decenteredness" constitutes a basic characteristic of the internal organization of networks. For this, see L. C. Freeman, "Centrality in Social Networks: Conceptual Clarification," *Social Networks* 1 (1979), pp. 215–239; P. Bonacich, "Power and Centrality: a Family of Measures," *American Journal of Sociology* 92:5 (1987), pp. 1170–1182. See also John Scott, *Social Network Analysis*, pp. 85–102.
- 54 J. Scott, *Social Network Analysis*, pp. 85–102, H. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, pp. 331–334.
- 55 J. Scott, *Social Network Analysis*, pp. 117–123.
- 56 *Ibid.*, pp. 119–120.
- 57 See the concept of "local dependency" as described by J. Scott, *ibid.*, p. 90.