AFTERWORD. BUILDING A GLOBAL WORLD BEYOND EMPIRES

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This book elaborates on central issues related to mechanisms of global empire building, within- and on the borders of the institutions of empire. It also searches for understanding the configuration of the world that resulted from the creation of consortia of individuals, joined in networks of a great many political, ethnic, social and religious backgrounds. When one analyses empire building under these premises, it is difficult to encompass current views and conceptual definitions of empire that remain centered in a discourse of nation state building typical of the nineteenth century, but unheard of during the Early Modern period[1]. These men (and women, even if they were not brought to the fore in this book) came together and helped to construe global empires not, in a large extent, corresponding to nationalistic ends or ideologies typical of the period post-Age of Revolutions. Individuals and networks were powered by their own talents, skills and knowledge and driven by their own self-interest. It is at this level that a new definition of empire ensues and the global frames conjunctural and structural developments.

The case studies tackled by Erik Odegard and by Maria Inês Guarda show case a common practice in the articulation between state and private networks. In their chapters it is clear that the influence of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) and the Portuguese empire were far less important than the personal networks. The latter were far more profound and encompassing than what traditional narratives of the company and the empire have voiced thus far.

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[1] STOLER, 2006: 25-146; ——, 2004: 577-593.

Erik Odegard explains how the career progression of VOC high-ranking employees were co-dependent upon their personal networks, rather than on regimes of meritocracy usually portrait as paramount for the efficiency of the Northern European chartered companies. Odegard's contribution shows how networks in Europe and Asia were essential for individual progression within a specific empire and how the latter was heavily dependent upon the functioning of these networks for its daily functioning and long-term strategies.

Companies and states were equally played out by the way individuals and networks succeeded in participating in global movements and change, leaving the institutions responsible for empire at a loss. Kate Ekama shows that although the Dutch commercial companies seem to have been modern as organizations, they still faced serious competition from groups in the Dutch Republic that were less inclined to participate in a state-led colonial enterprise and were more vested in continuing trade at a global scale free from the constraints imposed by institutional rules. The Supreme Court of the United Provinces was a privileged ground where litigation against the VOC and the Dutch West India Company (WIC) took place. Even though the motivation for litigation was diverse, it remained a fact of daily life for companies, private merchants and their global networks during the seventeenth and the eighteenth century.

The same bottom-up approach is paramount in Joris van den Tol's analysis of the role petitions played in the support of Dutch Brazil in The Hague and the way this petitioning translated into lobbying practices that tried, and at times succeeded, in changing colonial policy and institutional set ups. The author analyzes the arguments (i.e. political, religious or economic) used to support the public discourse in the Dutch Republic in the debate that opposed sponsors of free trade versus monopolized access to Dutch Brazil in the seventeenth century. For Van den Tol, public pressure reflects the will of individuals and merchant groups to challenge the official policy promoted by the WIC.

Karwan Fatah-Black zooms into the case of the WIC's long history and supports Ekama's findings regarding opposition through litigation. His argument is, though, more specific and complex. For Fatah-Black, one of the strongest frameworks of nation-centric, institutional empire building were the systemic rules that governed economic exchange. The case of the colonial monopoly of the WIC is treated in his chapter as a case in which economic monopoly was the starting entrepreneurial point of the company in the 1620s, terminating in the 1780s as a deflected monopoly. This deflected monopoly was in many senses accommodating, adaptable and flexible and thus an agent in itself of practices across different geographies, but also within multiple social systems.

Still on the sphere of the Dutch empire, Chris Nierstrasz's paper investigates how monopolistic companies, private traders and smugglers pushed the boundaries of the traditional Companies (VOC and the British East India Company – EIC) regarding the import of tea into Europe. The process that Nierstrasz analyses is deeply contextualized by the globalization of the tea trade and consumption in Europe, a development that was responsible

for implementing multiple varieties of tea trade to Europe from Canton. The author shows how, by the creation of a market for popular tea, the trade of rogue companies, private traders and smugglers played a vital role. The two joint-stock companies were simply following in a catching-up tandem. Favorable market conditions arguably allowed that, whilst the Companies tried to organize their monopolies, private traders and smugglers simply worked around them. At times, those were the source of innovation that provided the edge that became the source of competitive advantage to overcome competition.

Opposition in the context of global empire building was contemporary and simultaneous with cooperative and representative mechanisms between the state and entrepreneurial networks and between different networks across empires. Ana Sofia Ribeiro provides an example where mechanisms of cooperation between merchant communities institutionally separated resulted in the decrease of geographical boundaries across the Portuguese and the Spanish empires. However, hypothesizing that the collaboration of Portuguese and Spanish merchants in cross-imperial trading ventures could have been increased by the political union of the two crowns, she concludes that, after all «the political annexation of the Portuguese Crown by the Habsburgs has not changed much Portuguese foreign trade associations. In theory, the kingdom's economic independence and a separate overseas territories administration were kept. In practice, an Iberian complementary trading exploitation was already practiced before 1580. Spanish and Portuguese merchants soon tried to articulate trading potential profits from both Imperial spaces», what means that political and institutional trends did not seem to be a determinant condition to promote cooperation between merchants of diverse «nationalities».

Alejandro Garcia Monton also follows the trail of this cooperative bottom-up approach by explaining the way a private Genoese firm approached the Spanish Monarchy in order to govern the slave trade through the *asiento* and all adjacent activities within the contract. The forging of this public-private partnership stands for the way people excluded from empire building (the Genoese) were still able to determine governance and exploitation of empire, while expanding the institutional borders of the same empire beyond what the state had initially conceived. The case study addressed by Garcia Monton also exemplifies, to a certain extent, the capacity of non-institutional elements to represent empire and in so doing furthering the interests of expansion and consolidation.

Spain being clearly an empire in which the agency and contribution of private actors in shaping empire remains still understudied, the central role traditionally conferred to the «state» at framing imperial policies has been prominent. It even resulted in the misinterpretation of different strategies and mechanisms the state developed and used to cooperate with private actors in order to achieve its own goals. Garcia Monton's essay reverses this standpoint by focusing on how private agents collaborated with the state in pursuing their own personal and private goals and doing so contributing to the sustainability of the empire.

It is however in the work of Mariah Wade where this phenomenon is clearer. Wade's account of the Portuguese participation in the Spanish expeditions in North America, perceived as an odd case as it can be, shows how mechanisms of cooperation and representation were already in place since the very beginning of the European expansion overseas. As stressed by the author, the volunteer enrollment of the Portuguese in expeditions to New Spain highlights the free movement of people, skills and wealth across different boundaries. Part of this involvement of priests, knights, pilots, sailors, craftsmen and settlers in hazardous colonial enterprises performing in religious, military and commercial colonial ventures were undertaken while the Portuguese Crown was part of Spain, but many others were not. This evidence raises questions as to the covert primacy of commercial and personal interests over political ones or, alternatively, to the enterprising power of individuals. In the end, the chapter argues that «national» provenance was not a consideration in joining these expeditions.

Even if mechanisms of opposition, cooperation and appropriation were common features and strong drivers of global empires, they were not mutually exclusive and should, once again, be seen within a sliding scale of analysis (as is the case with all the chapters in this book). What the analysis of these mechanisms provides is the possibility to understand the complexity of agency as translated into personal choices of different historical actors and the mapping out of the repercussion of their choices at the level of empire.

Mechanisms of global interaction in- and between empires were not often peacefully acknowledged or accepted by institutions and states. More often than not, the state and institutions of empire reacted to mechanisms of global integration by punition, allowing for cooperation (or forcing cooperation) and by incorporation. Punitive actions were often translated into systems of punishment for illegality, subversion and political or religious unorthodoxy. However, punitive actions were costly and inefficient for states that were generally weak and institutions that could not enforce resolutions. Therefore, cooperation and appropriation seemed the best options to take. Cooperation in a nutshell combined the wishes of individuals, groups and networks with the goal setting and the rules of the state through complex systems of interpersonal and collective bargaining. Incorporation, on the other hand, was more pernicious and included the inclusion of mechanisms of global exchange in the functioning of empire. As Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo claims, colonial empires being «polities characterized by the generating and institutionalizing of uneven political, economic and socio-cultural relationships, both within and outside of their porous frontiers, they can and should also be analyzed as agents of globalization and as polities that globalized production, trade, communication and finance and that frequently favored territorial expansion and international integration»[2] – often by assimilat-

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[2] JERÓNIMO, 2016: 213.

ing mechanisms and solutions offered by individuals and networks working sometimes in favor, sometimes against imperial aims.

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