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Game of networks: family links within the Swedish council of the Realm (1520-1680)

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Contents

1	Introduction	3
1.1	Research questions	3
1.2	Previous research	4
1.3	The Council of the Realm	7
1.4	Sources	11
2	Method	14
2.1	Defining the network	14
2.2	Implementation of the network analysis	15
2.2.1	Test run	16
2.3	Fitting modern model on historical timeperiod	19
3	Conclusion	21

1 Introduction

The aim of my master's thesis is to (re)construct and study a network of the family ties inside the Swedish Council of the Realm (Riksrådet) from the early 16th century to the late 17th century. The study will be conducted by creating a data structure and a visual representation of a graph depicting the family links. The work will be focused on roughly two main sectors: first of which is the actual analysis of the family links between the councillors, the second one is the assessment of the method of historical network analysis.

In my thesis historical network analysis will be referred to as a computer-aided method, which links this work to the field of digital humanities. This study is also in the field of pre-modern history, because the timeframe of this study covers most of the 16th and 17th century. Methodologically, the study is quantitative study with an explorative approach.

Even though things like machine learning and artificial intelligence (AI) are particularly popular and to a certain degree hyped at the time of writing, it is important to assess and understand the fundamentals and basics of digital and computational methods. Obviously, it is easier to understand simpler models, and therefore ask important questions. Those questions are for instance: What are the premises for this model? What kind of data is suitable for this model? What kind of interpretations can be made from the results? What is the potential problem, how to fix or adjust the model if something goes wrong or unexpectedly?

The text will be divided in four sections. The introduction will present the premises of this work. As the method is a focal point of the study, it will be explained further in its own second section. The third section is about the practical implementation of the analysis and assesment of the results, and the last section collects everything together as a conclusion.

Furthermore, according to historians Miia Kuha and Petri Karonen, majority of historiography concerning Sweden (and Finland) in the early modern period is written in the national languages Swedish or Finnish.¹

1.1 Research questions

The research questions are:

1. Can historical network analysis reveal new or unseen patterns in the affiliations between Swedish councillors of the Realm?
 - How dense is the network (how linked the council was in general)?

¹Kuha and Karonen 2024, p. 6.

- Are there any isolated nodes (councillors who have no relatives in the council)?
 - Can the graph be visually divided into clear subgraphs (is there a certain groups or 'houses' of related councillors)?
2. What are the potential difficulties and pitfalls in the implementation and interpretation of historical network analysis in this specific dataset, and further in the field of pre-modern history?
- To what extent can pre-processing the dataset for the network analysis be automated with a script?

The source material for this study is the *Swedish Councillors of the Realm, 1523-1680* dataset, which also dictates the timespan of the study. The period is relatively long and momentous in Swedish history, including many important events, such as, adoption of hereditary kingship (1544), the conflicts between the sons of Gustav Vasa (from 1560's to early 1600's), thirty years war (from 1618 to 1648) and queen Christina abdicating the throne (1654).² These events and shifts obviously have had a significant impact on the ensemble and activities of the Swedish council of the realm. Yet, instead of event-history or lives of individual councillors, the focus of this study is on the macro level, in (re)constructing a visual and computational network model of the family relations between the councillors. A longer timespan is necessary in order to the generations of family links to accumulate enough to make a network meaningful to study.

This study is conducted with a quantitative dataset instead of more traditional way of qualitative text analysis. Therefore, the source criticism is done for the dataset as a whole. For example, by assessing the sources of the dataset, looking for possible human errors in the data and considering the original purpose and use of the dataset. The source criticism is discussed further in the subsection 1.4.

The basis and context of this study will lay on the pre-existing literature concerning the Swedish Council of the Realm. Previous historical research will form the base for deciding the parameters for the network model (graph), and direct the choices for the data processing. These decisions include, for instance, whether or not draw the link between brothers if they are already connected to same father present in the graph. These decisions need to be based on the prior knowledge on the social relations during the pre-modern era.

1.2 Previous research

Historical network analysis can be understood as, to a certain degree established, but developing method. According to Finnish political historians Kimmo Elo and Olli Kleemola,

²Karonen, Hakanen, and Einonen 2017, p. 8-9.

the roots of historical network analysis are as far as in the late 19th century, yet, the modern appliance of the method is due the invention of computers, increase in the computing capacity and availability of user friendly network analysis software. They estimate that historical network analysis has gained its popularity from somewhere in the late 2000's.³

It appears that Elo and Kleemola approach historical network analysis as a predominantly digital or computational research method.⁴ However, the definition is not that straightforward. Social network analysis, which is the basis for historical network analysis, involves theorising, model building and empirical research focusing on the patterns formed inside the networks.⁵ (Social) network analysis has been employed in the field of history before the turn of the millenia, previous to the era of intuitive software.⁶ So, the field of historical network analysis can be roughly divided in two approaches: one with more descriptive or theorising stance and the another that treats network analysis as a quantitative computer-aided method. In the context of this work, (historical) network analysis will be treated primarily as a computer-aided method, similarly to the article of Elo and Kleemola, therefore focusing mainly on the previous research with computational approach. The further theory and practice will be covered in the section 2.

The international *Historical Network Research Community* (HNR) was found in 2009. The community has grown over time, and nowadays HNR runs workshops, conferences, lectures and a Slack (chat) group, and publishes an open access journal, a newsletter and a research bibliography.⁷ On the word of Kimmo Elo, historical network analysis has been the most popular computational method amongst historians.⁸

Scanning the HNR research bibliography, it appears that historical network analysis has been applied by researchers and research teams from around the globe in variety of research topics. The topics vary from the social networks of Chinese gods to the technical implementation of historical network analysis, and to the historical study of reconnaissance during the Cold War.⁹ More relevant for this study, network analysis has been utilized in the study of ruling elite and power in the pre-modern period.¹⁰

In Finland, Kimmo Elo is one of the researchers highly profiled on the use of the historical network analysis. Among other things, he has co-authored two articles addressing the method in more explorative manner. The first article is "*Verkostoanalyysi historiallisten aineistojen eksploratiivisena analyysimenetelmänä : esimerkinä sotavalokuvat*" written by Elo and Olli Kleemola. In the article they focus mainly on the applicability

³Elo and Kleemola 2015, p. 415-417.

⁴Elo and Kleemola 2015, p. 415-417.

⁵Keats-Rohan 2007, p. 22-24.

⁶Aronsson, Fagerlund, and Samuelson 1999, TODO check!

⁷"About HNR" 2021.

⁸Elo 2016, p. 22.

⁹Elo 2016, p. 22. "HNR Bibliography" 2024.

¹⁰Sigurðsson and Småberg 2013, See e. g. Ruth Ahnert's and Sebastian E. Ahnert's book *Tudor Networks of Power* (2023) or Paul D Mclean's article *Widening Access While Tightening Control: Office-Holding, Marriages, and Elite Consolidation in Early Modern Poland* (2004).

of historical network analysis. As their data, they use German war propaganda pictures taken from Finland during the second world war.¹¹

The another article is "*Networks of Revolutionary Workers: Socialist Red Women in Finland in 1918*" written by Elo and political historian Tiina Lintunen. In this article the method of historical network analysis is applied on the connections between the women who participated to the Finnish civil war in 1918 on the side of the socialists also known as "reds".¹² Both of these articles share the exploratory perspective with this study, and therefore, offer a point of reference.

When it comes to the literature discussing early modern Sweden, historian Petteri Impola has made a quantitative analysis on the social groups studied by Swedish and Finnish historians. Generally the early modern royals and nobility was the the focal point within the Swedish scholars till the 1950's, whereas their Finnish colleagues have been more focused on the peasants and other social groups. In the latter half of 20th century more attention was paid towards lower social classes. Yet, a resurgence of interest in the nobility has occurred in the beginning of the 21st century. This new research examining nobility has been focusing on women, family connections and further social networks.¹³ My work seems to be similar with the modern study of the nobility.

As a significant administration the members and activities of the Swedish Council of the Realm have been to some extent covered by previous research. For instance, the development and affairs of the council as an institution are addressed in the works of historians such as Petri Karonen, Pentti Renvall and Kurt Agren.¹⁴ Additionally, short biographies of some members of the council can be found easily in the *Biografiskt lexikon för Finland* (Biographical Dictionary of Finland).¹⁵ Those biographies include an assortment of notables found in the councillors dataset, such as, Herman (Claesson) Fleming, Gabriel Bengtsson Oxenstierna (af Korsholm och Wasa) or Lorentz (Ernstsson) Creutz d.ä.¹⁶ Even so, the Council of the Realm has not been examined thoroughly down to the last man. And based on historians Marko Hakanen and Ulla Koskinen, the council as a focal point, does still hold some uncovered parts.¹⁷

Authors of the councillors dataset, Hakanen and Koskinen, have explained the dataset's background in their article *The Gentle Art of Counseling Monarchs (1560-1655)*. In their

¹¹Elo and Kleemola 2015.

¹²Lintunen and Elo 2019, Almost the same article is found in Finnish in the *Historiallinen Aikakauskirja* 116 (2/2018).

¹³Impola 2024.

¹⁴See e. g. Petri Karonen: *Pohjoinen Suurvalta* (2008) TODO check! or "The council of the realm and the quest for peace in Sweden, 1718-1721" in *Hopes and fears for the future in early modern Sweden, 1500-1850* (2009), Pentti Renvall "Keskityn hallintolaitoksen kehitys" in *Suomen kulttuurihistoria. II* (1934) or Kurt Agren "Rise and decline of an aristocracy: The Swedish social and political elite in the 17th century" in the *Scandinavian journal of history* (1976).

¹⁵"BLF – Biografiskt lexikon för Finland" 2014.

¹⁶"Artiklar A-Ö" 2014.

¹⁷Hakanen and Koskinen 2017b, p. 47-48.

study the council is approached through the concept of personal agency.¹⁸ In the article, Hakanen and Koskinen also mention some prior collection and utilisation of datasets on the study of said councillors and their networks. Namely, Jan Samuleson has listed councillors and their affiliations from years 1523 – 1611, Kurt Ågren has collected councillors and their families from years 1602 – 1647, and Björn Asker made a similar collection from years 1640 – 1680. Unfortunately, some of the datasets remain unpublished.¹⁹

All in all, computer-aided historical network analysis is somewhat rare compared to the traditional methods of historiography. Nevertheless, it also seems that the pre-modern elite is collectively understood as a network amongst historians, and the ties between the members of nobility have been in the scope of interest for some time now. Which makes applying the computer-aided network analysis relevant. The aim of this work is to join the rather uncommon method of historical network analysis with the classic research topic, and to further explore and develop the method in the context of historical research.

1.3 The Council of the Realm

The position of the councillors of the realm was well recognized by the whole society. They were an elite group which enjoyed formal position in the power structure. Their job was to help the monarch reach decisions.²⁰

In the early modern Sweden the Council of the Realm (Privy Council, swe. Riksrådet, fi. valtaneuvosto) was to give council to the Royal Majesty (monarch, king or queen) on decision making. The Council consisted of noblemen loyal to the monarch. The councillors held a significant power and authority on the realm, yet, the Council did not have the ability to make decisions bypassing or opposing the monarch. Ideally decisions would be made in concensus with the king or queen and the Council.²¹

The position of the Council as an institution was established in the early Middle Ages. With the elective kingship in the medieval period, the elections of Swedish kings were made with the consent of the Council. The authority and power possessed by the Council fluctuated from time to time, but it is said to have been at its peak during the 15th century. However, in the early decades of the 16th century, the Council took part in the plot against the personal union of Sweden and Denmark *Kalmar Union*(1397-1523) and the Danish king. Consequently, ten councillors lost their lives in the dramatic events of *Stockholm Bloodpath* or 'the coronation of King Christian II of Denmark' in November 1520. These occurrences soon lead to the splitting of the Kalmar Union and Gustavus Vasa's (1495/1496-1560) rise to power.²²

¹⁸Hakanen and Koskinen 2017b.

¹⁹Hakanen and Koskinen 2017b, p. 48, 67 (cite 4).

²⁰Karonen and Hakanen 2017, p. 26.

²¹Karonen 2009, p. 13-14, Hakanen and Koskinen 2017b, p. 47-50.

²²Hakanen and Koskinen 2017b, p. 49-50, Karonen, Hakanen, and Einonen 2017, p. 8-9.

Following Gustavus Vasa's and his descendants' ascension to the throne, the authority and power of the Council and upper aristocracy weakened. The Council was only called on by the king, further, the king was the one who chose the members of the Council, hence being able to favour the ones conforming him.²³ Gustavus Vasa and his sons perceived the upper aristocrats as rivals, therefore relying on the unofficial help and support of the ignoble²⁴ secretaries.²⁵

Overall, the timeperiod between 1560 and 1611 was politically turbulent and unpredictable in the Swedish realm. The passing of Gustavus Vasa in 1560 led to the bitter rivalry and struggle over the inheritance of the throne between his three sons. Each of his sons ruled Sweden for relatively short period of time, and the unforeseen changes of monarchs meant that the Council and nobility had to adapt and swear allegiance to the right sovereign at the right time. Loyalty to the wrong party led to fall from favour at best or execution at worst. It can be considered essentially dangerous to be in a position of power during that timeperiod.²⁶

The Council faced the most severe crisis during the 1590's civil war. The warfare over Swedish throne was fought between Gustavus Vasa's youngest son Duke Charles (Charles IX 1550-1611) and Gustavus Vasa's grandson the king of Poland Sigismund. The war led to the Duke Charles' rise to power, and the demise of the noblemen and councillors who had opposed him.²⁷ In fact, the Council was practically decimated in 1601, nonetheless, the kingdom needed the help of a legitimate Council in order to take care of the administrative and diplomatic tasks. In 1602 Duke Charles appointed 15 new councillors.²⁸

After the death of Charles IX in 1611, Charles' oldest son Gustavus Adolphus (Gustav II Adolf 1594-1632) became the king. At that time, the kingdom was at war with Denmark. To appease the nobility and settle the political situation within Sweden, Gustavus Adolphus gave a charter of guarantees, which for example, assured all of the high posts in civil administration to the nobility by privileges.²⁹ The authority and position of the aristocracy and the Council incremented significantly in the early 17th century. Due to that, the Council was able to set the Regency (swe. Förmyndarregering, fi. holhoojahallitus) after the king's sudden death in 1632. Additionally, the Council started to gather recurrently in Stockholm. Yet, the 1634 Instrument of Government (swe. Regeringsform, fi. valtiomuoto) further warranted the position of the nobility and the Council.³⁰

²³Karonen 2014, p. 58.

²⁴Nonaristocratic, proletarian.

²⁵Hakanen and Koskinen 2017b, p. 53.

²⁶Karonen 2014, p. 96-121, Hakanen and Koskinen 2017b, p. 51-52.

²⁷Hakanen and Koskinen 2017b, p. 57-60, Karonen 2014, p. 96-121.

²⁸Hakanen and Koskinen 2017b, p. 57-59.

²⁹Karonen 2014, p. 121-123, Karonen, Hakanen, and Einonen 2017, p. 8-9.

³⁰Karonen 2014, p. 195-197, Karonen and Hakanen 2017, p. 16-17, Karonen, Hakanen, and Einonen 2017, p. 8-9.

Table 1: Parameters on the number of councillors between 1520-1680.(Hakanen and Koskinen 2017a) Calclutaed with R script: <https://github.com/Heidi-Suurkaulio/mastersthesis/tree/main/RScripts>

Min.	1st Qu.	Median	Mean	3rd Qu.	Max.
1.00	19.00	23.00	24.29	27.00	48.00

The position of the nobility and the Council started to decline drastically after the Charles XI's (1655-1697) succession of the throne in 1672. In the Diet of 1680 the monarch practically retract the status of the Council. In 1681 the Council of the Realm was renamed the *Royal Council* (swe. Kungligt råd, fi. kuninkaallinen neuvos). Concurrently, the Great Reduction was being implemented, meaning that the fiefs³¹ were reclaimed to the state. The reign of Charles XI is retroactively called the Age of Absolutims in Sweden.³² Finally, in the 18th century the role of the Council steadily declined further, and it was disestablished during the reign of Gustavus III (1772-1792).³³

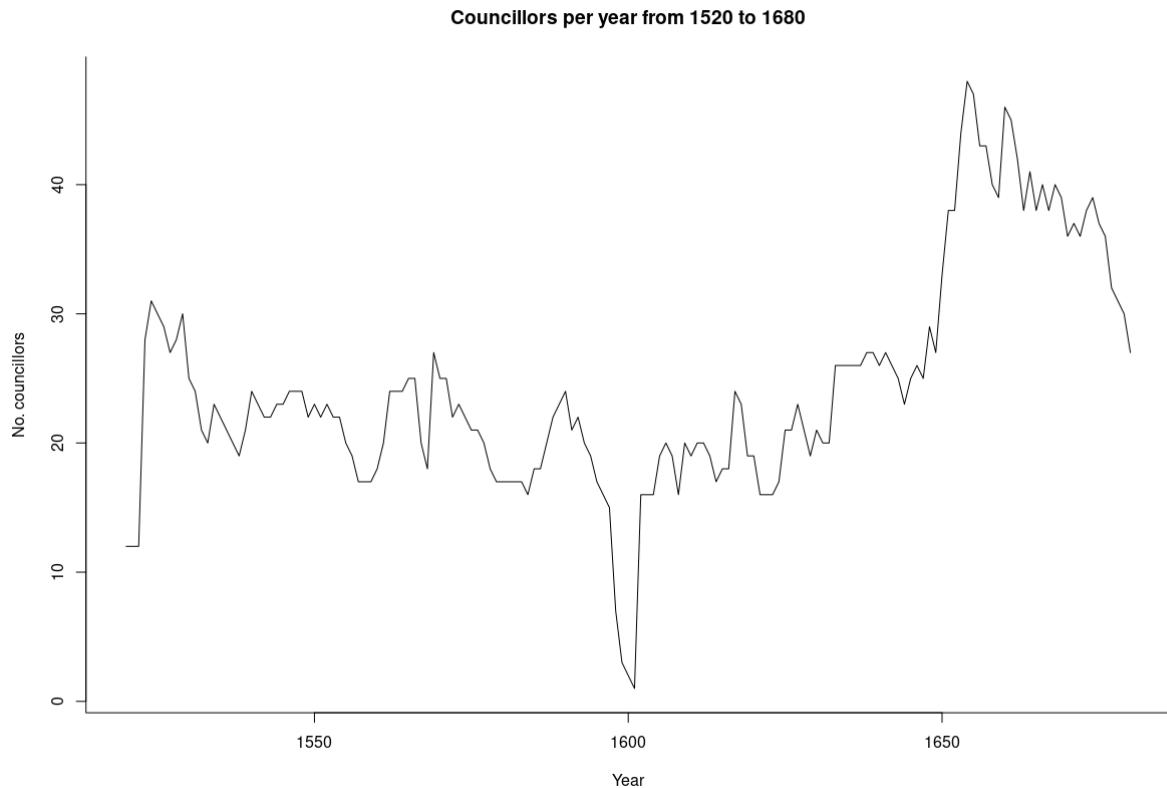


Figure 1: The changes of the number of councillors per each year.(Hakanen and Koskinen 2017a) Plotted with R script: <https://github.com/Heidi-Suurkaulio/mastersthesis/tree/main/RScripts>

The 1442 Law of Realm ordered the Council to be consisted of 12 noble men and vary-

³¹Lands given to the aristocracy.

³²Karonen 2014, p. 289-295, Karonen, Hakanen, and Einonen 2017, p. 8-9.

³³Karonen 2009, p. 14.

ing number of bishops and other clerics.³⁴ As the religious reformation was implemented during the reign of Gustavus Vasa, the bishops and church men lost their position in the Council. Thereafter, the Council consisted primarily of noble men during the 1523-1680 time period.³⁵

According to the *Swedish councillors of the Realm, 1523-1680* -dataset, between 1520 and 1680 the number of active councillors per year changed between 1 in 1601 to 48 in 1654, the mean being 24.29 and median 23. Most of the time the number was between 19 and 27 (Table 1).³⁶ The fluctuation of the councillors count is visible in the Figure 1.

Generally, it seems that the broader position of the Council and the enclosing aristocracy is proportional to the amount of the councillors. However, such an abstract and broad concept as 'position' should be understood as a *latent variable*. Latent variable meaning a factor that is measurable and observable only indirectly through modeling and calculating other variables.³⁷ As well as the definition of 'position' as a concept not being that simple and straight forward. It cannot be indubitably quantified in one diagram.

In Figure 1, the amount of councillors declined during the religious reformation in the first half of the 16th century. Then the political instability is seen in the downward spikes after year the 1560, most dramatic of those being in the turn of the 16th and 17th century. The amount started a rapid incline somewhere mid 17th century and hit its peak in 1654. It being the year queen Christina (1626-1689) relinquished the throne to her cousin Charles X Gustav (1622-1660).³⁸ According to Hakanen and Koskinen queen Christina could also have deliberately raised the number of councillors in order to dilute their power.³⁹ Yet, closing the year 1680 the number starts to drop exceedingly.

In early modern Sweden the monarch was the highest authority. Practically the deeds of the royal family members were the second place, and the power of the Council came after these two. Beneath these was the Diet of Sweden (swe. Riksdag, fi. valtiopäivät): the representatives of the four estates (the Nobles, the Clergy, the Burghers and the Peasants) that was to negotiate and legitimate the rules and laws given by the monarch.⁴⁰ All in all, the place in the Council of the Realm was highly sought after, and compared to the surrounding society or even encompassing nobility, the members enjoyed a significant valuation, authority and most of the time prosperity and wealth.

³⁴Hakanen and Koskinen 2017b, p. 49.

³⁵Karonen 2014, p. 72-75, Karonen and Hakanen 2017, p. 15.

³⁶Median is the middle observation on the data, it usually represents the middle point of the distribution.Box et al. 2005, p. 26, Moore, McCabe, and Craig 2017, p. 30-31. 1/2 (50%) of the observations lay between the 1st and 3rd quartile.Moore, McCabe, and Craig 2017, p. 32-33.

³⁷"APA Dictionary of Psychology" 2018.

³⁸Karonen, Hakanen, and Einonen 2017, p. 8-9.

³⁹Hakanen and Koskinen 2017b, p. 63-64.

⁴⁰Karonen 2014, p. 57-61.

1.4 Sources

Since this work is conducted with pre-collected dataset, this work can be vaguely categorized as secondary analysis. Secondary analysis meaning re-analyzing the data with new research questions or approaches, while primary analysis involves the collection of the data. Secondary analysis can also be discerned from meta analysis, which means comparing multiple previous studies (usually with quantitative methods) to create a synthesis on a certain question.⁴¹

On the contrary in their articles Kimmo Elo and Olli Kleemola or Elo and Tiina Lintunen apply a network analysis on their own primary datasets.⁴² However, in the case of this work the benefit of doing secondary analysis is that the focus can be on the implementation and assessment of the method. Furthermore, the existing dataset will be automatically and manually re-examined for possible errors in the process, as will be discussed soon.

As mentioned earlier, this work is based on the *Swedish councillors of the Realm, 1523-1680* -dataset authored by Marko Hakanen and Ulla Koskinen. The dataset was published in 2017 and can be found in Digital repository of University of Jyväskylä under the license CC BY 4.0. The dataset was collected as a part of the research conducted for the anthology *Personal Agency at the Swedish Age of Greatness 1560–1720*.

To be precise, discussing the data I deliberately use the term *dataset*, whereas the original authors call it *database*. The difference between dataset and database is not clear-cut, but for example the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) briefly defines dataset as a structured collection of data and database as a collection of multiple datasets. USGS also mentions that the data in databases can (typically) be updated and manipulated easily in real time.⁴³ Hence, databases are generally more complicated interfaces for data management, and for this purpose the term dataset is more suitable.

The dataset consists of information from 257 Swedish councillors of the realm. Each councillor has the following feature attributes: date of birth, year of death, year, date and age of appointment, noble rank, spouse(s) along with father's spouse and the individual's family links between other councillors. The councillors are identified with their full name and id number.⁴⁴

Hakanen and Koskinen have compiled the data from secondary sources such as biographical registers and databases, biography collections, lineage databases and research literature. The dataset's sources are listed in the dataset and in the article written by Hakanen and Koskinen, those include for instance Nordic Family Book (Nordisk familjebok), National Biography of Finland (Finland's nationalbiografi, Kansallisbiografia),

⁴¹Card and Little 2012, p. 4-5.

⁴²Elo and Kleemola 2015; Lintunen and Elo 2019.

⁴³"What are the differences between data, a dataset, and a database?" 2022.

⁴⁴Hakanen and Koskinen 2017b, p. 48. 2017a.

genealogies of old Swedish aristocratic families (*Äldre svenska frälsesläkter*) and further refereed literature.⁴⁵ As reported by Hakanen and Koskinen the dataset is collected using methodologies of collective biography, new prosopography and source criticism.⁴⁶

Even though the dataset can be assessed as reliable and generally accurate, there is the general problem of some missing data. As seen in the example of Table 2, some of the councillors have missing attributes such as date of birth and therefore age of appointment. The missing attributes are most likely due the fact that during the time span of the dataset there was no standard of civil registration.

The order of keeping parish registers (kyrkobok) was given in the Swedish Church Law 1686 (Kyrkio-Lag och Ordning), six years from the endpoint of the dataset. The Church Law made it mandatory for parish vicars to keep certain records and documents concerning the population and economy of the parish. Among other things these parish registers included the records of marriages, births, christenings, deaths and funerals. Despite that the Swedish parish registers have been assessed exceptionally comprehensive by historians, there are some considerable deficiencies due to the differing circumstances and practices between parishes, furthermore some of the registers have been destroyed or lost. Even though some records do exist prior and post (TODO format) the Swedish Church Law 1686, they are notably dispersed.⁴⁷ A case in point: according to the Dictionary of Swedish National Biography (Svenskt biografiskt lexikon) the birth year of king Gustav Vasa (1495 or 1496) is also an estimate.⁴⁸

However, the focus of this work is not on the ages of the councillors but in their affiliations, so, the more relevant question is whether or not there are missing family links.

(TODO write script and do some checking)

As the relatively large dataset is compiled by humans, it leaves some room for typos and errors. While producing the first experimental graph of the dataset, some empty data points were found. These "ghosts" were nodes with only id number and one or two links to the other councillors. All in all there were four "ghosts" with the id numbers 147 (linked to 18 and 152), 215 (linked to 217), 249 (linked to 269) and 254 (linked to 94). With the help of Marko Hakanen it was resolved that those "ghost" nodes were data points removed from the dataset as the authors found out they have not been official councillors, however, some references to their id numbers had been left to the dataset by accident. The "ghost" nodes will be removed from the latter graphs.

⁴⁵Hakanen and Koskinen 2017b, p. 48, 76; 2017a.

⁴⁶Hakanen and Koskinen 2017b, p. 48.

⁴⁷Viikki 1994, p. 169-176.

⁴⁸Svalenius 1969.

Table 2: Example rows of the dataset: Gyllenhorn, Joen Olsson and Natt och Dag, Måns Johansson (Hakkanen and Koskinen 2017a)

Name	No.	D.O.B.	†	Appointed	Date	Age	Noble rank	Family members in the council	Spouse(s) / Father of Spouse / Date of Marriage
Gyllenhorn, Joen Olsson	82	1556		1529	00.6.		Uradel (Ancient Nobility)	Karin Bese/Nils Nilsson Bese/1529	
Natt och Dag, Måns Johansson	142	1498	1555	1529	00.6.	31	Uradel (Ancient Nobility)	Barbro Erikssdotter/Erik Turesson Bielke/ probably 27.6.1524	

Table 3: Example of the raw .csv file

1	Name;	Id;	D.O.B.;	died;	Appointed;	Date;	Age;	Noble rank;	Family;	Spouse(s) / Father of Spouse / Date of Marriage
2	Ingemar Petri;	162;	;	1530;	1495;	;	;	Estate unknown, Bishop;	;	;
3	Tre Rosor, Ture Jönsson;	231;	;	1532;	1497;	;	;	Uradel (Ancient Nobility);	Father CR, Father-in-law CR, Sons 228, 230, Son (illegitimate) 175;	Anna Johansdotter / Johan Christiernsson Vasa (CR)

2 Method

My method is computer aided (social) network analysis. It is one of the most implemented methods in the field of digital humanities. Generally network analysis has other more everyday applications, such as, the analysis of the internet as a network in the field of technology. Quite a few textbooks have been written on network analysis.

2.1 Defining the network

Network analysis combines mathematics, statistics and social sciences. Primarily it is based on the mathematical graph theory. A graph is a representation of the network. Graph includes nodes (also called vertices) and edges (also called links and connections).

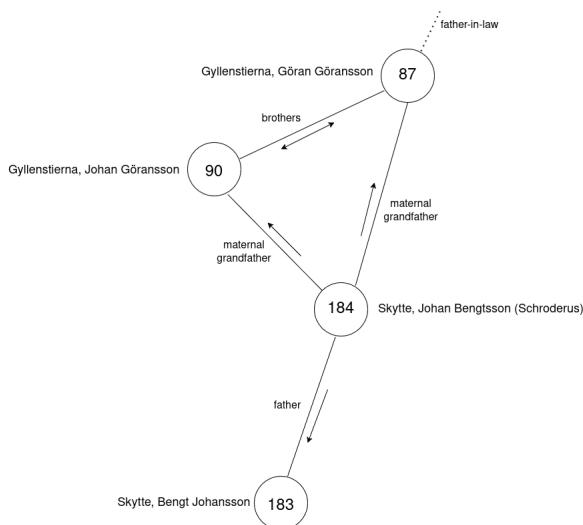


Figure 2: A sample from the graph

In this context the graph's nodes depict individual councillors with the input of name and id number. Correspondingly the edges represent the kinships between two nodes. For instance, in Figure 1 we can see that Johan Bengtsson (Schroderus) Skytte (id 184) is Bengt Johansson Skytte's (id 183) father and a maternal grandfather for Johan Göransson Gyllenstierna (id 90) and Göran Göransson Gyllenstierna (id 87). Johan Göransson and Göran Göransson are brothers, however, their father is not mentioned in the dataset. Göran Göransson also has further links in the network.⁴⁹

Calculating different statistics is a crucial part of the network analysis. One of the most important measures is the **node degree**. In all its simplicity node degree means the amount of edges connected to a specific node. For example, the degree of Johan Bengtsson (Schroderus) Skytte (id 184) is three or the degree of Bengt Johansson Skytte (id 183) is one. The **average degree** is the mean [keskiarvo] of all the node degrees of

⁴⁹Marko Hakanen and Ulla Koskinen. 2017a. *Swedish Councillors of the Realm, 1523-1680*. doi:<https://doi.org/10.17011/jyx/dataset/55523>.

the specific graph. The **density** of the network is based on the node degrees. In very dense network almost every node is connected to each other, but a sparse graph has just a few edges in it.

Another important factor is whether the graph is **directed** or **undirected**. In directed graph the edges have directions, like in the communication networks a message has a sender and a receiver. The directions are marked with an arrow. In undirected graphs the edges are bidirectional (two way), for example, a relationship between two brothers can be understood as undirected. Directed graphs have more features and a more complex structures, for instance, the degrees of inbound and outbound edges can be counted separately. For simplicity, the graphs presented in this work are undirected.

2.2 Implementation of the network analysis

I use the combination of Python programming language and Gephi software in the data processing and analysis. Python is used for extracting the data from the councillors-dataset and formulating it in the right format: readable for Gephi. Whereas the actual network analysis: visualization and calculating statistics, is performed with Gephi.

Python is a high level⁵⁰ programming language. Python can be used in variety of tasks including data processing, machine learning (AI models) or web development. Python is intended to be of object oriented programming style, however, it is not determined to be used only on that paradigm.⁵¹ For instance, my personal programming style is more in the imperative style.

I selected Python due its simple syntax and ease in implementing relatively small tasks in data processing. The language is understandable and widely used amongst scientists, which makes the work replicable. To be precise the scripts are written with Python 3, exact version being Python 3.11.7.

As graphs are structures commonly used in programming, it would have been possible to conduct the actual network analysis using tools provided by Python, yet, Gephi software provides a graphical user interface (GUI) and more intuitive tools for the manipulation of the graph. Furthermore, the Gephi format makes the data and graph accessible also for non programmers.

Gephi is a software for network visualization and analysis. It contains tools for manipulating, filtering, clustering and visualizing the graph. It has built in appliances for fixing errors in data and calculating necessary statistics.⁵² Gephi reads data from text format (comma separated values .csv) or Microsoft Excel tables (XLSX), and Gephi projects are saved as .gephi files. The processed graphs and data can be exported as images or tables.

⁵⁰Meaning code intended to be read and understood by humans if compared for example with binary code written only with 0s and 1s.

⁵¹Mastrodomenico 2022, p. 1.

⁵²“About Gephi”.

Nonetheless, Gephi does have some weaknesses. It is not always the most intuitive to use, and especially the visual configurations of the graph causes some issues. I have encountered difficulties with the node labels (the councilor's name next to the node). Sometimes the problems lies in the Gephi settings, but if the whole software crashes when trying to make the node labels visible, the problem lies within the software itself and should be solved when starting the program.⁵³

Lastly,

All of these tools are open source and free to download. In the name of replicability and transparency, all scripts written for this work available on my GitHub page.⁵⁴

Basically the steps of network analysis are :

1. Choosing the subject and data
2. Pre processing the data for the network analysis
3. Constructing the graph and finding possible issues and errors
4. Counting the statistics
5. Deciding the layout (algorithm)
6. Doing the interpretations

However, the analysis is not that straightforward, sometimes the steps 2 and 3 must be repeated and re-repeated. Yet, on some circumstances the graph is not visualized or the statistics are not deemed important. These steps will be discussed in practice below.

2.2.1 Test run

To draft the structure of the graph and understand the nuances of the given data, a test run was carried out. The test run was done with a simple Python script, and no attention was paid to the temporal aspects of the network or the potential directions within the graph. The script and Gephi project used, and the visualization of the graph of the test run is available in GitHub in the TestRun folder⁵⁵

The data processing was started by manually cleaning the data in LibreOffice Calc (equivalent to Microsoft Excel). The columns and rows containing information of the source material of the dataset and councillor's years active were removed. That made the structure of the data coherent and easier to manipulate with the Python script. The manually cleaned data is exported as .csv (comma separated values) file. The .csv file's header (the first line of the file) should be modified so that the column name "No."

⁵³For Linux environments opening Gephi from command line with command "LIBGL_ALWAYS_SOFTWARE=1 ./gephi" can sometimes help.

⁵⁴<https://github.com/Heidi-Suurkaulio/mastersthesis>

⁵⁵<https://github.com/Heidi-Suurkaulio/mastersthesis/tree/main/TestRun>

is changed to "Id" and "Family members in the council of the realm" is changed to "Family", the first one can cause an error if referenced in the Python code, the latter is inconveniently long.

The script itself reads the data from the .csv file. The connections between the councillors are separated from the "Family" column, based on the knowledge that each connection is marked with the id number of another councillor. The connections are then formatted and printed to .csv file. The connections .csv file containing values for "Source" id of the source concillor, "Target" id of target councillor, "Type" standard "Undirected", "Id" id number for the connection, "Weight" standard 1.0. Another .csv file is formatted and printed with the information of councillors' names and id numbers.

Table 4: Example of the connections .csv file

1	Source,	Target,	Type,	Id,	Weight
2	231,	228,	Undirected,	0,	1.0
3	231,	230,	Undirected,	1,	1.0

Table 5: Example of the councillors .csv file

1	Id;	Label
2	162;	Ingemar Petri
3	231;	Tre Rosor, Ture Jönsson

These .csv files are readable for Gephi. The outcome was an undirected graph of the councillors' affiliation network that had accumulated during the 160 years. The graph consisted of 261 nodes (257 real + 4 "ghosts") and 372 edges (including self loops and "ghost" nodes). The test run revealed three problems within the graph: the emergence of the empty "ghost" nodes, parallel edges and thirdly self loops.

The "ghost" nodes were excess nodes with no name and only an id number and one or two connections in the graph. They were due to the references to the data points removed from the original dataset, and therefore can be ignored. The ghosts are discussed further in the subsection 1.4. However, the more essential problem were parallel edges and self loops.

The parallel edges occur because one relationship, such as father and son, is sometimes marked parallel in the dataset. For example, in the case of Göran Göransson Gyllenstierna (id 87) the relatives are "Maternal Grandfather 184, Brother 90, Father-in-law 3, ...", and the same relationship is found in his grandfather's Johan Bengtsson (Schroderus) Skytte's (id 184) links: "Son 183, Grandson through daughter 87". Yet, the connection to Göran Göransson's brother Johan Göransson Gyllenstierna (id 90) is not marked in the grandfathers links. This means that the node of Göran Göransson Gyllenstierna (id 87) has one excess link compared to his brother's node. The case is visualized in the Figure 2.

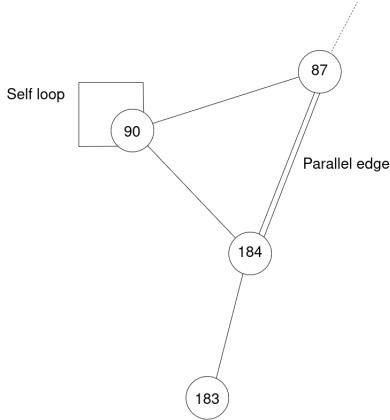


Figure 3: Visualisation of the parallel edge and self loop

These duplicate edges would cause bias to the calculation of the node degrees and any statistics based on them. A node degree is a sum of all the edges connected to one node, and if the relationships are inconsistently marked with one or two edges, the factually similar nodes would get different degrees. These inconsistent node degrees would accumulate when counting the average degrees and so forth. The problem of parallel edges is widely recognized in the field of network analysis, and therefore Gephi does have some builtin features for handling it.

While importing data to Gephi (on Import Spreadsheet) the strategy for merging the parallel edges can be chosen. One option is, for example, placing the sum or average of the parallel edges in the edge's degree, yet using only one connection to represent the edge in the graph. In this context a more simple solution was chosen, with the option "First" Gephi will use only the first connection between two nodes ignoring any latter ones. This will reduce the amount of connections from 698 found in the connections.csv to only 372.

Self loops occur when one node has – for some reason or another – a connection to itself. Similarly to the parallel edges, they cause bias to the node degrees. In this graph a self loop can be found at least on the node with id 5 and id 90. In the case of id 5: Gustaf Axelsson Baner, his relatives are "Father 4, Father-in-law 217, Brother 9, Sons 5, 7, 8, 10, Sons-in-law 152 and 197", and similarly with id 90: Johan Göransson Gyllenstierna his family reads "Maternal Grandfather 184, Brother 90". These self loops are most likely caused by a typo in the dataset, because it is reasonable to assume that none is a son or brother to themselves.

Gephi does have a switch whether or not self loops are allowed in the graph, and it can automatically remove them based on the preference. The self loops are present in the test run graph alongside with the ghost nodes, yet those will be removed from the subsequent analysis. To highlight the ghosts they are colored gray, and the four nodes referred as an example here are colored red in the test run graph.

The last step in the preparation of the network analysis is the selection of the layout algorithm. For the test run an algorithm called Yifan Hu was used with default configurations except parameter theta set to 2.0. Then layout option "noOverlap" was chosen to separate possibly overlapping nodes, and some further manual placement of the nodes was done to make the graph more readable. The outcome was visually somewhat dense network in the middle and mostly unconnected isolated nodes around it.

2.3 Fitting modern model on historical timeperiod

Every model is an approximation.

All models are wrong; some models are useful.⁵⁶

A graph is elementally a generalizing and simplifying model of complex social networks on the Swedish council of the Realm. Yet, when bulding any kinds of (computational) models, decisions between the complexity and abstraction must be made – in fact besides too simplifying models, too complex or overfitted ones are a problem on their own.⁵⁷ One of the most important question is what to include and and what to exclude. And, a more existential question is what we can model or even know about historical social networks.

As I am working with pre-collected data, the choices have been made by the authors of the dataset Hakanen and Koskinen and by the scholars their work is leaning on. The data – and further the graph – is able to give a picture of the officially recorded family links within the council of the realm. However, it is not possible to know about the messy every day relationships, friendships, informal discussions, intentions, emotions or disputes these 257 men have had. It is important to understand the limitations of the data and model.

Generally, what comes to the study of early modern period, source material concerning women, lower social classes or marginalized groups are harder to find.⁵⁸ However, at least noble women are included in the contemporary lineage diagram as seen in figure 4. So maybe a network including noblewomen or the councilors patrons would be possible to build.

It can be said with relative certainty that contemporaries in the early modern time didn't perceive their society as a network in the modern sense. And when studying ...

For instance *Hortus Regius* can be used as an illustration of the ideals and understandings of the early modern nobility. The book was given to queen Christina by a diplomat Shering Rosenhane in circa 1645, and it consists of delicately illustrated political emblems⁵⁹ and noble family trees leading to queen Christina.⁶⁰

⁵⁶Box et al. 2005, prefix.

⁵⁷TODO

⁵⁸TODO

⁵⁹Instructions, virtues, metaphors

⁶⁰"Hortus Regius" or Queen Christina's Genealogical Tree with Political Emblems."; Blennow 2023,



Figure 4: Lineage of the house of Vasa from the *Hortus Regius* or "Queen Christina's Genealogical Tree with Political Emblems".(Rosenhane and Holsteyn (artist) 1645)

3 Conclusion

Collecting and creating network data from scratch is hard and time consuming. What comes to early modern studies, we should also try to reconstruct the networks between women.

Here is a truth: nobody wants to run your program. What they want is to get their work done, or play their game, or send their email... The truth is that good code is invisible. It simply allows things to flow smoothly. Bad code is memorable. It interferes, makes people frustrated and angry.⁶¹

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⁶¹Parker 2021, prefix p. XVI.

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