1. **OBJECIVE/PROBLEM/RESARCH QUESTION**

The aim of this project is to determine the Portuguese Overseas Identity between 1650 and 1750 by application of Social Network Analysis. On one hand, the research studies how emerged the sense of the belonging of the Portuguese towards their maritime possessions in Africa and America and, on the other, reviews the social position of the marginalized individuals of those colonies.

The collective identity was defined by Alberto Melucci as a long-term process of establishing networks of active relationships between actors who interacted, communicated to each other and negotiated values and terms of coexistence[[1]](#footnote-1). According to this theory, the Portuguese Overseas Identity will be understood as a process which was constructed and negotiated through relationships between the individuals and bureaucratic colonial structure. Such theoretical approach of identity, however, will be also mathematically calculated due to Network Sciences meters in algorithms connecting the network, among others, degree centrality, betweenness, closeness or eigenvector etc., where the major network actors as bridges, informers, key users and connections will be defined.

The colonial social network was not natural given but was a fruit of the dialogue-based approach and the result of investment strategies, both based on individual and collective needs. The social relations between the inhabitants of the Portuguese colonies and the metropolitan institutions were established and reproduced consciously, resulting in durable obligations, felt subjectively at individual level as gratitude (port. gratidão), respect (port. respeito) and mercy (mercê) or institutionally guaranteed (rights).

Paul D. McLean, associate professor of Sociology at Rutgers University and the author of “The Art of the Network: Strategic Interaction and Patronage in Renaissance Florence” believes that early-modern societies had much deeper understanding of importance of networking as a social process than the contemporaries[[2]](#footnote-2). The research question is how the Portuguese administration contributed to birthing the Overseas Identity of its inhabitants, especially those marginalized from the point of view of the colonial system. The hypothesis, however, is that Portuguese colonialism united single individuals rather than excluded them, making even the most marginalized groups to strive to integrate within the colonial system and to create supranational social networks.

1. **CONTRIBUTION AND IMPORTANCE**

The results will be innovative and significant on many different levels.

**For the historiography:**

This study is a combination of the traditional historiography with the Network Science and the

mathematical-information tool, Social Network Analysis. It is as well one of the few historical studies that utilizes the network perspective as a methodology and a data analysis software (R Studio) as a tool for the archive-based investigation. Additionally, it should be explained that the concept of networks has always been used in historical studies, but so far only in a metaphorical sense, but the contemporary tools already allows to apply them in practice. Therefore, the project aims to disseminate the interdisciplinary collaboration of historiography with other fields such as computer science and digital humanities.

**For the Portuguese historiography:**

It would be the first attempt, among the Iberian and Lusophone researchers, to reconstruct the Portuguese colonial social networks metaphorically and mathematically. The history of the Portuguese empire shall be approached in its entirety, and not necessarily as separated regions.

The traditional Portuguese studies used to focus mainly on the economic history and the trade relations. The changes in this field first occurred at the beginning of the 21st century, when the new studies referred more to social and cultural history and to comparative research. The social history of the Portuguese empire is the academic practice of the last two decades, however it is still analyzed from the point of view of the elites, family connections and transatlantic trade. The subjects of my research are people who, in the light of traditional historiography, were on the social margins of this empire, ex. slaves, freedmen, women, native Indian.

Diego Ramada Curto, the great Portuguese historian, drew attention to the importance of the internationalization of the studies on the Portuguese Empire, whose purpose became obsessive to the historians of his generation.

**For the study on globalization:**

The results of quantitative analysis, supported by the qualitative one, can provide an innovative view of the study of the history of the Portuguese empire and indicate the golden mean for two antagonistic schools: Portuguese and Brazilian. While the first propagates the vision of a "good empire" based on integration and miscegenation, the second (mainly represented by F.A. Novais) refers to the empire of economic exploitation. These investigations explore the Portuguese empire in terms of understanding the overseas possessions as a space of ​​new socio-political opportunities in the world of colonial exploitation. Social networks can reveal interesting relationships between the empire and the metropolis, showing that those that had the right to express their feeling and minds were not only those who deserved it, but also those the most exploited and excluded.

Therefore, the research brings innovative results in many fields, always highlighting how this small Iberian country connected the world, consequently creating the transatlantic Lusophone culture and the Portuguese overseas mentality. In the macro scale, due to the Network Science, many concepts such as bridges, reciprocity or centrality are being investigated mathematically through the administration correspondence. In the micro scale, however, this kind of correspondence will show the relations between the European metropolis and its African and American colonies, modifying the traditional vision of the center and the peripheries. The research provides tangible answers to questions like ‘who was responsible for the activities

developed in the Portuguese colonies,’ and ‘what was the role of these colonies in the

construction of the most enduring European maritime empire?’

Finally, the project offers an innovative perspective on the study of globalization in the area of ​​the early-modern Portuguese empire and can provide a basis for understanding contemporary relations between Portugal and its former colonies.

**For the Polish Academy:**

The project will be the first Polish contribution to the studies on the early-modern Portuguese Empire on the international scale. During the realization of the research, various scientific articles will be published in different languages. The final result will be a publication in the form of a bilingual book - in English and Portuguese, which next will be disseminated through Polish Universities, in addition to Portugal and Brazil.

**For the Network Analysis:**

Finally, the research can bring innovative results for the network analysis that often falls prey to a static conception of networks, forgetting that the network ties are being constructed and negotiated throughout the time. The Portuguese colonial social networks were the place where all the actions were happening very dynamically.

1. **WORKING PLAN:**

**The project will be implemented in accordance with the following research concept:**

1. **To prepare the literature that refers to Social Network Analysis**

* Study of the impact of Social Network Analysis on the scientific researches
* Selection of relevant articles published in leading journals in social networks research: *Social Network, Connections, Journal of Social Structure*

1. **To prepare the literature that refers to theoretical concepts of social network and to develop a theoretical framework**

* Ex. Paul D. McLean, “The Art of the Network – strategies interaction and patronage in Renaissance Florence”
* Ex. Exchange relation theory and Social Influence Network Theory

1. **To prepare the relevant literature that refers to the globalization and theoretical networks in the Portuguese Empire (examples):**

* J.R Russell-Wood, *O Império Português 1415-1808 – O mundo em movimento*
* H.M Gesteira, L.M Carolino, P. Marinho, *Formas do Império*
* Giuseppe Marcocci, *A Consciência de um Império*

1. **To determine research question incorporating network perspective into study on the Portuguese Empire (examples):**

* How the colonial system affected individual outcomes and how those individuals affected the system?
* To what extant were individual outcomes and the social system intertwined?
* How a given colonial social network affected the formulation and the maintenance of various collective norms in the African and American

1. **Bibliographic query in libraries in Portugal and Brazil**

* National Museum of Lisbon, Portuguese Overseas Archive in Lisbon, Torre do Tombo National Archive in Lisbon, The National Library of Brazil In Rio De Janeiro, Florestan Fernandes Library of São Paulo University
* Selection and study of written sources
* Consultations and discussion about the gathered documentation in Portugal and Brazil

1. **Quantitative (Macroscale): Construction and visualization of the network by R Studio and Python**

* Based on the records and short abstract of the correspondence of the Portuguese Overseas Archives
* A special application was created just for this project (based on Natural Language Programming, Text mining and Latent Dirchlet Allocation)
* The application performs actions to filter and sort the lists stored in the database, depending on its preferences. It is able to track the correspondence throughout the ages, at different locations. In addition, one can see details about the letter that was extracted from the metadata
* Determining Social Network meters of the Portuguese colonial society degree: ex. centrality, betweenness, closeness, eigenvector, major network actors, bridges, informers, key users and connections will be selected.

1. **Qualitative (Microscale)**

* The analyze of the letters in the Portuguese Overseas Archives, for example:
* Analyze of the original Portuguese letters sent by women, slaves, freedmen, Indians (ex. Design, rhetoric, structures and techniques of writing letters, patterns, identifying relevant third part involved, narration of the problem, social attributes)
* Analyzing how they negotiated their relationships by different means of the words, how they identified themselves and their position in the structure

1. **Popularization of the research results in papers presented in national and international conferences**
2. **Final social networks of the Portuguese Empire presented in the form of interactive website available in four languages**
3. **Popularization of the research results in scientific articles**
4. **Final research result presented in the form of bilingual publication (English-Portuguese) on national and international scale**
5. **METHODOLOGY**

The methodology used in this research will be Social Network Analysis, which offers a new perspective on the understanding of sociocultural and political developments at both regional and global levels. The research tool is "R", which is a specialized software for interpreting the programming language that enables statistical calculations and visualization of results in the form of graphs of social networks, through the graphical interface RStudio.

The project will be based on the database and the application that were especially created and developed for this research and was possible due to other funding specifically for the IT service.

The graphs of social networks may only show some tendencies and dynamics; therefore such research should be backed up by a solid qualitative analysis. Consequently, the Historical Network Research will be next conducted on two levels: macro (quantitative) and micro (qualitative).

The data source for the quantitative analysis are the records of the colonial correspondence that was circulating between Lisbon and its Atlantic colonies in America and Africa. The documentation is stored at Overseas Archive in Lisbon, the heir of the old Overseas Council, the early-modern institution created in 1642 to deal with the overseas administration and finances.

Those letters, as the key links in the colonial social network, proved the strong communication between Portugal and its old maritime possessions, where both sides very active - the royal administration and the individuals. The database will allow to calculate the network meters of the early modern Portuguese empire. This analyze will identify who had a central position in the network, who connected more than two groups and who was able to mediate or to control the flow between different parts of the network.

It should be noted that quantitative analysis will identify the nodes, but will not reveal any details of relationships between them, therefore, the qualitative analysis will be an integral part of this project. The selected original Portuguese letters stored in the Lisbon Overseas Archives will be profoundly analyzed. On this basis, an analysis of Ego type networks will be made in the context of the numbers and types of connections that the marginalized individuals (ex. slaves, freedmen, native Indians and women) had in their target group. Placing an Ego type network in a full network structure will determine how central those individuals were in colonial structure.

The network approach is based on a theoretical statement indicating that all individuals are interconnected and their outcomes are strongly related. Therefore, the networks theory focuses on the interdependence of social life and on the complexity of the social system whose paths served for the flow and diffusion of ideas or information[[3]](#footnote-3). It should be remembered that all actors’ actions within networks are intentional and, for this reason, social networking could be understood as the conscious practice of establishing lasting relationships. Social actors, somehow, are involved in the actions with their own strategies and motivations. Thus, it is essential to study both - the role played by the actors and the importance of the connections. As Gary Christina Prell noted, social network analysis is not only a methodological extension to social science, but first it brings some theoretical commitments borrowed from the graph theory, where dependency and connectivity shall be the focus of research, and then, after all, whose results could be represented in a graphical form[[4]](#footnote-4).

Consequently, the traditional analysis of historical documents will be enriched with network theory and network theory. As an example, we could analyze a strong position of the Portuguese king within the networks, however it does not necessarily imply that his reign was just centralized and absolutist. The relations between colonial societies and Lisbon could be considered impersonal and weak. Nevertheless, S. Granovetter was the first scholar in the area of social networks that understood the strength of weak ties, demonstrating that such bonds could connect the disconnected groups, as they acted as bridges in diffusion of information and the spreading of ideas from one group to another[[5]](#footnote-5). Unlike networks that rely on strong ties that imply and overlap between groups, this colonial social network of weak ties was more probably to connect different groups of people. Such structure could be crucial for both sides - the king and the population of color. According to this theory, the king was supposed to be a bridge that provided access and information which otherwise some individuals would not have been able to obtain by themselves. Such a bridge was extremely important also for the society as it prevented the formation of subgroups that could break its integrality. However, one defect of this theory is strongly perceptible, as Granovetter underestimated the strong ties, which he considered a threat to social solidity. On the contrary, such ties could have built a basis for the most important component of community cohesion which was trust. Perhaps the king himself acted as a diffuser, but failed to create denser networks that could link better several groups. Predominating heterogenous groups, as well as the colonial ones, could naturally divide into subgroups and lead to fragmentation, which is what fundamentally happened during the decolonization period. Weak ties should be responsible for the community to evolve, while strong ones--to remain. It could be observed that while the first ones succeeded, the second--failed in the maintenance of the Portuguese colonial system.

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5. Mark S. Granovetter, “The Strength of Weak Ties”, 1363-1364 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)