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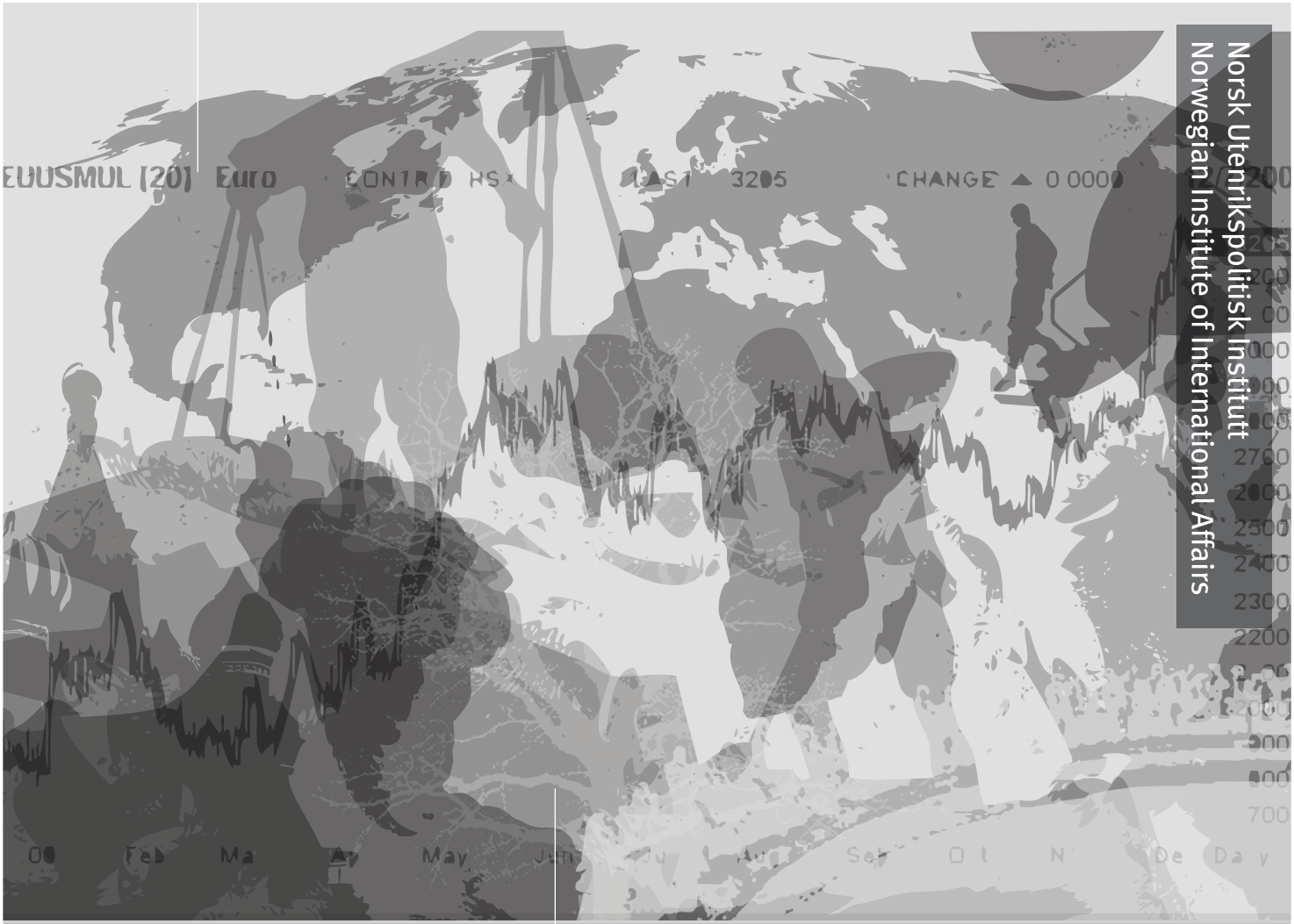

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Visiting address: C.J. Hambros plass 2d
Address: P.O. Box 8159 Dep.
NO-0033 Oslo, Norway

Internet: www.nupi.no
E-mail: info@nupi.no
Tel: [+ 47] 22 99 40 00
Fax: [+ 47] 22 36 21 82

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Morten Skumsrud Andersen
msa@nupi.no

Nexon and Wright (2007) have shown how classical social network analysis and newer relational sensibilities can be combined in ideal typical ways to make sense of the governing logics of empires. Whilst their model shows formal imperial ties, I argue that there is a lot happening before these formal ties are established – what one might call 'preparing the ground' for imperial logics of rule. For such dynamics, I construct a sup-plementary ideal type to facilitate the empirical study of the *formation* of imperial ties. To investigate processes of social formation, I resort to institutional theory. Further, to apply institutional theory in an efficient way in studying the formation of ties, one should focus on micro level phenomena. The new ideal type depicts how informal imperial ties exist in the process of empire formation, how imperial intermediaries are under construc-tion, and how an imperial 'pincer movement' helps to construct such informal ties and in-termediaries. Using empirical illustrations, I assess the core mechanisms of Nexon and Wright's original formulation in light of the new ideal type.

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In the Assyrian empire, boasting about how terrible and ferocious the Assyrian kings and their armies were in war served to install fear in the to-be-conquered populations (Mann 1986: 232-234). But their relations were not only of fear and awe. One event, as retold in the Bible, describes how the Assyrian army approaches the walls of Jerusalem. The people of Jerusalem are on the walls to see and listen. The Assyrian envoy, the Rab-shakeh (a vizier), is negotiating with the Hebrew representative, but is asked by his fellow Assyrians not to speak in Hebrew when negotiating. The people on the wall will understand. But that was exactly the purpose. The Assyrians had chosen an envoy that mastered the local language. He 'stood and called out in a loud voice in the language of Judah: "Hear the word of the Great King, the King of Assyria. Thus says the King…Make your peace with me and come out to me; then every one of you will eat of his own vine, and every one of his own fig tree"' (2 Kings 18:31, quoted in Watson 1998: 36). He was reaching out to influence the people, not only talking to the local rulers.

In emerging empires, there is a direct relationship between the imperial core and subject populations, and not only through imperial intermediaries (Watson 1998: 34-37, Mann 1986: 235-237). The importance of such direct ties with the population is echoed in Machiavelli's insight, that the worst strategy for creating an empire is to simply install a friendly oligarchy, and then to collect the benefits from afar. To be successful, he argued, you have to travel to the population in the periphery and live with them (Maquiavelo 1999: 17). This is what this article will illustrate, through elaborating an ideal-type of how empires emerge.

A systematic exploration of the concept of empire to make it analytically useful for empirical studies of world politics has been lacking in International Relations (IR). However, recent efforts by Nexon and Wright (2007, see also Nexon 2010) have made an important step in this direction. Leaning on social network analysis, they develop an ideal typical configurational model of imperial relations to facilitate an exploration of specific instances that might evidence imperial logics of power in operation. They make the convincing case that looking at hierarchy between polities is not specific enough to study empires, or imperial traits (cf. Lake 2009b). Empire is a form of hierarchy, but with a distinct logic of rule.

However, as I will argue in this article, this ideal type is not particularly effective in explaining how imperial relations are constituted and made. We need a complementary ideal type to explain how empires emerge.

The concept of 'empire' has received a bad rap historically. Since when the word empire was used to legitimate Napoleon's expansion and lost the classical significance as *regnum*, the concept of 'empire' has been associated with something that others do. Put another way, empire contra what empire is *not* has become an asymmetrical political rhetoric between 'bad' and 'good'.[1] This means that 'empire' as analytical concept is difficult to put to use in contemporary social science, as the negative connotations with tyrannical rule linger on.[2] Still, the concept rears its head in debates over U.S. grand strategy, EU expansion, or in claims that the neoliberal underpinnings of interventionism, peacebuilding and state building practices are reminiscent of colonial 'standards of civilizations', and that western IOs and NGOs are increasingly approaching an imperial way of conducting business (see inter alia Gong 1984; Mehta 1999; Fidler 2001; Behr 2007; Zielonka 2007; Cohen et.al. 2008; Bowden 2009). On the other hand, it seems that contemporary claims on empire, rather than arguing for the existence of traditional, fully-fledged imperial relations, are addressing *burgeoning* imperial relations – or phenomena that are somehow *reminiscent* of empire. These are claims, however, that seem to be difficult to assess empirically in a systematic manner with existing conceptual tools. When combined with the bad reputation of empire as a concept, the danger is that such claims are easily dismissed as 'politicized' or 'unwarranted' without a proper systematic investigation of their merit. In social science, there is an ever-present need to distinguish between quotidian and political terms, and analytical terms (Jordheim and Neumann, forthcoming).

There are more substantial reasons for why an ideal type of empire formation might be relevant in a contemporary context. For example, divide-and-rule tactics has been upheld as a core defining feature of the operation of empires. However, such tactics become more difficult to pull off in contemporary, interlinked world politics. As Nexon (2010) points out, the reason why this worked against alliances in early modern Europe was because the logic of local privileges was based on a zero-sum logic in a highly stratified arrangement of authority. In practice, there was no way to 'simultaneously expand the rights and privileges of dynasts, substitutable elites, and ordinary people' (Nexon 2010: 128). Many would argue that this does not hold true today and that, in fact, the opposite logic is characteristic of modern forms of rule, e.g. in 'global governance' and in addressing 'failed' or 'weak' states through liberal peacebuilding (Neumann and Sending 2007, 2010).

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1 For instance, In Germany, because of the historical circumstances, imperialism was seen as a 'bad' activity exercised by the British. Germany, in contrast, only exercised *Weltpolitik* - World Politics.

2 Even if, among some, it has become a self-referential concept. See e.g. Rieff 2003: 10, Lal 2003: 29, Boot 2002.

The assumption, in short, is that there are more instances of imperial relations under construction than there are fully operational imperial relations in contemporary world politics, and that there might be other logics behind the formation of imperial relations.

I argue that within Nexon and Wright's model of empires, it is difficult to study how empires emerge and to answer the question of how governing logics of empire are made in the first place as their ideal type is formalizing already operational imperial relations. Nexon and Wright start out a priori with the concept of empire as having some ideal-typical defining features, a collection of functional traits, or 'social-network properties of imperial orders' that 'produce a set of dynamics and processes that distinguish the logics of empire from the logics of unipolar or hegemonic systems' (2007: 254). How such properties are made and changing is not open to inquiry within their model, and we need an additional tool to investigate the formation of empire.

Nexon and Wright's ideal typical model of how empires work is laudable for its parsimonious clarity. How can one study formative mechanisms of empire in an equally clear manner?

I will elaborate a complementary ideal type capturing the mechanisms involved in preparing the terrain for what concerns Nexon and Wright, namely formal imperial relations. In doing this, one will have to recognize the practices that have historically 'marched in procession' (de Certeau 1984, Neumann 2002) before formal empire. The value of operating with more than one ideal type is also emphasised by Max Weber, who is often considered the father of the methodological invention of the ideal type. If we adopt Weber's view, theories are 'instrumental idealizations of phenomena and relationships rather than representational copies of them – and as such are always provisional rather than final, and are also linked to the specific goals and purposes that animate them' (Jackson 2010: 143). Weber thus emphasized the usefulness of a number of different ideal types to use in empirical investigations of a phenomenon.

Ideal typification will always involve 'freezing' an array of states of affairs or objects for analysis, but one can get away with this by being conscious about ideal types always being 'utopian', in a sense, to instrumentally facilitate investigations of a messy world. Instead of starting from an assumption of a possible correspondence between the world and our ideas about it, the starting point is a never-achievable and utopian model and systematization of traits, and pragmatically compares, not tests, the empirics against it - not as a totality, but focusing on specific cases or instances. Given its methodological 'as if'

character, an ideal type cannot be untrue, but it can be more or less efficient in systematizing and explaining phenomena. I argue that by starting from 'somewhere else', one could complement Nexon and Wrights ideal typification to shed new light on contemporary world politics. Whilst Nexon and Wrights ideal type of formal imperial traits is extremely useful, and the basis on which I rest in this article, the additional ideal type concerns informal ties of empires, and can serve as a tool to investigate the formative practices of imperial relations.

In constructing such a new ideal type of formative imperial practices, Nexon and Wright's model is a good starting point for this, as it represents the ideal typical 'result' of such formations. I will proceed with the task in the following manner. I will first present the core thrust of Nexon and Wright's argument, and detail why we are in need of another ideal type of how empires are made. To investigate processes of social formation, I will then argue that one can gain important insights by drawing on newer institutional theory, preoccupied with questions of how social arrangements form. Further, to apply institutional theory in an efficient way to investigate the formation of ties, I argue that the empirical entry point should be on the micro level of social phenomena. This moves the study of empires in IR beyond formal relations or units, and towards studying empires as a 'full spectrum social phenomenon' not limited to questions of political control (Barkawi 2010). In the new ideal type there are three, major differences from Nexon and Wright's original ideal type. First, the network ties based on routine interaction are not formal but informal. Second, imperial intermediaries or 'middle men' are emergent agents and not yet fully fledged actors. They are better conceptualized as an institution under construction. This is connected to the third and most important difference. There exist routine relations directly between core and peripheries, alongside the burgeoning middle men. The imperial core has a more 'hands on' approach in relation to the imperial peripheries. This is needed to construct a stable social background condition with associated sanctions that is shared between the core and periphery - a general prerequisite for informal rule. It is also needed in order to construct categories of differentiation to prepare for divide-and-rule tactics. This network property of an empire under formation can be likened to a 'pincer movement', by which the intermediary is constructed both from the core and from below – from peripheral society. I will in conclusion consider the mechanisms of Nexon and Wright's original ideal type, but with a view as to how ties were formed, using empirical illustrations.

Empire and IR

The question of empire has made a comeback in the study of International Relations, particularly following the 9/11 attacks. A wave of literature in the early 2000s addressed questions of empire and corresponding challenges of rule and global governance (see inter alia Boot 2002; Callinicos 2002; Eland 2002; Hasner 2002; Hendrickson 2002; Ikenberry 2002; Mallaby 2002; Shaw 2002; Walker 2002; Wohlforth 2002; Cox 2003; Ignatieff 2003; Kaldor 2003; Rosen 2003; Snyder 2003). However, as an analytical concept, empire has been conceived of in different ways within IR and analyses of world politics.

As indicated above, a rather normative approach uses empire in a politicised and rhetorical way. Historically, the concept "empire' has developed from meaning effectuating God's rule, to a secular concept of hierarchical rule as opposed to the Pope's sacerdotal domain, to the natural way of organising progress, and has for the last 90 years been a negatively loaded concept for describing what others do (see Jordheim and Neumann, forthcoming). Empire is bad because it is empire and not something else, like domestic rule (Muthu 2003) or democracy (Chomsky 1992). My aim is however to understand empire analytically, and not simply oppose it.[3]

Perhaps the most common way of looking at empire is as a mainly materialistic and unitary concept; empire is often similar or equal to actors such as super- or hyperpowers, or hegemons, or even to unipolarity (Ferguson 2004: 8). Power is possessed by such centralised actors, and used towards the sub-dominant or the peripheries. Empire is about territorial conquest, and parallels are often drawn between historical empires and contemporary contexts (Colás 2008). Ivan Eland (2002) talks about 'the new imperialists'. His point is that there are changes *in* the international system, not *of* the system. The logic is still that of great powers rising, counterbalancing, and a tendency towards sameness (Waltz 1979). Martin Walker (2002) calls the U.S. a 'virtual empire', in which power is so evident that it need not be exercised - only possessed. He argues, then, that 'sovereignty is treated with respect' in the 'virtual empire'. Pierre Hasner (2002) leads our attention to the paradox between the modern political system and the imperial ambitions of the U.S. Bush said 'we have found our mission' and the

[3] Still, another way of approaching empire analytically is to take the different, normative meanings of empire as the object of analysis – to analyse concepts "semasiologically' by investigating their different meanings over time. For such a conceptual analysis of empire, see Jordheim and Neumann (forthcoming).

mission, according to Hasner, is one of benevolent empire combined with warrior virtues inspired by Rome, all this in conflict with modernity. The 'solution' is for Europe to counterbalance. But what is empire? Empire as analytical category is underspecified in focussing on classical power disparities. There are no imperial traits, just power to be used whilst others' power is ignored. Authors that do focus on empire as an analytical category, are also often at loss when it comes to how this is different from unipolarity or hegemony (Cooley 2005; Spruyt 2005). These approaches do not address how a logic of empire and the exercise of power can be fundamentally different from that of the traditional state system. These two categories are not very analytically useful. Other approaches fare better, because they offer us some analytical tools to investigate empires.

Newer constructivist or critical approaches see empire as a changing logic of de-territorialised rule and governance in the international realm, as the forms and practices of power are changing. Barkawi and Laffey (2002) point to how the Westphalian model of the international obscures the role of imperial relations in world politics. Retrieving the imperial offers a way out of the 'territorial trap' set by Westphalia, and directs our attention to phenomena occluded by taken-for-granted categories in IR. Roxanne L. Doty (1996) also prefers a focus on 'imperial encounters' to systemic and material analysis. Yet, even if pointing to important dynamics, a basis for systamtically studying imperial phenomena today is lacking. Ferguson and Mansbach (1996) elaborates on the idea of 'polities' as a substitute for taking the state as granted, and to escape Westphalian territoriality. They go through a range of historical examples of empires to explore the complexity of political arrangements throughout history, but there is little in terms of systematizing this complexity (Ferguson and Mansbach 1996; Buzan and Little 2000: 54). Also, some analyses within this approach tend to be overtly structural and interpretative. Discourses are coherent and all-encompassing, logics are singular (Hardt and Negri 2001) and insufficient weight is given to imperial practices.

The original ideal type: formal imperial ties

Nexon and Wright (2007), in turn, do not see empire as a traditional 'fully fledged' one, as consistently territorial or coherent. Instead, they try to identify mechanisms of empire to study imperial tendencies in contemporary international relations.

Empire is posited as an ideal type - that cannot be tested against the empirics - but that still exists as the basic tool to investigate how the nodes interact or relate. Their ideal type provides guidance, not in defining a territorial unit like the state as 'an empire', but in investigat-

ing specific logics of rule in specific cases. These patterns of interrelations as specified in the model produce effects, like divide-and-rule dynamics, or cross-pressures. Such interactions and effects are results of the ideal typical model of network properties of empires. Empire exists as an ideal type, and one can then go on to specify how this can be used in empirical investigations to determine whether the relation or tie observed can plausibly be termed imperial.

Nexon and Wright start out a priori with the concept of empire as having some ideal-typical defining features, a collection of functional traits, or "social-network properties of imperial orders' that "produce a set of dynamics and processes that distinguish the logics of empire from the logics of unipolar or hegemonic systems' (2007:254).

In their ideal type, whilst the actors are structurally equivalent (as in Waltz's 1979 ideal type of the anarchical system), they are not functionally equivalent, and here it differs from Waltz. That is, there are different equivalence classes, in which actors or nodes are placed according to an equivalence measure, thereby inhabiting different positions and functions in a network.

They identify an ideal-typical imperial hub and spoke structure or a 'rimless wheel' (cf. Motyl 1999, 2001). They follow Charles Tilly's (1997) definition of an empire, as consisting of two elements. An empire makes use of intermediaries to exercise power. The intermediaries, to 'enjoy considerable autonomy within their own domains', contribute to the center with 'compliance, tribute and military collaboration' (Tilly 1997: 3). Secondly, these intermediaries are not homogeneous in their character and in their role as middlemen. In empires there exist, typically, a relation between the centre and *each of* the imperial provinces, such that the space for agency of each of these intermediaries is unique. The combination of what Nexon and Wright call heterogeneous contracting and indirect rule, are thus the basic elements of the ideal-type empire (Nexon and Wright 2007: 258-60). However, how intermediaries become intermediaries in imperial relations, and how different spaces for different intermediaries surge within one structure, is not treated in the model.

The problems with indirect rule are, first, that it is not very efficient, and second, that it facilitates the diversion of resources into the

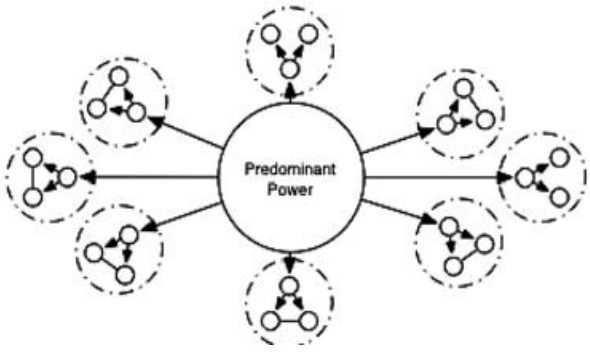

Fig. 1: Ideal type of imperial order (taken from Nexon&Wright 2007: 257)

hands of the local elites acting as intermediaries. It also involves a danger of the local elites 'going native' – that they use their local power base to pursue their own interests and gain too much power relative to the centre. This is often checked by rotating the offices of the intermediaries (Barkey 1994, 1996; Elliot 1984: 291-3; Nexon and Wright 2007: 265).

Heterogeneous contracting means that the centre has to maintain its specific 'contracts' with the various intermediaries who rule the provinces. The intermediaries need a degree of authority to control the population, and thus surges the dilemma: a concern to maintain good relations with the centre on the one hand, and the good relations with the inhabitants of the province on the other. From the centre's perspective, the central point is that the provinces must be isolated from *each other* to prevent the possibility of coordinated resistance against the imperial power. Consequently, the imperial power chain goes to the provinces through intermediaries, but no linkages exist between the various provinces. Heterogeneous contracting is therefore dependent on a strategy of *divide-and-rule* to avoid contact between and the homogeneity of provinces.

With a multitude of different peripheral units, the core has to negotiate between different interests and cross pressures. This is done through 'multivocal signalling' – communicating in ways that can be interpreted differently according to the specifics of the peripheral units, or conveying different stories of legitimacy to each of the peripheries. However, the constitution of commonalities or differences on which such legitimacy and communicative strategies rest is difficult to investigate with their model.

It is tempting for the centre to apply the same logic of divide-and-rule also in the imperial relations to each of the provinces *in particular*. The centre triangulates between different local factions within the province, and thus prevents the imperial exercise of power from becoming dependent upon acceptance from a local group (Nexon and Wright 2007: 265) However, there is usually a trade-off involved between this and a politics of creating common identities. The promotion of a common identity binds the empire together. Local elites, who act as intermediaries, are given the status, benefits and ideological orientation necessary to bind them tightly to the centre (*ibid.*). This mechanism does not combine easily with a mechanism of divide-and-rule. What is more, divide-and-rule within the province is more difficult than divide-and-rule between provinces, and must often rely on categorical differences like class, status, identity, religion, ethnicity etc. (Baumgartner et.al. 1975: 422). Nexon and Wright call the two *binding strategies* and *pivoting strategies*.

One can observe both strategies of binding the local actors to the empire to secure legitimacy, and to construct a class of loyal, local actors that may eventually serve as middle men. This class can also serve as a substitutable elite, because the central authorities also need to triangulate between local actors, including the middle men. These are the 'pivoting' strategies, to avoid reliance on only one segment of the population. Another important element is that the conscious or unconscious diffusion of the imperial culture may in itself lead to ties developing between peripheries. The process that leads to the development of the loyalty of the local elites and populations may also create the possibility for greater homogeneity of peripheries (Nexon and Wright 2007: 262). However, it can easily be assumed that making categorical differences, the binding of actors to the core, and the construction of classes to serve as intermediaries, all happens through more or less *informal* relations – that is, relations between actors and groups of actors that are not explicitly codified e.g. through alliances with corresponding rights and obligations. The model, however, takes the existence of formal imperial ties as its point of departure, and is therefore not able to systematically explain how imperial relations surge - a process that could involve different logics.

In the original model, the concepts of *centrality* and *brokerage* are central. The core has a high centrality, as it has ties to all the peripheries. In the 'rimless wheel', each periphery only has one tie, and that is to the core. The degree of 'betweenness' of the units concerns brokerage - who has the power of broker, through controlling central access points in the network? The core also has a high degree of brokerage. Any periphery wishing to interact with other peripheries must go through the core. This has to do with the abovementioned importance of segmenting the peripheries to avoid simultaneous rebellion or resistance. Also the middle men have an important brokerage position between the core and the peripheries.

On the level of local structure - that is within the periphery - the intermediaries must have a degree of autonomy, but not so much as to gain inappropriate leverage over relations between the core and the periphery in question. After all, they serve as a broker between the core and its periphery. As on the aggregate level, the possibility for divide and rule strategies must be present also on the local level. There are, however, no possibility in the model for routine ties existing directly between the core and the peripheries, something I will argue is important in the formative phase of empires.

The theoretical advances of such an ideal type, also in combination with other ideal types of international order, are significant. It provides us with a tool to systematically and empirically investigate for-

mal imperial ties and their operations, as something different from e.g. anarchy and unipolarity, and 'allows scholars to provide guidance for assessing how real-world patterns of interaction approach each of the ideal-typical forms, combine them in specific instances, or otherwise configure in ways that make the dynamics associated with each of them more or less salient to foreign policy (Nexon and Wright 2007: 254).

However, Nexon and Wrights model are depicting an already operational imperial network structure, with certain network properties in place, but not how such network properties arise in the first place – the constitution of empire – what would make Nexon and Wrights ideal type what it is. Nexon and Wright write that

> Isomorphisms in the formal properties of networks generate similar causal logics and dynamics. This should be the case regardless of the particular historical period in which a network structure is found, what level of analysis it operates at, or the specific cultural content of the ties that make up a network (Simmel 1971: 25–26).

Even if this is true, I will argue, it is not the case that the logic is similar regardless of whether we are talking about *constitution or maintenance* of empire. I argue that a different logic is present in the formative phase of empire. To put it crudely, a logic of constitution is to a logic of maintenance what flirting and banter is to marriage. The network properties in Nexon and Wright's model play out only after the imperial network has been established by other, constitutive properties. Whilst their model concerns whether an empire is efficient at being or remaining an empire, depending on the network properties, it is not concerned with the constitutive network properties of *becoming* an empire.

Even if Nexon and Wright are attentive to different mechanisms leading to change, it is difficult to asses the changes that are constitutive for the very mechanisms or relations of empire in the first place. Within their ideal type, it is difficult to explain the origin of systemic changes, meaning the origin of imperial ties and their network properties. Even if the specific mechanisms within their ideal type of empire might change, depending e.g. of how one responds to cross pressures, the constitutive and defining properties of the imperial relations remain stable in their ideal type. The contents of empire change, but the model is less dynamic than what is required to understand empire formation – the constitutional properties of empire. Explaining the origins of such properties, relations, or networks, become problematic.

In general, when 'the rise and fall of empires' is studied in IR, the weight is more often than not on the 'fall'-part of the equation. As Motyl (2001) has pointed out, there is a need for theories that explicitly concern the rise of empires. A systematic approach to preparatory practices of empire formation, a way of investigating consistently the building blocks of empire, is a deficit in the literature. Adding an ideal type of preparatory practices for empire, I argue, is also highly relevant for the contemporary study of world politics. If one is able to specify an ideal type of formative practices potentially leading to relations of empire, that would open up for a thorough, systematic, and empirically based assessment of contemporary claims that certain informal logics in the international system are different and approaching the 'imperial', such as liberal interventionism, peacebuilding, practices of International Organizations and NGOs, and a host of other contended phenomena of 'global governance'.

For my purpose, then, it is necessary to investigate whether there are ideal typical traits that are specific to the very formation of imperial ties, in short, if there are practices of 'preparing the ground' for empire. More specifically, we need an ideal type that makes possible the systematic investigation of how imperial ties form, how middle men emerge, and that can account for routine ties that exist directly between core and peripheries.

I will propose a new ideal type, resting on two general assumptions that can facilitate the explanation of empire formation: a general prerequisite for indirect rule is that core and periphery have a stable and shared background condition with associated sanctions. Furthermore, it is necessary to construct categories of differentiation to prepare for heterogeneous contracting.

More specifically, in the new ideal type of imperial formation, there are three, major differences from Nexon and Wright's original ideal type. First, the ties based on routine interaction are not formal but informal. That means that the properties of ties and the measure of equivalence (the reason for placing one category of actors in a functional group, such as 'periphery' or 'intermediary') will depend on different functions in the formation of empire than in an already functioning imperial tie. Even if the equivalence classes remain – after all, the aim is to explore the formation of imperial ties according to the original ideal type – the classes are not defined by their formal function in an imperial system, but their characteristics to be 'used' in the formation of such formal functions.

A second difference is that the middle man, or intermediary, is an emergent agent and is not yet a fully fledged actor. It is better concep-

tualized as an institution under construction. This is directly connected to the third difference, which is the most crucial: there is a routine relation that exists as a direct informal tie between core and periphery, alongside the burgeoning middle man. This can be likened to a 'pincer movement', by which the intermediary is constructed both from the core and from below – from peripheral society. The core cannot simply hand over power to a given social group or actor. This must be supported from below, by a broader social structure, to create the necessary 'taken-for-grantedness', or 'background' to secure the stability of the functioning of the intermediary as detailed in Nexon and Wrights model.

In the following, I will start from Nexon and Wright's model and look at what happens to the above mechanisms in an ideal type of formative practices of imperial ties. In contrast to Nexon and Wright's ideal type that treats *formalized* imperial traits through routine authority relations, my focus is on informal practices preceding these ties.

Empire as Institutionalization

My starting point is that Nexon and Wright's framework can be put to use in this effort to systematize how imperial relations surge. However, some additional theoretical resources are needed for this endeavour. If one is interested in the creation of social phenomena, one good place to look is in institutional theory – more specifically what has been called 'new institutionalism'. Institutions can in many ways be defined as 'taken-for-grantedness', and the aim of studying it is to reveal the mechanisms behind the formation of structures that become so ingrained in social relations that the 'can's and the 'cant's defining normality go unquestioned. This happens when there is a 'reciprocal typification of habitualized actions by types of actors (Berger and Luckmann 1966/1991: 72), and is as such a result of a co-productive relationship. Relevant questions addressed within this strand of research is how such institutions surge, how they change, how they are dismantled, and how institutions might prevail in spite of changing goals of actors, or vice versa (see e.g. Meyer and Rowan 1977; DiMaggio and Powell 1983, 1991; Lounsburry 2001, 2007; Scott 2001).

Much of the inspiration for these new institutionalists, emanating from Stanford, is found in Berger and Luckmans classic book 'The social construction of reality' (1966/1991) dealing with how basic social interactive mechanisms constitute and affect institutional formation, and has been further developed within seminal institutional and organizational work such as that of Paul DiMaggio, Walter Powell and Richard Scott. [4] Writings on institutions originating from this tradition might shed light on the formation of imperial ties if we for a moment think of the preparation of empire as being similar to institutionalization – a background of habitualized activity and ways of doing things. So how can institutional theory inspire us to think about ways in which the two core features of empire, indirect rule and heterogeneous contracting, are constituted?

Institutionalization, indirect rule, and heterogeneous contracting

The first contention is that, somehow, a common background of understandings must be present between core and periphery. This can

4 Alex Cooley (2005) is one of few that have applied organizational theory to the study of hierarchy in world politics. He applies a business model to different hierarchical formations to identify path dependencies of different types of institutionalization.

already be in place, or it must be crafted from existing cultural resources.

A stable background, portraying premises for action as something natural and (largely) unquestioned, is cost-effective, socially speaking, as the energies spent on decision making is reduced to a minimum by coding as much as possible into normality, and leaving space for crucial and highly necessary decisions (Berger and Luckmann 1966/1991: 71).

In the literature on the creation of empires, we can observe three different approaches concerning this question. First, some see the imperial efforts as a continuation of local traditions, or the 'local background' through indirect rule. Secondly, some would see imperialism as a radically transformative project, trying to construct a completely new 'background', as it were. Thirdly, and more attuned to the present analytical framework, one can see empire as established through interactions and hybrid constellations of neo-traditional elites (Gallagher and Robinson 1953). Tools in this effort has been the 'invention of tradition', or, rather imagined traditions, and what Mamdani (1996) in connection with modern colonization has called de-centralized despotism - closeting in populations in separate containers for then to selectively reconstruct tribal leadership as intermediaries. As Terence Ranger (1993) has shown, tribes and ethnicity in colonial Africa was not imposed as rigid and codified packages, unalterable by the colonial state. They were rather constantly re-made *from both above and below*, and existing practices were selectively invested with authority.

If this is so, by forming the social fabric of everyday practices, a fertile ground for indirect rule can potentially be obtained.[5] Instead of governing directly and spending a lot of resources on everyday decision making, ruling through a common understanding of the 'dos' and 'don'ts' is effective. A stable background for rule is also relevant in the way that it can assure legitimacy in the ruled periphery, as the peripheries themselves are indirectly involved in the formulation and reproduction of this 'normal state of affairs', and not simply shaped by a one-way exercise of dominance or force (see Lake 2009a; Dillon Savage 2010). The presence of 'taken-for-grantedness' frees space for involvement also in the peripheries. This is an advantage to use as 'it is more likely that one will deviate from programs set up for one by others that from programs that one has helped establish oneself' (Berger and Luckmann 1966/1991: 80). This resonates also with more recent cultural studies of empires and colonialism, detailing how impe-

5 This statement, importantly, does not by necessity imply any conscious decision on part of some imperial agent to actively form the social fabric to enable indirect rule. See next footnote on relations and coproduction.

rial rule was formed not as a one-way process, but co-produced through the collaboration and resistance of agents in the peripheries (Vail 1989; Feierman 1990; Ranger 1993; Said 1993; Stoler 1995; Doty 1996; Brysk et.al. 2002; Mitchell 2002; Cooper 2005; Pratt 1992).[6]

This social process of co-producing a stable background can almost be seen as the cultural equivalent of imperial rule through middle men, as detailed for example in the writings of Lord Lugard (1926/1965). Importantly, the fact that normality, and eventually imperial relations, are co-produced, does not mean that the peripheries were equally powerful as the core. The production still took place within a budding formal hierarchy. The core often sat down the terms of the debates, but they did not decide where it ended (Ranger 1993, Berman 1990). This in turn creates the need for constant vigilance and reproduction of the definitions of normality.

For longevity and reproduction of the normalized institutional framework, or background, new populations or new generations must be included into it, and to do that, 'the institution must…claim authority over the individual, independently of the subjective meanings he may attach to any particular situation. The priority of the institutional definitions of situations must be consistently maintained over individual temptations at redefinition' (Berger and Luckmann 1966/1990: 80).

As such, in forming the preconditions for indirect rule, there are two conflicting priorities that must be managed simultaneously: the liberation of space for action promoted by a common definition of normality, and the disciplining functions necessary for the reproduction of it. These corrective functions, importantly, must be maintained at a level that does not alienate the individuals. This can be secured by maintaining a balance between 'hard' and 'soft' measures, by selective application (confirming to the logic of 'heterogeneous contracting' as detailed below), or by defining exceptional situations (Schmitt 1922/2006) relative to established 'normality'. However, above all in the formative phase of institutional arrangements, attempts at defining normality with associated sanctions will trigger conflict and resistance. Concepts are co-produced, but also resisted (Cooper 2005: 4). To understand the formation of imperial ties, it is also important to

6 Such a view of the co-constitution of imperial ties also puts a traditional question often asked in a new light, namely how much causal weight should be put on he empire builders, and how much on the people in the peripheries (Abernethy 2000: 13). The question becomes less one of attributing degrees of causality, and more about specifying the distinctive causal mechanisms formed in the interactions in what was indeed a composite of relations. This means that, in the ideal type, there are no directional ties. The superior power of the core is in the model captured in the hierarchical structure, but not in the ties. They are co-producing the relation.

understand contestation (Suddaby and Greenwood 2005: 35, Dillon Savage 2010).

The need to avoid redefinition can be likened to how one raises children to behave properly, and subsequently how they are 'kept in line' (Berger and Luckmann 1966/1991: 80). This is a metaphor that resonates with much of colonial and imperial history (see e.g. Mehta 1999). Through this, it becomes clearer that there are some that implicitly are the ones to define and guard what are the borders of the institutions, even as it is co-produced. As with children and parenting, as with the prevalence of liberal ideas about universal rationality and values often taken into use in modern (colonial) empires, it can come to mean that certain things are done not because they are particularly efficient, but because they are institutionalized as the right thing to do. Institutions may persist even if they have lost their complete, original purpose. This again speaks to the taken-for-grantedness of institutions – structures must be seen as legitimate, 'apart from evaluations of their impact' (Meyer and Rowan 1977: 344). And this, importantly, can apply equally to the institutional core as to the peripheries.

Even if sometimes projected, there is never or seldom a fully planned scheme for social engineering behind institutional formations (Scott 1998, Li 2005). Institutions are not built from scratch, but are woven together by already existing social resources. Understandings and interpretations of e.g. new events are always built on already existing categorizations (unless you are mad), and so goes for institutions. This is the point behind de Certeaus formulation that 'stories "go in a procession" ahead of social practices in order to open a field for them'. Myths and local traditions are parts of what comes to be a co-produced social structure – the 'building blocks' for institutions are 'littered around the social landscape; it takes only a little entrepreneurial energy to assemble them into a structure' (Meyer and Rowan 1977: 345).

To assure legitimacy and survival, then, the new structure has incorporated already existing locally legitimate elements in what is surging as formalized arrangements (Meyer and Rowan 1977: 352). One of the historical characteristics of empires is therefore also that they are multicultural or multiethnic. Imperial rule has then been more about the organization of such existing differences, than imposing one, homogeneous concept of rule over a variety of subject populations (Duara 2007, Cooper 2005). Also in order not to invoke some kind of 'external model' to explain the preparation of empire, and to avoid reductionism, it is important to acknowledge that the mechanisms of preparing for empire are situated within a context of various 'repertoires' for action, and multiple structures or orders that interact to produce new

configurations. We are not talking about one superstructure, but 'a variety of ordered institutional and ideological patterns, each with its own origins and history and each with its own logic and pace' (Lieberman 2002: 701; Orren and Skowronek 1994, 1996). 'Normality' is therefore more about convergence of different, already exiting elements, rather than creating something fundamentally new.

This in turn implies that there is always a danger that if one structure of normality or logic invades another structural domain, the whole institutional framework is challenged. The application of existing categories to new circumstances is always 'risky' as categories can be used and appropriated 'by acting subjects in their personal projects' (Sahlins 1985: 149) leading to redefinition of these categories as corresponding to discrete goals of action (Sahlins 1981: 67-72; 1985: 136-56; Sewell 2005: 203). Therefore, in addition to a stable institutional 'background', it is in addition absolutely necessary to define categories of difference within the structure to prepare for divide-and-rule strategies. As seen above, with inclusion, there is a simultaneous need for exclusion. In other words, categories fit for both *binding* and *pivoting*. This corresponds to the divide-and.-rule tactics needed to avoid linkages between the isolated peripheries, and to enable polyvalent signalling as a response to cross-pressures from heterogeneous peripheries. Importantly, this is much more difficult to contain when talking about preparatory practices of empire. Efforts to establish, to guard and control the borders of normality to be able to reproduce them, and construct categories of inclusion and exclusion, become acute in the preparatory phase before formal and contractual imperial ties are established.

In their ideal type, Nexon and Wright are not so preoccupied with the constitutive properties of empire, but rather how a 'mature' or operational empire works. To get at how informal rule and heterogeneous contracting are constituted and established, I propose that a) that core and periphery have a stable and shared background condition with associated sanctions is a general prerequisite for informal rule, and that b) in addition to this, it is necessary to construct categories of differentiation to prepare for heterogeneous contracting. This can capture two crucial constitutive elements of empire that is not available for us in Nexon and Wrights model.

Empire from beneath

The empirical entry point to investigating this, I argue, should be a focus on concrete relations on the ground. The focus is on social formations, or institutionalization, that might support imperial efforts, and not on formal political control. Therefore, it is here particularly

important to treat empires as a 'full spectrum social phenomenon' (Barkawi 2010). An ideal type of preparatory practices for empire should start with a focus on practices of empire building on the micro level, to efficiently conceptualize mechanisms of 'imperial institutionalization'.

By micro level I mean the smallest units of analysis in the conceptualization of social reality one is operating with – practices like enacting, interpreting, translating and meaning making[7] – usually everyday activities (Schatzki 2001: 13-14, Reckwitz 2002: 15). This does, however, not mean that micro level analysis cannot be structural analysis. Micro factors are not necessarily dealing with issues of creativity, agency and social entrepreneurship (Powell and Colyvas 2008: 277). It has to do with the units one wants to start with in ones theories. It is often the case that the macro level is 'pulled down' to the practice level. As Michael Doyle writes, 'historians of the periphery often write as if metropolitan transnational forces form a steady background to crises determined by actors in the periphery' (Doyle 1986: 42). As I want to investigate formative practices, I will rather link micro processes of sense-making, normalization, typification and categories, to macro concepts like empire to be able to analyze also how these 'processes ratchet upwards' (Powell and Colyvas 2008: 278; Suddaby and Greenwood 2005: 37). This can shed light on how hierarchies and status indicators produced at the micro level can be reproduced at higher levels through common practices.

When analysing the formation of imperial ties, or to paraphrase de Certeau, when practices go in a procession before empire, the study of the micro level social processes has much analytical purchase. Relations, and therefore the stuff that ideal-typical ties represent, come from our general embededness in a social setting of interactive patterns (cf. Lake 2009a). To see how something surges, or rather changes from something existing, this is an important field of investigation.

Being attentive to such micro level practices and phenomena that exist 'in doing', can help investigate how the ties form and how practices that 'emerge out of everyday encounters' can 'generate sociability and reproduce the social order' (Powell and Colyvas 2008: 279; cf. Adler and Pouliot, forthcoming) as detailed above. Structural phenomena or ideal types are here used as shorthand for a collection of experiences, so it is useful to start with micro level practices and relations as the empirical entry point for analysing constitution.

7 This is not equivalent to mental content. By writing 'interpreting' instead of 'interpretation' etc., I am referring to empirically observable practices.

Also for the purpose of understanding the possibilities and limitations of powerful states today, no matter how they are conceptualized, it is important to focus attention on the ‘doings’ of empire: normalizing and policing, making and reproducing boundaries by including and excluding, terrorizing, disciplining and impressing, but also instilling a sense of belonging and identification in a multiplicity of peoples – both to the general conditions and to the specific forms (Cooper 2005: 30).

Imperial formation

The first step in constructing the new ideal type starts with Nexon and Wright's original ideal type of empires. This ideal type makes possible the exploration of imperial settings based on formal imperial ties. In a second step, I take such formal ties as the point of departure (as this is in ways the 'result' of the formative practices), and cluster the nodes (the core, intermediary, actors in the periphery) into groups based on their position in Nexon and Wrights ideal typical structure even if ties are not formal. The same type of configuration, or patterns of ties, is present with informal ties as the nodes or group of nodes do not need to have formal ties to each other to be structurally equivalent. Similar network positions yield rather similar opportunities and constraints, also when the ties that exist are informal. The same constraining and enabling mechanisms are seen in the absence of formal imperial ties. As such, there is a functional and positional 'equivalence' also between Nexon and Wrights ideal type of formal ties, and the new ideal type of informal ties of empire formation.

I therefore use the original ideal type as the point of departure, but go on to ask how the formal imperial ties one can identify, based on the ideal type, were formed. The goal is to find ties that are not formally imperial according to the original ideal type, but that are typical of empire formation. This move allows one to empirically study informal empire, or empire 'under construction'.

The general conditions for indirect rule and heterogeneous contracting, based on institutional theory as detailed above, are not sufficient to categorize some practices as being a preparation for empire. Standing alone, they could equally well describe the precondition for state-formation, or identity formation based on differentiation in general. Mechanisms based on these general conditions that are specifically related to empires, must somehow be combined in an aggregate structure. I will do this, in the first instance, in a way that corresponds to that of Nexon and Wright, for then to go on and suggest some alterations to the original ideal type that will make it fit for exploring formative practices.

The mechanisms behind empire formation based on informal ties, are functionally equivalent to the formal mechanisms in the original ideal type. However, the practices behind these informal mechanisms indicate that modifications must be made to the original ideal type.

The first major difference in the new ideal type is that the ties based on routine interaction are not formal but informal. That means that the properties of ties and the measure of equivalence (the reason for placing one category of actors in a functional group, such as 'periphery' or 'intermediary') will depend on different functions in the formation of empire than in an already functioning imperial tie. As argued, an efficient way of investigating informal ties that might promise structural change is by focussing on micro level dynamics. That is, even if the equivalence classes remain – after all, the aim is to explore the formation of imperial ties according to the original ideal type – the classes are not defined by their formal function in an imperial system, but their characteristics on a micro level to be 'used' in the formation of such formal functions. Secondly, the middle man, or intermediary, is an emergent agent and is not yet a fully fledged actor. It is better conceptualized as an institution under construction.

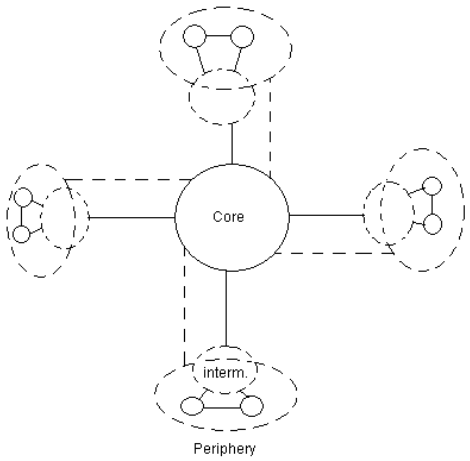

Fig. 2: Ideal type of the formation of empire

However, the third difference is the most crucial for the aggregate structure. This involves the aggregation of an extra tie, describing a routine relation that exists as a direct informal tie between core and periphery, alongside the burgeoning middle man. This can be likened to a 'pincer movement', by which the intermediary is constructed both from above by the efforts of the core, and from below through the social background conditions. The core cannot just hand over power to a given social group or actor. This must be supported from below, by a broader social structure, to create the necessary 'taken-for-grantedness', or 'background' to secure stability to the functioning of the intermediary as detailed in Nexon and Wrights model.

As in the original ideal type, my point is not to create a model that encompasses all possible instances of empire formation. The goal is to construct a plausible model of how empires surge, which is different from the original model of already established ties, as it involves processes of institutionalization from the bottom up. In the following, I will specify the integral parts of the new ideal type basing this on how Nexon and Wrights particular imperial mechanisms of an already operational or "mature' empire are constituted.

Indirect rule

An empire makes use of intermediaries to rule indirectly, but the intermediaries are not a homogeneous group. This is connected to the fact that the provinces are of a different character, needing different types of local intermediaries to interact with the local. Also, crucially, the heterogeneity of the intermediaries is important to avoid cross-pressures, and exercise divide-and-rule strategies. In preparing for empire, then, both the institutional process of creating a common 'background' for imperial rule, and the separating out of a class of actors to serve as intermediaries and to guard the borders of normality, are important mechanisms.

In achieving the loyalty of the intermediaries, and establishing a stable background for rule, already existing local elements are incorporated into such efforts. A prime example of this is how local 'traditions' have been selectively appropriated and reconstructed, for example under colonial rule in Africa (Berman 1990; Feierman 1990; Mamdani 1996).

Another example is how, in the formative period of the Portuguese empire in Asia, institutions called *casas de misericórdias* that did charity and social work, gradually took on a political and economic role (Sá 2004: 6). The relationship between the centre and the periphery became steadily more codified, and the governance of *las misericórdias* was increasingly handed over to the local elites, resulting in greater autonomy for the intermediaries (Abreu 2001). The charity practices became bureaucratized and elitist. This contributed to the creation and maintenance of social categorizations in the colonies. Las *misericórdias* became institutions for indirect rule and managed to integrate both loyalty to the core and local adaption. Las misericórdias evolved into formal intermediaries also because of the nature of Catholicism. As opposed to in Protestantism, rituals are central, and the collective is as important as the individual 'disciples'. This made it easier for the periphery to become involved in the social practices, despite the increasing elite driven nature of the *misericórdias*. The charity practices were seen as a form of Catholic grant of indulgence. They did not result in material redistribution, but were a useful fiction. This fictional redistributive practice helped dampen social conflicts in the colonies, normalized social interaction, and secured the social order. Through the charity practices, 'correct' moral behaviour was also secured and normalized (Abreu 2000, Sá 2004: 10-12).

In the creation of the Mughal Empire, various historical traditions and practices already in place were invoked, and all put into a new style of kingship. This was done to fit problematic elements, such as Rajput chiefs, into their political culture, and to separate out classes of middle

men – imperial administrators, or *manadbar*. (Alam and Subrahmanyam 1998: 21; Richards 1998: 21-22; Siegler 1998). By picking up already existing 'social building blocks', it was possible to create both an inclusive social structure based on different 'myths', and separate out a class belonging to the core, and different classes of intermediaries.[8]

Similar mechanisms took place in the creation of the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Empire, as the Mughals, also fused different traditions of rule: the tradition from the Muslim Ghazi emirates gave the empire a religious power base, the steppe-tradition defined sovereignty as a family possession, and the tradition of Persian kingship installed a differentiated class-system.

With a subject population that was increasingly non-Muslim, one could not lean exclusively on the Ghazi-justification. Religious groups were given legal autonomy through the Millet system. Jews, Christians and other religious groups, divided into administrative Millets, could make their own laws and were seen as separate and partially self-ruling 'peripheries' within the empire. The Millet-system was furthermore not only an abstract concept, but manifested itself in everyday practice through different colours on houses and personal clothing, corresponding to the Millet. This is a case in which the separation and closeting in of population was not based on ethnicity, but rather on (re)constructed religious or territorial identity. The practice of establishing autonomous units, religiously and territorially speaking, was reproduced and diffused from the bottom up as the empire was being created, and came to characterize the imperial set-up (Hourani 1991: 207-230; Barkey 1994). This established the 'normality' of this arrangement based on tradition, but also facilitated indirect rule through *differentiated* intermediaries. This leads on to the second element in the ideal typical imperial structure.

Heterogeneous contracting

The centre has to make different deals with the different intermediaries who rule the provinces. They must be isolated from each other to prevent coordinated resistance. The intermediaries on their side should make different deals with different segments of their populations. The intermediaries need authority and legitimacy to control the province, but must not 'go native' and become separated from the core. Hetero-

8 Existing imperial traditions can also serve as good material for a *translatio imperii* – that is, to base authority in the myth or reality of a linear transfer of power from one empire to another. For example, the East India Company at its founding explicitly saw itself as an heir to the Mughal Empire. The Mughal tradition was a perfect tool in the creation of the Company Bahadur (Alam and Subrahmanyam 1998: 2). This imperial myth of authority lasted until at least the late 1800s (Richards 1998).

geneous contracting means *divide-and-rule* strategies to avoid contact between the provinces, and for the intermediary to be able to play local factions up against each other. Heterogeneous contracting, in other words, exists for purposes of both across-segment divide and rule, and within-segment divide and rule.

Thus, in preparing for imperial rule, not only must intermediaries as a generic class be separated out, but different intermediaries in different peripheries need to be different from each other, and maintain these different identities over time. Secondly, the intermediaries themselves need to categorize the population within their provinces to exercise within-segment divide-and-rule. The 'taken for grantedness' must not be upset by coming in contact with different structures, so as to jeopardize the social fabric constitutive of empire.

In across-segment divide and rule, that is on the aggregate level, different categorizations for different peripheries are needed. The Mughals picked up on Central Asian heritages, Persian heritages, and steppe traditions from the Mongols (from where the name Mughal derives) to legitimize their rule, but also to 'open up a hierarchical chasm' between the rulers, and the different peoples they commanded (Alam and Subrahmanyam 1998: 17). By drawing on multiple traditions, there is also the possibility of creating differentiated peripheries. They picked various historical and cultural 'building blocks' in an eclectic and ingenious manner, both to secure legitimacy and to divide the population into separate categories, at the same time reconciling and including a large multicultural population into the ruling system. (ibid. p. 71)[9] The Mughals installed an illuminationist theory, that could be interpreted by various religious constituencies – both traditional Islamic jurists, pre-Islamic Persian traditions, and the Rajputs (Richards 1998: 21-22). This permitted a flexible interpretation of *sharia* as meaning primarily the preservation of the social balance. The formulation based on the traditions from when Muslim rulers served the Mongols, were 'put to a new and creative use in South Asia' (Richards 1998: 22). There were different possibilities for interpretation on the basis of a common 'taken-for-grantedness'. This served as the basis for multivocal signalling to avoid cross-pressures, as the same message could be interpreted in a variety of different ways, according to the segmented peripheries. Leaning on flexible symbols, but that still are commonly accepted, the same symbol can resonate with different publics in different ways.

One period in which the preparation for heterogeneous contracting is particularly clear, is in modern colonialism. Divide-and rule was con-

9 Many of the traditions live on even today, and the word 'mogul' is even included in the English language as a synonym for riches and power, or an important person.

nected to the concept of 'native policy', partially as a response to the increasing illegitimacy of colonial possessions or imperialism in the 19th and 20th centuries (Steinmetz 2008: 593). A central point here is that most of the colonized populations already had knowledge of their conquerors, due to informal relations established by travellers and missionaries. Information about the natives was needed to level out the perceived differences in knowledge. Understanding was control (*ibid*.). Combining this with the rule of difference, by boxing peoples into categories 'native policy tried to compel the colonized to adhere to a constant and stable definition of their own culture and to prevent them from shifting strategically among cultural codes' (*ibid*.).

Mechanisms preparing heterogeneous contracting can be seen also in colonial Latin America, where racial hierarchies were created and the notion of 'mixture' was explicitly rejected. As long as indigenous populations stuck to their identity, it was acceptable. But as soon as natives started mixing their traditional clothing with that of the colonizers, or even mixing local alcoholic drinks with imported beverages, the necessary categories were seen to be upset (Cañeque 2004: 228-229, 222-230). Creating different segments across peripheries, and categorical hierarchies of peoples, are crucial mechanisms to establish formal ties of empire.

The preceding sections indicate that traditional modes of looking at the rise of empires, as unitary concepts where an central actor possess power to use towards the sub-dominant or the peripheries, is not a particularly efficient point of departure for explaining mechanisms of imperial formation. As Cooper (2005: 11) puts it, 'Empires should not be reduced to national polities projecting their power beyond their borders. They always had to balance the incorporation of people and territory and differentiation that maintained the power and sense of coherence of the ruling elite'. A central mechanisms of the formation of empires is '…the calculus of balancing incorporation and differentiation' (*ibid*.).

In short, the focus on the polities or actors to be constructed is important, but also on parallel and supporting efforts that are core features in the *establishment* of imperial ties. The original ideal type is useful to identify imperial ties once they are there. It is more difficult to use it to identify how imperial relations are constituted, or to deal with imperial ties that has the same logic of power, but is exercised in absence of an intermediary as an already formalized actor.

The pincer movement

One significant difference from the Nexon and Wright model is that in the formative phase of imperial relations, there is a direct, informal tie between the core and the periphery. There are simultaneous efforts to shape the periphery, and the middle man. As in figure 3, this constitutes a 'pincer movement' on the middle man. As the most important element in the imperial set-up, it is crucial that a loyal and long-lasting intermediary segment is created.

When, as in the model, there are direct ties between the core and the peripheries, this counters the danger that 'attempts to control and coordinate activities…lead to conflicts and a loss of legitimacy' where elements are becoming too decoupled (Meyer and Rowan 1977: 357).

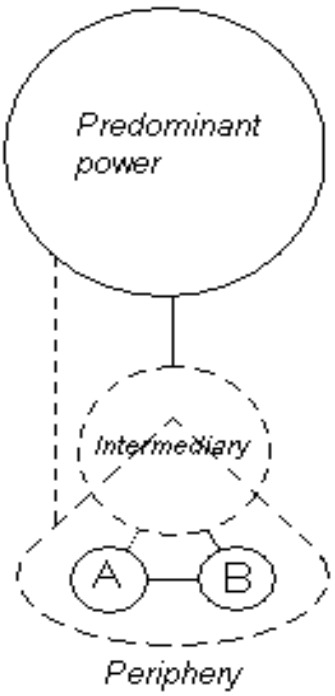

Fig. 3:Ideal type of imperial formation in one periphery

As Nexon and Wright's is an ideal type, this is however not sufficient in itself for advocating an addition to it. The bypassing of middlemen can happen, and other kind of ties might exist. The difference here is that this new model treats these ties as *routine relations*, that indicate another logic.

Furthermore, the relations between classes and nodes change as a new direct, but still informal, tie is introduced between the core and the periphery. This affects the operation of preparatory imperial practices.

By being closer to the centre than in the original ideal type, and interacting with it on a routine basis, the influence and diffusion between core and periphery is higher in the situation of imperial preparation.

For example, informal and routinized exchanges through the presence of 'imperial entrepreneurs' such as missionaries, scientists and explorers are often seen in the creation of imperial ties (see e.g. Secord 1982; Nicholson 1987; Stafford 1989; Pratt 1992; Clifford 1997; Bravo 1998; Smith 1998; Duncan and Gregory 1999). In the case of

Latin America, where many would argue that the US established an informal empire, such imperial entrepreneurship was applied to incorporate the whole host of local events, cultures, encounters, and individuals into one story about the U.S. and its relations (Salvatore 2006: 26). Representations of Latin America spread widely throughout the North-American public, based on practices of observing, registering, narrating, photographing, mapping, printing, classifying, and exhibiting. In collaboration with the scientific canon of the time, the 'wild' South-America, a *terra incognita*, was also made visible and controllable through these practices located in various and contradictory spaces and projects (Salvatore 2006: 28). The Rockefeller Foundation assisted in medical investigations in the region. Museums exhibited South American artefacts as immobile representations of the continent. Scientific expeditions of geographers and ethnologists were sent out to map both the physical and the human terrain. The Machu Picchu expedition of Yale University led attention to the condition of the Andean indigenous population within a racial rhetoric of development (Bingham 1930; Salvatore 2003, 2006: 32; Wise 2005). The Pan-American Union (PAU), financed through The Carnegie Endowment for Peace, led missionary activities, tours, commercial recognisance missions, and conferences. In preparing the ground for imperial logics of rule, statistics, maps, and technical illustrations helped created a synthetic and objective vision of geographical regions (Salvatore 2006: 63).[10] William A. Reid's book collection *Seeing South America* popularised the recently collected facts and knowledge. Tellingly, the subtitle of the series was 'condensed facts for prospective travellers' (Reid 1919; Salvatore 2006: 64-65).

Also in Africa, as Leroy Vail (1989) has pointed out, the creation of colonial systems depended on groups of foreign intellectuals, such as missionaries, in *combination with* local intermediaries – or indirect rule through middle men. In the German empire in Africa, 'missionaries paved the way for conquest … by offering comprehensive representations of the indigenous populations…and helped negotiate the transfer of sovereignty to the Germans' (Steinmetz 1998: 598; Menzel 1992).

The practices of such 'imperial entrepeneurs' constitute a routine tie between the core and the periphery – not formal, but informal through diffusion and exchange.

On the other hand, the fact that both center and periphery have more connections to other units here than in the original ideal type, makes the dominance of the centre over the periphery in terms of authority

10 On the mapping and visualisation of colonies in the British Empire, see Burnett 2000; Crinson 1996; Edney 1997; Ryan 1997.

and prestige less prevalent than in the original model. This is technically termed ‘degree’, and is related to how many connections you have with the other nodes in the system. This mainly concerns questions of prestige and authority. The degree of the periphery increases with the new tie. This corresponds with persuasion and creation of legitimacy through institutionalization being more important in the formative phase, as the peripheries are not formally subordinate.

Typical examples of how both normality, and inclusive and exclusive distinctions are produced from existing social material, are therefore how missionaries, travellers and explorers, artists, scientists, journalists and doctors can act as initial informal agents, working to form representations both in the peripheries and in the core by ‘connecting new ideas to established cultural accounts’ (Suddaby and Greenwood: 37). The ideal of imperial governance and reason for dominance has been constructed by diverse ‘specialists’ or ‘experts’ through novels (Said 1993), laws (Dezalay and Garth 2002), maps (Edney 1997), science fiction and popular culture (MacKenzie 1986), world fairs (Benedict 1983), environmentalism (Grove 1995), medicine (Vaughan 1991, MacLeod and Lewis 1988) museums (Sheets-Pyenson 1988), and other practices. This is in many (but not all) cases based less on superior power and technology in itself and more on these imperial entrepreneurs’ ‘ability to construct an accommodation with existing cultural schemas’ (Suddaby and Greenwood 2005: 37). This is however also done to facilitate the guarding of normality, by increasing the ability for surveillance through knowledge and to penetrate the social domain.

The power of the intermediary as broker, the ‘betweenness’, is also not as great as in the original model, as it is under formation and is not controlling the access point to the peripheries. During the Cold War, the U.S. engaged in a systematic propaganda campaign in Mexico. This had political goals, but was also an effort to make the Mexican population be more healthy and hygienic. This was, however, conducted directly from the U.S., but also with the blessing and cooperation of Mexican government agencies. As such, direct ties are at the same time aiming at direct influence, and of constructing an intermediary that can go on to exercise imperial functions at a later stage (Seth 1998).

The ‘betweenness’ of middle men is reduced and the ‘closeness’ of the periphery is increased in this model, as the shortest passage to the core is not through an intermediary. An important point is that in the formative phase of empire, ‘cohesion’ is increased from Nexon and Wright’s model as every unit is tied to the others. The reach of both core and periphery is increased, and this in turn increases the struc-

tural cohesion or institutional ‘normality’ so necessary for the formation of formal imperial ties. This, however, means that the middle men have less opportunity to triangulate between different local populations. This must be done directly from the core until an intermediary is formally in place.

In short, in the formative phase, there is a structural hole between the core and the periphery, compared to the original ideal type, which can be strategically filled to achieve the benefits of direct knowledge and control. This also ties the intermediary in, by constructing it from below and above. This is a mechanisms that create the ‘background’ for imperial rule, the required component of ‘taken for grantedness’, that can serve for both inclusion and exclusion, and is preparing the terrain for more direct ties of control. The institution that is formed through social networks and relations is again the source of normalization and what has been called ‘institutional myths’ such as myths of universality, contracts, and expertise (Meyer and Rowan 1977: 347; Abernethy 2000: 15).

Conclusion

As Donnely (2006) has argued, we can no longer be content with operating with simple dichotomies, like anarchy versus hierarchy or sovereignty versus empire. There are different forms of rule that combine in different ways. Ideal types of imperial relations are therefore important contributions, as they are aiming not at categorizing a polity or world structure as an empire - or one in the making - but looking at specific instances of relationships evidencing particular logics, perhaps different from what one normally is looking for in IR.

Nexon and Wright have done path-breaking work on how to study empires in a systematic, empirical and theoretically informed way. Still, I have argued that there is a lot of preparatory work needed on the ground before these formal ties can be established. Using Nexon and Wright's model of formal imperial ties as the point of departure, and drawing on institutional theory, I constructed a supplementary ideal type to facilitate the empirical study of formation of imperial ties. In the ideal type of formation of empire, ties are informal. To investigate such informal ties in an efficient way, one should concentrate on micro level social dynamics. In preparing for imperial relations, the middle man is an emergent agent, better conceptualized as an institution under construction. The new ideal type also depicts how an imperial 'pincer movement' helps to construct formal imperial ties and imperial intermediaries. The intermediary is constructed both from above by the efforts of the core, and from below through the social background conditions. Using empirical examples, I assessed the core mechanisms of Nexon and Wright's original formulation, in light of the new ideal type.

Contemporary claims that many phenomena of world politics can be seen as imperial relations in the making can systematically and empirically be addressed by using the ideal type. Some authors making such claims argue that the shape and practices of rule and governance is evolving from a weight on stasis, domination, direct power, sovereignty, imposing of schemes (Scott 1998), through forms of indirect rule and informal Empire (Gallagher and Robinson 1953; Berman 1990; Feierman 1990) to new ways of exercising power directed against the population and local knowledge (Burchell 1991; Foucault 1978/1991; Hindess 2005; Neumann and Sending 2010). However, there has never been a time where governing indirectly in some sense has not been in focus. Furthermore, there has never been uniformity, and always resistance, shifting frames and practices. Exactly because

of this, the construction of an ideal type capturing such mechanisms in preparing the terrain for what concerns Nexon and Wright, namely formal imperial relations, is important. It provides a tool to systematically investigate the practices that have historically 'marched in procession' before formal empire.

The new ideal type takes a further step away from coherent societal types, and starts from the puzzle of how relatively stable configurations emerge and are *accomplished* through actions that are culturally and contextually available to actors. In doing this, it opens up for a more dynamic exploration of contemporary political structures in the making. For instance, in the exploration of interventions in weak or failed states, or the practices of International Organizations, we can look for direct ties between a core and a periphery that exist parallel to different types of 'middle men' and intermediaries. Are such practices constructing 'the normal states of affairs' in a specific way, making it apt for intervention? Can one observe both a gathering of detailed knowledge and attempts at direct forms of governing through intermediaries? Are there direct ties between the core and the periphery, without going through middle men, even if operating alongside them? And are such relations converging in a broader logic of rule?

One or two ideal types are never sufficient for effective explanation of phenomena, but a new ideal type might serve as a useful addition to be able to identify imperial ties in the making, and not being limited to one temporal segment in the development of imperial logics of power.

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