

## Developments

### **Review Essay – David Singh Grewal’s *Network Power: The Social Dynamics of Globalization* (2008)**

By Tiffany Wong\*

[DAVID SINGH GREWAL, *NETWORK POWER: THE SOCIAL DYNAMICS OF GLOBALIZATION* (Yale University Press, 2008); ISBN: 978-0-300-11240-5; 403 pp.; \$30.00 Hardcover]

#### **A. Introduction**

Networks have been discussed extensively in different ways within social and cultural theory as well as in economic scholarship.<sup>1</sup> Author of *Network Power*, David Singh Grewal, participates in a popular discourse by describing globalization as a series of networks of power in contemporary society. In the same year that his book was published, Grewal writes a response to these theories of a globalized “flat” society in an article for the UK newspaper, *The Guardian*. Entitled “The World Isn’t Flat – It’s Networked,” the preface reads: “Globalisation does not ‘flatten opportunity in the world: rather it forces everyone to conform to an underlying standard, specifically that of the already privileged nation.”<sup>2</sup> A young scholar, Grewal holds a J.D. from Yale Law School and is currently Ph.D. student at the Department of Government at Harvard University.

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<sup>1</sup> See, most recently, THOMAS L. FRIEDMAN, *THE WORLD IS FLAT: THE GLOBALIZED WORLD IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY* (2006) and Joseph E. Stiglitz, winner of the 2001 Nobel Prize in Economics, who each discuss how globalization is changing the world. In 2006, both scholars, who were interviewed by the New York Times, explained their theory of a ‘flat globalized world’ in further detail. Available at: [http://select.nytimes.com/2006/04/25/opinion/25friedman-transcript.html?\\_r=2&pagewanted=all](http://select.nytimes.com/2006/04/25/opinion/25friedman-transcript.html?_r=2&pagewanted=all), last accessed 27 July 2009.

<sup>2</sup> David Singh Grewal, *The World Isn’t Flat – It’s Networked*, *THE GUARDIAN*, available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2008/jul/29/globalisation.globaleconomy>, last accessed 27 July 2009.

In his first book, which grew out of his earlier academic journal articles,<sup>3</sup> Grewal touches upon existing discourses of globalization, modernity and cultural diversity. After considerable thought on these issues in these journal articles, Grewal's response culminates in this book where his coined term, "network power" is created to describe the "power of a standard."<sup>4</sup> By "network power," he means a movement of standards in an age when overt power is subsumed under more covert powers embedded within social, technological and global networks.<sup>5</sup> It is a new term unused by other scholars, yet its ideas described in *Network Power* are strongly influenced by important, yet unmentioned, discourses in the areas of social and cultural theory.

Part A of this book review provides a brief synopsis of *Network Power*, followed by Part B's critical analysis that attempts to posit this book within current and previous scholarship on networks. By doing so, this book review attempts to assess potential of *Network Power* to create further discussion in this area of academic discourse.

### **B. *Network Power* – A Brief Synopsis**

*Network Power* consists of ten chapters building towards a broader understanding of networks with some indication of how social dynamics are generated and influenced by power. A review in the *Financial Times* noted the main gist of Grewal's book that "*Network Power* leans on Marx, Keynes, and the Canadian philosopher, Charles Taylor, to examine the more general problem of 'power structures' – how power can be exercised over people even when no one is visibly giving orders."<sup>6</sup> Using historical and contemporary examples to illustrate his conception of network power, Grewal also cites the works of Gramsci, Foucault, Hume, Weber, Deleuze, Habermas, and Appadurai. These theorists provide a backdrop of scholars engaged in a theoretization of power without networks that contributing to an "international in-group."<sup>7</sup> In addition to providing a standard of theoretization of power, I think these scholars demonstrate their own network power by influencing Grewal's use of them as a foundation to build up to current debates on

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<sup>3</sup> See, David Singh Grewal's past journal articles outlining his response to books written about globalization: *Is Globalization Working?*, 20 ETHICS AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS 247 (2006); *Network Power and Global Standardization*, 36 METAPHILOSOPHY 128 (2005); *Network Power and Globalization*, 17 ETHICS AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS 89 (2003); *Empire's Law*, 14 YALE JOURNAL OF LAW AND HUMANITIES 211 (2002).

<sup>4</sup> DAVID SINGH GREWAL, NETWORK POWER 297 (2008).

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

<sup>6</sup> Christopher Caldwell, *Networks that work too well*, FINANCIAL TIMES (23 May 2008), available at: [http://us.ft.com/ftgateway/superpage.ft?news\\_id=fto052320081343411263&page=1](http://us.ft.com/ftgateway/superpage.ft?news_id=fto052320081343411263&page=1), last accessed 27 July 2009.

<sup>7</sup> GREWAL (note 4), 3.

globalization, thereby adding his voice to the mix. Indeed, Grewal aptly writes of network power as a social and cultural dynamic.

His book begins with *Chapter 1 Defining Network Power* that features examples of language as a mediating standard that “establishes an ideal or target.”<sup>8</sup> Grewal elaborates that “standards have a power that grows in proportion to the size of the networks they unite.”<sup>9</sup> I believe that human conformity to powerful standards is not a new phenomenon. By implying that power grows alongside various sizes of united networks appears to me to be a pedestrian observation. As standards of using the metric system or learning English grow, clearly, so does social, cultural, economic and political pressure to conform to it.

The tension between sovereignty and sociability, particularly the latter, comes to the forefront again in *Chapter 2 The Power of Sociability*. Can individuals, states and groups of people avoid conforming to standards that are dominant, yet less practical than local standards? The adoption of global standards is influenced strongly by a need to be a part of the “international in-group,” as mentioned above. Sovereignty to resist such standards may be met with economic implications, if, for example, a country does not adopt the same standards as more powerful countries. A conscious choice to deviate or refuse growing standards could be seen as a political statement. It refuses sociability with global players who do not hesitate to adopt an international standard, because of its network power and not necessarily because of the standard's inherent superiority. Although many of his arguments have economic implications, Grewal admits in this chapter that his focus shifts towards the role of politics.

The English language as a growing standard with political influence resurfaces in *Chapter 3 English and Gold*. It is described as a global language where, in this case, its network power encourages the assimilation of minority languages in order to access global economies converging towards a single dominant language.<sup>10</sup> This coincides with discussion of conformity to universal standards<sup>11</sup> as the world adopts the gold standard much as it adopts the English language, as a global second language, with compatible, as well as disappearing, alternatives at the local level.<sup>12</sup> Detailed examples given in this particularly interesting chapter will be explored further in Part B of this book review.

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<sup>8</sup> GREWAL (note 4), 22.

<sup>9</sup> GREWAL (note 4), 27.

<sup>10</sup> GREWAL (note 4), 76.

<sup>11</sup> GREWAL (note 4), 101.

<sup>12</sup> GREWAL (note 4), 173.

*Chapter 4 Power and Choice in Networks* demonstrates that a local or alternative standard that has not grown to achieve network power is that one must adopt the dominant or universal standard or face isolation. Here, Grewal explains how it relates to the social dynamics of 'networks' in globalization with specific reference to the works on power by Foucault.<sup>13</sup> Although Foucault does not frame his earlier theories in terms of networks, he does explore the notion of power as a multifaceted concept rooted in Kantian thought that fosters a critical history of modernity.<sup>14</sup> This coincides with discussion of conformity to universal standards.<sup>15</sup> As the world adopts the gold standard, as much as it adopts the English language as a global second language, compatible alternatives disappear at the local level.<sup>16</sup>

Grewal could explore this conception of 'power' that he covers briefly in relation to Foucault's established work on the same topic.<sup>17</sup> Particularly these relationships between power, knowledge and discourse that Grewal describes is comparable to Foucauldian tension with Habermas' notion of "communicative rationality" and "discourse ethics" in civil society and democracy.<sup>18</sup> I think that civil society has potential to resist Grewal's standards of network power alongside the power of citizenship, which itself can write an entirely separate book. Nevertheless, in this chapter, Grewal acknowledges that there is in fact an existing discourse into which his use of the term "power" is embedded, except that his is based on consent and consensus over conflict and suppression.

Aside from the network power of language, Grewal discusses the "pull" or "momentum" of some networks over others.<sup>19</sup> He explains and enumerates the history of various standards in order to identify their individual network power: the adoption of the metric system<sup>20</sup> in *Chapter 5 Evaluating Network Power* and the use of technical standards for high technology<sup>21</sup> in *Chapter 7 Network Power in Technology*. These standards have network power that reveal economic advantages— that the costs of making such a shift to attract

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<sup>13</sup> GREWAL (note 4), 134-139.

<sup>14</sup> MICHEL FOUCAULT, *THE BIRTH OF BIOPOLITICS* 57, 61, 138, 283 (2008).

<sup>15</sup> GREWAL (note 4), 101.

<sup>16</sup> GREWAL (note 4), 173.

<sup>17</sup> GREWAL (note 4), 134-139.

<sup>18</sup> Bent Flyvbjerg, *Habermas and Foucault: Thinkers for Civil Society?*, 49 *BRITISH JOURNAL OF SOCIOLOGY* 210, 212, 228-229 (1998).

<sup>19</sup> GREWAL (note 4), 25-26.

<sup>20</sup> GREWAL (note 4), 148.

<sup>21</sup> GREWAL (note 4), 194.

foreign capital, for instance, can become inevitable and the concept of sovereignty as explored in *Chapter 2* becomes null. When choice disappears, the issues are complicated further. In *Chapter 8 Countering Network Power*, Grewal elucidates that the consent driven power of networks is beyond the dichotomy of positive and negative rights or direct coercion.<sup>22</sup> The concept of choice is, therefore, replaced by consent to move towards global standards without explicit coercion by any individual player.

In the last chapter, Grewal offers practical knowledge and accessible reading using populist examples such as fast food chain, KFC, and the concept of McDonaldization, to demonstrate the globalization of social norms.<sup>23</sup> Americanization, in this chapter, is identified as another standard by which the world has adopted, not by force, but by choice. This larger standard can trickle down to mundane examples of choices by consumers to frequent American fast food chains or governments to allow these chains to enter its market borders. These examples may not be strictly academic discourse *per se*, however, the author's clearly laid out chapters, approachable arguments and explanative definitions guide the novice reader through theories of globalization that is complicated by networks of power.

In his conclusion, Grewal describes globalization as a "consolidation of transnational and international networks that link people—or groups of people, including entire countries—through the use of shared coordinating standards [...] their adoption by new users giving rise to what [he has] called network power."<sup>24</sup> The book's central argument underscores the unconscious way by which our tendency to adopt and eventually adhere to certain standards is a result of the standards' network power within the overarching trend of globalization. The author defines networks as a series of possible standards that exist in the world. This type of network, as seen above, can range from standards of measurement, such as the metric system, to global business language, such as English, to personal computer operating systems, such as Microsoft Windows or MS/DOS. Importantly, this definition dialogues with others that have been writing on power by pointing out its role in networked globalization. However, within network theory, Grewal's naming of the "power of standards" is less influential as it is an obvious factor assumed by these other theorists that are unreferenced within the pages of *Network Power*. Although the final page pronounces that "globalization is here to stay,"<sup>25</sup> it is coupled with a broad conclusion that the power is in our collective hands. Indeed, it is a rather general conclusion, encompassed by the influence of political power, yet does not necessarily propose the full potentials of this book.

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<sup>22</sup> GREWAL (note 4), 166.

<sup>23</sup> GREWAL (note 4), 267-8, 277.

<sup>24</sup> GREWAL (note 4), 292.

<sup>25</sup> GREWAL (note 4), 296.

As will be discussed in Part B, network theorists have not necessarily configured the concept of “networks” within an established schema of “power.” Rather, networks have been more conceptually defined and redefined according to more organic movements in society that can be subverted. Grewal has succeeded in broadly defining one obvious aspect of networks governed by *powerful standards*, while these concepts have elaborated with more nuanced approaches to networks with greater depth.

### **C. Network Power – A Critical Analysis**

Readers familiar with theories of coercion, power, dominance, and hegemony by theorists, again, such as Gramsci, Foucault, Hume, Weber, Deleuze, Habermas, and Appadurai, will not find this book’s ideas new or groundbreaking. Grewal posits his ideas in the globalization debate by identifying the power of networks. However, its broad scope is likely to be more useful to those unfamiliar with concepts by cultural studies theorists and philosophers, and those who prefer to have it mapped out in plain language in the context of an information age dominated by networks and globalization.

Grewal articulates what appears to be obvious for younger generations raised with internet technology and savvy older generations who have come to appreciate it. As a member of the so-called ‘internet generation,’ the term, social networks, is the catch phrase of the day with the rise in popularity of second generation internet (*e.g.* Facebook, Twitter, MySpace). Internet regulation and media lawyers have not yet caught up to the changes in technology that mediate these networks between people, groups and, in the case of concerns of power relations pertaining to current issues of cyber warfare between nation states, online speech freedom, privacy issues and surveillance. Globalization has taken on a web-like nature that connects and spreads certainly along the lines of power and who has access to a standard of internet access – one that Grewal may identify as having strong “network power.” Solitary individuals in this global community are connected as soon as they log onto the internet. Knowledge beyond social networks is also a network itself. The concept of “network power” may be a new theory articulated to those desiring a solid introduction into the “social dynamics of globalization,” however, this concept that standards influences freedom of choice that may seem painfully obvious to others and which is a common critique that other reviewers of this book have noticed.

There are interesting insights into the subtleties of power occurring within networks. These involve an intricate interplay of hegemony.<sup>26</sup> For instance, different sized networks have different dynamics. How they view each other in relations of power are mapped out in the

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<sup>26</sup> GREWAL (note 4), 133.

context of current and historical examples, such as second language choices in rural India<sup>27</sup> or some of the other examples enumerated in the synopsis in Part A of this book review. An influential factor is the context in which these dominant standards develop.<sup>28</sup> As a result, according to Grewal's theory, relational choices shaped by allegiance to a common standard<sup>29</sup> are additionally shaped by the context in which these dominant standards develop.<sup>30</sup>

The author is also aware of his biases as an American scholar. He points out American standards posing as universal while at the same time behaving parochially, meaning that other more practical standards existing in the world are virtually ignored or overlooked (e.g. adoption of the metric or imperial system of measurement). Interestingly, he writes, if the tables were turned and Americans had to "pass examinations in Mandarin as a condition of success in a Chinese dominated global society, we would probably hear loud insistence on the beauty and uniqueness of the English language and of the American way of life." This observation coincides with the book's *Introduction* where he writes of basic accusations of power and empire as "solutions" that help in shaping "global standards," while promoting the "suppression of standards" (including local standards that may function better than universal ones) – a power that typically emanate from privileged countries like the United States.<sup>31</sup> Although I agree with this observation, it does also come across as evident to those following the general trends in economics, politics, technology and society, particularly in today's crisis of globalization as a recession makes the intricacies of global networks evermore apparent.

There are two main elements: networks and power. Grewal explores power to great extent in his book, yet leaves out important (and newer, more marginal) discourse on networks. By doing so, Grewal himself demonstrates the network power of discourse on power. He foregrounds established, mainstream theorists on power and leaves aside the voices of networks. Grewaldian standards move through networks. This standard is driven by its power to move through these networks, penetrating and coercing its audience to adopt the standard over local or alternative ones that may function better in its home environment.

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<sup>27</sup> GREWAL (note 4), 83.

<sup>28</sup> GREWAL (note 4), 142.

<sup>29</sup> GREWAL (note 4), 140.

<sup>30</sup> GREWAL (note 4), 142.

<sup>31</sup> GREWAL (note 4), 5-6, 10.

For instance, key voices like Édouard Glissant, French-Caribbean author who argues for the active appropriation of colonial culture by the colonized, particularly on the level of language. Glissant, in outlining his theory, aptly summarizes Deleuze and Guattari:

...criticized notion of the root and even, perhaps, notions of being rooted. The root is unique, a stock taking all upon itself and killing all around it. In opposition to this they propose the rhizome, an enmeshed root system, a network spreading either in the ground or in the air, with no predatory rootstock taking over permanently.<sup>32</sup>

He writes “that is very much the image of the rhizome, prompting the knowledge that identity is no longer completely within the root but also in Relation.”<sup>33</sup> In my opinion, Glissant’s notion of Relation (with a capital R) has network power. A relational network can have the power to subsume all around it. Moreover, when applied to colonial languages imposed on Other cultures, something that Grewal touches upon in his *Chapter 3*, Glissant describes the process of adoption of language as “going beyond the impositions of economic forces and cultural pressures, Relation rightfully opposes the totalitarianism of any monolingual intent.”<sup>34</sup> This predatory root system made up of rhizomes sounds much like Grewal idea of network power. In relation to Glissant’s response to Deleuze and Guattari’s roots and rhizomes, Grewaldian standards, particularly related to language, refer unknowingly perhaps to Glissant’s interpretation of the ‘Relation’ that I think is connected to ‘network power.’

Nevertheless, *Network Power* is a well-summarized introductory work in which its ideas may not be as revolutionary as its author might intend. Grewal’s book refers to previous chapters and guides the non-academic and academic reader throughout a discovery of what constitutes power in a networked society based heavily on globalized social dynamics. His ideas are not revolutionary, yet they do incorporate current trends into academic vocabulary and colloquial examples. He, too, conforms to a standard on how globalization is presented, argued and discussed with his choices of referencing an established standard scholars on power to which more peripheral standards of scholars on networks are elided. It is a broad overview that provides a glimpse into various issues in a large field of globalization. Individual scholars on “networks” have not been cited, although their ideas, specifically, target network culture, networks in technology, networks in

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<sup>32</sup> Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relations, 1990*, in PARTICIPATION: DOCUMENTS OF CONTEMPORARY ART 71 (Claire Bishop, ed., 2006).

<sup>33</sup> *Id.*, 75.

<sup>34</sup> *Id.*, 76.



politics, networks in the new/neo-liberal/post-Marxist economy *etc.* therefore, offer more specialized discourse on the matter.

These discussions have also been dealt with specifically by leading economic and political theorists including: Manuel Castells' discussion of technology and networks, particularly, amidst the rise of the network society in the information age; Christian Marazzi's reference to networks when writing about the new economy from a post-Marxist perspective; Michael Hardt's theories of the knowledge economy; Paolo Virno's identification of globalization as a force that allows us to rethink 'the people';<sup>35</sup> Deleuze and Guattari's work on networked "rhizomes" of interconnected nodes that are neither horizontal or vertical hierarchies but collective organization;<sup>36</sup> Geert Lovink's conception of network culture and the new economy governed by technology; and Tiziana Terranova's discussions of the politics of network cultures in an information age.<sup>37</sup>

Another possible interpretation views network culture as a 'mode-of-being' or a 'process of collective-becoming' that stems from the philosophy of mainly Deleuze and Guattari in their reconfiguration of Foucauldian power. A network, in this case, can be construed as a dynamic, more than simply 'a thing.' It is something collective and singular— it functions in the multiple embodied by endless varieties of social relations in an interconnected globalization.

Particularly, Deleuze is one of the main theorists of 'network theory.' Even though Grewal discusses this theorist briefly in a section entitled, *Foucault on Power*,<sup>38</sup> it could stand for greater elaboration of the relation between Foucauldian power in the context of networks pioneered by Deleuze and Guattari. In this section, Grewal briefly discusses Deleuze and Guattari's networks and its influence on Foucauldian power, yet combining this concept of power with a previous approach to networks to contribute to a supposedly revolutionary idea of 'network power' – one that is not entirely original. Grewal differs from other contemporary theorists, such as Glissant,<sup>39</sup> by lacking a fore grounded presentation of network theory. Roots and rhizomes are implicitly infused with 'power' to regenerate,<sup>40</sup> it

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<sup>35</sup> See, generally, PAULO VIRNO, *A GRAMMAR OF THE MULTITUDE* (2002)

<sup>36</sup> See, generally, GILLES DELEUZE & FÉLIX GUATTARI, *ON THE LINE* (1983)

<sup>37</sup> See, generally, TIZIANA TERRANOVA, *NETWORK CULTURES: POLITICS FOR THE INFORMATION AGE* (2004)

<sup>38</sup> GREWAL (note 4), 135.

<sup>39</sup> GLISSANT (note 32).

<sup>40</sup> Rhizomatic networks have the power to regenerate as much as they are decentralized in terms of this power. "A rhizome may be broken, shattered at a given spot, but it will start up again on one of its old lines, or on new lines:" Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Introduction: Rhizome*, *A THOUSAND PLATEAUS: CAPITALISM AND SCHIZOPHRENIA* 9 (2002).

is decentralized; it can reach a 'plateau'<sup>41</sup> that, I think, Grewal has construed as the creation of a coercive standard. Importantly, Deleuze and Guattari state that:

...not every trait in a rhizome is necessarily linked to a linguistic feature: semiotic chains of every nature are connected to very diverse modes of coding (biological, political, economic, etc.) that bring into play not only different regimes of signs but also states of things of *differing status*.<sup>42</sup>

This "differing status," in my opinion, could be interpreted as power between the elements creating the networked rhizome based from a deeply embedded root. They write that "it is still in the sphere of a discourse implying particular modes of assemblage and types of social power."<sup>43</sup> In comparison with this key theory on networks, Grewal also adopts a wide scope with respects to 'network power' occurring in all aspects of life, especially those aspects that are embedded in the social, economic and political.

By eliding the influence of rhizomatic networks consisting of influential roots and rhizomes guided by various sizes of social (as well as economic and political power important to globalization, Grewal is missing a key component articulated prior to his theory of 'network power' and which is acknowledged by post-colonial theorists such as Glissant when developing his concept of the 'Relation'. Deleuze and Guattari's theory on the power of networks is the most prominent example to be thoroughly referenced. Other notable network theorists that Grewal could pay deeper reference to belong to the 'Italian workers' movement:' Marazzi, Lazzaretto and Virno, as well as, Hardt, the latter who is quoted on the back cover of *Network Power* as a supporter of Grewal's work. It is, therefore, not outside the scope of globalization theorists, such as Grewal and his contemporaries, to touch upon these existing discourses on networks.

It is not apparent that Grewal fully applies or uses the language developed by these theorists and philosophers, in favour of using what Hardt has applauded on the book's back cover as "jargon-free prose." Rather, Grewal attempts to understand networks through "network power" which, as a theory, is weak compared to ideas of 'multitudes' (Hardt and Negri), 'rhizomes' (Deleuze and Guattari) and others. While these are primarily political theorists, they are also linked to discourses on philosophy and technology. It would be beneficial for *Network Power* as a developing concept to draw greater

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<sup>41</sup> *Id.*, 21-23: "A plateau is always in the middle, not at the beginning or end. A rhizome is made of plateaus...concepts are lines, which is to say, number systems attached to a particular dimension of the multiplicities (strata, molecular chains, lines of flight or rupture, circles of convergence, etc.)...The outside has no image, no signification, no subjectivity."

<sup>42</sup> *Id.*, 7 [my italics].

<sup>43</sup> *Id.*

connections between these discourses on networks as well as venture further into legal discourse.

While the term "network power" has not been used by other scholars, its ideas explained in this book touch upon various facets of other theorists who have delved more deeply into its particularities. This concept has potential to develop and expand the current discourse on networks, however, as this book demonstrates, Grewal appears to still be in the process of exploring this term. Network power, although interesting, has not yet been fully developed as it amalgamates and greatly simplifies previous ideas without saying anything about it that is precisely *new*.

#### D. Conclusion

As an emerging public intellectual, Grewal has received critical acclaim from newspapers coupled with Grewal's recorded presentations on mostly American television, online magazines, and public radio.<sup>44</sup> In addition to his writings in popular newspapers,<sup>45</sup> *Network Power* has received critical acclaim from reviewers in these circles as well as academics quoted on the back cover of his book. I believe that Grewal has written a book that simplifies networks for a primary audience of practitioners in business, economic, legal and political industries, rather than a specifically targeted audience of academics directly involved in critical social science studies, as previously discussed. Its content popularizes networks and translates it to those unaccustomed to using the concept of "networks" in different ways and says surprisingly little about legal implication aside from a brief overview of rights<sup>46</sup> introducing *Chapter 6 Countering Network Power*.

At present, Grewal's *Network Power* is a minor voice in a larger body of existing work, which itself is a position of power. Networks function in multitudes of singularities of shared ideas and discourses, to which Grewal also contributes. In the realm of critical social studies there has been much academic debate about networks in its multitudes of

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<sup>44</sup> See, e.g., Interview on PUBLIC ETHICS RADIO with Christian Barry and Matt Peterson (25 March 2009), available at: <http://publicethicsradio.org/2009/03/25/episode-8-david-grewal-on-network-power/>, last accessed 28 July 2009; Interview on THE ALCOVE with Mark Molaro (1 April 2009), available at: <http://www.mefedia.com/entry/david-grewal-author-of-network-power-on-the-alcove/16160262>, last accessed 28 July 2009; presentation at the CARNEGIE COUNCIL (3 December 2008), available at: <http://www.cceia.org/resources/video/data/000099>, last accessed 28 July 2009; interview with FAIRER GLOBALIZATION – ONLINE MAGAZINE, available at: <http://fairerglobalization.blogspot.com/2008/05/david-grewal-on-network-power.html> (31 May 2008), last accessed 28 July 2009.

<sup>45</sup> GREWAL (note 2).

<sup>46</sup> GREWAL (note 4), 166-170.

forms. He, along with other voices, form the multitude moving towards new ways of working and living together amidst globalization and the debates surrounding it.

Problematically, Grewal does not clearly propose the possibilities of networks, subjectivity, and the role that it plays within the new economy. How does 'network power' specifically challenge or elaborate dominant discourses by the above theorists? How does it challenge dominant discourses on networks?

These debates have and continue to occur on how the networks fit outside of a traditional discourse, more specifically, how the new economy uses networks in destructive ways (post-Marxist) and also to create new potentials (neo-Liberalist). (The latter of which is explored more closely in Grewal's *Chapter 9 Global Neoliberalism*). As mentioned above, the internet generation (young scholars like Grewal) will likely to be familiar with it. Internet-like networks have almost become natural to those always having been surrounded by a globalized economy based on networks, especially in the shape that its forms in digital media. The new digital economy, for example, can utilize these networks in a destructive way that exploits those in developing nations who have limited access to online networks. It can create new potentials by building new uses for digital economies that are social, educational, political and favourable to an open society. The anxiety for most globalization theorists unfamiliar with networks taking on the form of digital media is the role of online civil society (often young, internet savvy individuals) in influencing, resisting coercion and controlling standards amidst a tidal wave of globalized ebb and flow of standards of information, currency, businesses, language etc. through networks of power. Such new potential is the focus of Grewal who remains optimistic about civil society operating deftly in power laden networks. Each voice about networks has its own take on it, thereby creating a polyphonic network *about* networks.<sup>47</sup>

On this note, Grewal engages us in a good introduction to a concept that has greater potential for development. Such an approach can risk greater depth into specific ideas, rather than provide a general overview. A precise possibility for deeper development, ultimately, lies in the "power" aspect in Grewal's approach to networks: What is this power and how does it precisely work? How does it participate in politics, economics and how is it used in everyday life to challenge existing dominant discourses? Networks and culture, as Grewal notes, is intrinsically tied to politics when he writes that "we can, or sometimes do, create or adopt standards as acts of political will,"<sup>48</sup> suggesting that there are political solutions to preserving cultural identity and freedom of choice.

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<sup>47</sup> A polyphony (meaning 'many voices') that creates a Moebius form of a network. Network as process, flow, and dynamic as formulated by Russian philosopher, literary critic and semiotician, Mikhail Bakhtin.

<sup>48</sup> GREWAL (note 4), 49.

In my opinion, the concept of “network power” could be interpreted as the power to create and collectively (re)create true knowledge, especially in a globalized, informational society. Perhaps this discourse on globalization needs to expand on its conclusion to raise more political questions and then, propose how laws can come into play? Grewal could expand on many complex issues that he raises in each chapter: Could relaxed laws on intellectual property, for instance, allow for the network brought about by the possibilities of the internet to reach its full potential?<sup>49</sup> What is the importance of informal and amateur production in allowing creativity to flow within this network? What is its relation to open source software?<sup>50</sup> All of these questions among many others can lead to a much larger discussion.

Overall, Grewal does not take a clear stance for or against his interpretation of the nature of networks. He identifies the trends that many of the internet generation already view as the norm of contemporary existence— offering straightforward business language that may be more appropriately aimed at a general audience unfamiliar with strictly academic discourse on networks which has subtleties with respect to technology, politics, power, new economies, information and globalization. Grewal deals with these issues more broadly in ten chapters. It will be interesting to see how these ideas are changed, shaped, critiqued, and expanded in the upcoming years of his developing theory of network power.

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<sup>49</sup> GREWAL (note 4), 196.

<sup>50</sup> GREWAL (note 4), 203.