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Vicinitas: Neighbourhoods, Networks and Identities in Ciceronian Italy

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Abstract. Roman Italy was a highly interconnected region. The social elites of both Rome and other communities were linked by a dense web of connections which played an important role in influencing social, economic and political behaviour and shaping cultural identities. This paper explores the importance of neighbourhood networks in the period after the social war, using the works of Cicero and his contemporaries, as well as modern analytical approaches. It examines how *vicinitas* is defined and what social and political significance it had in this pivotal period of Roman history.
Keywords: Cicero; Roman Italy; Neigbourhoods; Social networks; Cultural identities.

[esp] *Vicinitas*: vecindad, redes e identidades en la Italia de Cicerón

Resumen. La Italia romana era una región fuertemente interconectada. Las élites de Roma y de otras comunidades estaban conectadas por una densa red de contactos que desempeñaban un papel crucial a la hora de influir en el comportamiento social, económico y político y de conformar identidades culturales. Este artículo analiza la importancia de las redes de vecindad en el periodo posterior a la Guerra de los Aliados utilizando no solo las obras de Cicerón y sus contemporáneos sino también enfoques analíticos modernos, y estudia la forma en la que se define el concepto de *vicinitas* así como su importancia social y política en este periodo crucial de la historia de Roma.
Palabras clave: Cicerón; Italia romana; vecindad; redes sociales; identidades culturales.

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> *omnia quae dico de Plancio dico expertus in nobis; sumus enim finitimi Atinatibus ... nemo Arpinas non Plancio studuit, nemo Soranus, nemo Casinas, nemo Aquinas. tractus ille celeberrimus Venafranus, Allifanus, tota denique ea nostra ita aspera et montuosa et fidelis et simplex et fautrix suorum regio se huius honore ornari, se augeri dignitate arbitrabatur, isdemque nunc ex municipiis adsunt equites Romani publice cum legatione <et> testimonio…*
>
> Everything that I say about Plancius, I say from personal experience. For we [i.e. the people of Arpinum] are neighbours of the people of Atina … There was nobody at Arpinum and nobody at Sora, at Casinum, at Aquinum who did not support Plancius. That most celebrated territory, of Venafrum, and Allifae, in fact, the whole of that rough, mountainous, faithful, simple district, which supported its own people, considered itself honoured by his honour, and enhanced by his dignity. And now, from those same municipalities, Roman knights are here as a delegation, commissioned to bear witness...[2]

In his defence of Cn. Plancius in 54 BC, Cicero places great emphasis on his personal connection with the case as a neighbour of Plancius, and also on the high level of support for Plancius throughout southern Latium. The ties of *vicinitas*, or neighbourliness, are given centre stage, and Plancius is presented as embedded in a web of local ties and obligations centred on his home town of Atina.

Roman Italy was a highly interconnected society, in which elite families were connected by a complex web of social relationships, often crossing city or even regional boundaries. These could take various forms, including intermarriage, formal guest-friendship (*hospitium*) or various other forms of connection and obligation. Their form and details of how they operated changed over time, but they remained an important feature of Roman and Italian societies.[3] They went well beyond purely personal relationships and had wide-ranging significance. They served as modes of contact between Romans and Italians, and between different areas of Italy, acting as channels for spreading cultural ideas and influences, as well as forming powerful economic, political and social networks. However, their essentially fluid nature, and the fragmentary nature of the evidence can make it difficult to examine their extent and their modes of operating, and it can be difficult to get an accurate sense of what they could or could not be used to achieve.[4]

Ties of *vicinitas* (neighbourhood networks) are an important part of this network of connections and, as such, an examination of *vicinitas*, how it was defined, and what sort of obligations and connections it conferred, can illuminate important aspects of the way in which the elites of Republican Italy operated. It also contains an inherent paradox: *Vicinitas* was, by definition, a geographically-bounded relationship based on social obligation between people from the same area,[5] and

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[2] Cic. *Planc.* 21-22 (author's translation). I am grateful to all the participants at the various seminars at which versions of this paper were delivered for their comments, and in particular to Professor Tim Cornell, Dr Ruth Morello, Dr Henrietta Van Der Blom, Professor Jakob Wisse, Dr Dominic Berry and the anonymous reviewers for their feedback and suggestions.

[3] Badian 1958, 11-13; Wiseman 1971; Bolchazy 1977; Brunt 1988, 351-381; Patterson 2006, 139-147; Lomas 2004; 2012; Beck 2015; Bradley 2015, 101-105; Baudry 2016.

[4] Brunt (1988, 352-359, 377-380) stresses the fluidity of many of these relationships, as do Yakobson (1999) and Patterson (2006); on the fluidity of this type of network in general, see Eisenstadt – Roniger 1984, 51-52.

[5] Wiseman 1971, 47-52; Deniaux 1993, 91-95; Lomas 2004, 96-116; 2012, 198-202; Bispham 2007, 430-436; Courrier 2011.

yet in the first century BC a man such as Cicero could use it as a powerful tool to achieve a variety of social, political and economic ends well beyond his own region. Despite the apparent geographical limitations, it could be used to make connections throughout Italy. By examining the concept of *vicinitas* –the network of local and regional ties and loyalties conferred by a sense of neighbourhood– more closely, it may be possible to gain a more nuanced interpretation of how elite identities developed in this period, and how networks of socio-political contacts operated in practice.

1. *Vicinitas* in Latin literature

Although the term *vicinus*, denoting a neighbour, is relatively common in Latin literature, the abstract noun *vicinitas* derived from it is found much less frequently, with only c. 95 occurrences in classical Latin literature. The earliest attestations occur in the works of the comic dramatist Terence, and in Cato's *De Agri Cultura*; at a slightly later date, it is also found in the works of Sallust, Caesar, Hirtius, Varro and Vitruvius.[6] However, these attestations are greatly outnumbered by the references to *vicinitas* in works of authors writing in the first century BC or the early/mid first century AD.[7] The single most systematic user of the term is, however, Cicero.[8]

Both *vicinus* and the abstract *vicinitas* are derived from the concept of membership of the same *vicus*, a powerful concept in Rome where *vici* were important administrative subdivisions of the city. Each *vicus* consisted of a group of streets which shared amenities such as *compitales* cults, wells and fountains, etc., which provided a focus for face-to-face interaction between residents, and membership was an important part of the identity of the inhabitants of the city.[9] This core meaning denoting proximity or neighbourhood and emphasising close geographical association carries over into the abstract *vicinitas*, and many Roman authors use it purely in this descriptive sense. For instance, Vitruvius and Caesar use *vicinitas* as a geographical reference point, to describe characteristics of an area, or to locate places in relation to each other.[10] In addition, Caesar also uses *vicinitates* to denote the

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6 Ter. *Heau.* 56; Cat. *Agr.* 4.1.8; Sall. *Cat.* 36.1.2; Caes. *BG* 6.34.3, 8.7.6, 8.25.1; Hirt. *BG* 8.7.5, 25.2; Varro *LL* 10.26.5; Varro *RR* 1.16.2, 1.18.7, 3.1.10; Vitr. 1.4.1.5.

7 Liu. 33.33.6, 39.9.6; Plin. *HN* 2.34.5, 3.46.5, 4.102.10, 6.122.2, 10.122, 11.198.3, 14.51.2, 18.41.7, 21.115.3, 34.40.3; Sen. *Contr.* 1.2.5.10.

8 Of the 65 occurrences listed by the PHI Latin database which pre-date Late Antiquity, 36 come from the works of Cicero or his brother, as compared with 10 from Pliny's *Natural History*, and only 1-4 occurrences in the works of any other author of the Republic or early Empire. The only writer who uses it as extensively is Servius Honoratus, writing in the 4th century AD. He was writing in a very different political and social context and is therefore excluded from this study.

9 On the definitions and function of *vici* in Rome, see Courrier 2014, 31, 101-102 and 130-133. The role of *vici* elsewhere in Italy is less clear. They occur as subdivisions of *municipia* in the epigraphic record, but the term sometimes denotes rural areas rather than subdivisions of the urban population, and the chronology of their development is unclear. As Stek (2013) has noted, there is little secure evidence for the importance of *vici* and *pagi* before the second century BC, and they may have developed in the aftermath of Roman conquest rather than before it.

10 Caes. *BG* 6.34.3: "These places were known to the people of the neighbourhood, and the matter therefore needed great care..." (*haec loca vicinitatibus erant nota magnamque res diligentiam requirebat*); Vitr. 1.4.1.5: "In addition, a marshy neighbourhood should be avoided" (*deinde si vitabitur palustris vicinitas*). Cf. also Sall. *Cat.* 36.1.2; Hirt. *BG* 8.7.5.3, 8.25.2.2; Plin. *HN* 3.46, 4.102.10, 6.122.2, 10.122.1, 11.198.3, 14.51.2, 18.41.7, 21.115.3, 34.40.3.

people of a locality. However, the basic meaning remains descriptive. Varro's most frequent usage of *vicinitas* is also to denote proximity or discuss a geographical area.[11] In some instances, however, he attaches a wider meaning to it:

> *qui reliquus est tertius de villaticis fructibus, in hoc ad te mitto, quod visus sum debere pro nostra vicinitate et amore scribere potissimum ad te*.
>
> I am therefore sending to you the remaining third book, that on the farming of the villa, as it seems to me that I should dedicate it particularly to you, because of our proximity and affection.[12]

Here, *vicinitate* is more ambiguous. It describes neighbourliness in terms of physical proximity, but it extends this to make a connection with the personal relationship between Varro and the dedicatee, suggesting that it refers additionally to personal affinity or congeniality. Martial (1.86) also draws attention to the importance of personal face-to-face contact as an essential element in maintaining social relationships and fostering a sense of *vicinitas*. This ambiguity is also found in the earliest use of *vicinitas* by Terence, who explicitly connects being a neighbour with friendship and links *vicinitas* and *propinquitas* with *amicitia*:

> *Quanquam haec inter nos nupera notitia admodum est,*
> *Inde adeo quod agrum in proximo hic mercatus es,*
> *Nec rei fere sane amplius quicquam fuit;*
> *Tamen vel virtus tua me, vel vicinitas,*
> *Quod ego in propinqua parte amicitiae puto,*
> *Facit ut te audacter moneam et familiariter...*
>
> Although our acquaintance is quite recent (in fact it dates from the time you bought the farm next door) and we have scarcely had any further dealings with each other, nonetheless your good character and the fact that we are neighbours (which I think is the nearest thing to being friends) persuade me to offer you a bold piece of advice, person to person.[13]

In doing so, he attributes a complex set of meanings to the term. Not only does the possession of adjoining properties and the act of living alongside each other create a form of friendship, but it is also used as the basis for various social obligations, a feature which is greatly elaborated by Cicero.

The relatively rare use of the term by other writers makes its more frequent usage by Cicero particularly striking, as does the fact that he elaborates it to define *vicinitas* as a moral and social relationship. It is possible that it attracted most interest and most attempts to define it in the period of intense change and re-evaluation of local and Roman identities which took place in the later second and first centuries BC. This suggests that it is a concept which may repay further exploration as a means for enhancing our understanding of the development of Italy in the years after the Social War, and the interplay between local and Roman identities.

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11 Varro *LL* 10.26.5; *RR* 1.16.2.5, 1.18.7.2.
12 Varro *RR* 3.1.10 (author's translation).
13 Ter. *Heau.* 55-60 (Loeb translation).

There are, however, problems in interpreting Cicero's uses of *vicinitas*. Most of the direct references occur in his legal speeches, and therefore come from contexts in which Cicero may be distorting or exaggerating the closeness of emotional or social connections for forensic advantage or may be adopting a persona to appeal more effectively to the jury, techniques which were an important aspect of Roman trials.[14] Nevertheless, the picture painted by Cicero in his legal speeches, of complex local networks of social connections between leading families and individuals which could be used to generate various forms of social, legal and political co-operation, is consistent with other evidence from Italy and was clearly both recognisable and plausible to his audiences.[15] It is also consistent with the evidence of his letters. In these, he usually refers to the obligations of *vicinitas* more indirectly and, like the forensic speeches, they must be treated with caution. Cicero devoted just as much care to using claims of personal connection and obligation, or expressions of emotion, to disseminate information, sway his correspondents and persuade them to particular courses of action in his letters as he did in his speeches.[16] Nevertheless, both letters and speeches paint a consistent picture of a highly interconnected web of local relationships. *Vicinitas* played a significant role in Cicero's own career and relations with other Italian aristocrats, enabling him to maintain strong connections with Arpinum and its surrounding area and informing the conduct of some of his legal cases.[17] This article aims to examine the question of what the impact of *vicinitas* was in practice –what sort of things it could influence people to do, and why this might have been the case– and what it can tell us about the Roman and Italian elites in the generation after the Social War.

2. Defining *vicinitas*

At first glance, *vicinitas* seems unproblematic, implying, as it does, a clear and limited notion of geographical and physical proximity and a relationship based on face to face contact. On closer examination, however, it proves to be much more complex and wide-ranging. Pinning down who exactly were a specific person's *vicini* is not as straightforward as it seems, although some aspects are more clear-cut than others.

First and foremost, for people of Italian origin such as Cicero and many of his legal clients, *municipales* –fellow-citizens of their home towns– were a core group of *vicini*. This can be seen clearly in Cicero's own attachment to Arpinum and activities to promote Arpinate interests: he records intervening to try to arrange collection of revenues owing to the city, endowed buildings, visited his properties there regularly, and promoted the municipal political careers of family and friends.[18] It can also be seen in the tactics which Cicero uses in some of his legal defences of Italian clients. He frequently uses *vicinitas*, and especially the ways in which their fellow *municipals* and *vicini* react to his clients, as a means of establishing their social status and their moral character. One of the arguments advanced by the

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14 Riggsby 2004; Lintott 2008, 33-6; Guérin 2011; Hall 2014; Rosillo López 2017b.

15 Cornell 1995, 87-92; Patterson 2006, 139-141; Bradley 2015, 101-105. For the persistence of the importance of local and regional networks in the 1st and 2nd centuries AD, see Roncaglia 2011.

16 White 2010, 3-29; Pina Polo 2017; Evangelou, forthcoming.

17 Cic. *Fam*. 13.11; Shackleton-Bailey 1977, 441-442; Lomas 2004, 96-116.

18 Cic. *Fam*. 13.11; *Leg*. 2.5; Nicolet 1967, 276-304; Stockton 1971, 1-7; Rawson 1991, 16-33.

prosecutor of Caelius, for instance, was that his neighbours and fellow-citizens of his home city of Interamnia were hostile to him, thus establishing his bad character. Cicero counters this by using *vicinitas* as a form of moral validation, referring to notables and senators from the area who attended the trial to support him.[19] Plancius, in contrast, has a regional network of connections at his disposal. He was supported not only by his fellow-citizens but also by many communities of the surrounding area, including Arpinum.[20] Conversely, in the *Pro Murena*, Cicero depicts widespread opposition to some of the measures allegedly proposed during the turbulent elections of 63 BC. He specifically cites the hostility of men who were influential in their region as well as their own city as evidence of the strength and moral seriousness of the objections.[21] One of the accusations which seems to have particularly galled Murena was that of G. Postumius, who was a *vicinus* of Murena himself and a friend of his father. He could, therefore, have reasonably been expected to support Murena because of these family ties but instead chose to join the ranks of his accusers.[22]

Cicero deploys the same strategy in his description of Sextus Roscius the elder, the father of his client. He was of equestrian rank, but with very highly placed social connections and Cicero uses his prominence in three levels of activity and status –municipal, regional and Roman– as a way of indicating his standing.[23] He is described as being of pre-eminent importance within Ameria, a leading man within the region, and well connected at Rome, as a *hospes* of the Metelli, Scipiones and Servilii.[24] His son was eventually taken in by Metellus' sister until the court case was resolved.[25] It is clear that he derives extra kudos from being prominent in all three fields. *Vicinitas*, as used and defined by Cicero, therefore forms part of a hierarchy of influence, status and authority and as well as being a form of social obligation.

One question which must be examined is how closely connected, in terms of geographical closeness or personal connection, one had to be before one acquired the ties and responsibilities of a *vicinus*. For those of Italian origin, *municipales* certainly counted as *vicini*, hence the emphasis on the importance of getting their support and even their physical presence in the court for defendants such as Caelius, Plancius, and others, and ensuring also the presence of the candidate's *municipales* and *vicini* during

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19 Cic. *Cael*. 5: *idemque nunc lectissimos viros et nostri ordinis et equites Romanos cum legatione ad hoc iudicium et cum gravissima atque ornatissima laudatione miserunt* ("and these same people have now sent most distinguished men from our Order and the equites as a delegation to this court to offer a most weighty and eloquent commendation of him"). In this case, *vicinitas* is defined very much in terms of Caelius' *municipales*.

20 Cic. *Planc*. 1-4, 20-24, 72.

21 Cic. *Muren*. 47.15.

22 Cic. *Muren*. 56; Yakobson 1999, 74-76.

23 Cic. *Rosc. Am*. 15-18; *Planc*. 22-23. Cf. also a letter to L. Lucceius, Cic. *Fam*. 5.15.2.

24 Cic. *Rosc. Am.* 1-16. The ability to sway the emotions of the crowd was an important part of Roman court cases (Cic. *Orat*. 131, 236; *Brut*. 290; *Flacc.*106; Hall 2014, 45-61 and 99-128), and use of "props" such as grieving relatives, supportive *vicini* and *municipales* etc. were helpful in doing so. Cicero's constructions of character and invocation of *ethos* in the Roscius case are also very complex (May 1988, 21-30).

25 Cic. *Rosc. Am.* 27. The significance of the relationship of *hospitium* is difficult to evaluate. Essentially, it was a reciprocal obligation of hospitality between men of equal social status from different states which could be hereditary (as it may have been in the case of the Roscii), creating long-term connections between leading families. By the first century BC, the disparity in status between some senatorial families and the their Italian *hospites* has led to suggestions that it had become a form of clientship. However, *hospitium* usually implies a relationship of greater social equality than *clientela*, and there is no reason to dismiss it as inherently a relationship of inequality (Badian 1958, 11-13; Wiseman 1971, 33-37; Bolchazy 1977, 1-19; David 1992, 195-211; Patterson 2006, 140-143; Beck 2015).

elections.[26] Conversely, producing evidence of their hostility as a way of establishing bad character.[27] *Vicinitas* involved more than just the immediate locality, however. Cicero describes himself as having a personal tie of *vicinitas* to Plancius thanks to his connections with Arpinum and lists a whole group of cities in southern Latium as *vicini* of Plancius, including Sora, Casinum, Aquinum, Venafrum and Allifae.[28]

Clearly, though, there were geographical limits beyond which ties of *vicinitas* did not stretch. In the *Pro Rabirio*, Cicero emphasises the unusually high level of support for Rabirius Postumus in Campania and Apulia by indicating that it was so widespread that it could not be accounted for just by *vicinitas* but instead, drew in people from a wider area.[29] Cicero seems to imply that this is unusual, however, and goes beyond the level of support which could be expected by virtue of *vicinitas*. This suggests that close social contacts between leading families from different cities in a region was a crucial element in the formation of ties based on *vicinitas*. Putting a precise limit on the radius within which *vicinitas* was a valid social tie is difficult, but it is possible to form an estimate. The towns which Cicero cites as being part of his own network of *vicini*, and those of Plancius, all lie within a distance of c. 10-60 km of each other –in other words within a distance which would have been possible to travel without too much difficult, at least for the elite, and over which it would have been possible to maintain reasonably regular social contact. Pliny estimated that Laurentum, 17 km from Rome, was a half-day journey.[30] A distance of 40-50 km was regarded as a full day's travel.[31] The Copenhagen Polis Project estimated that the maximum viable radius for the rural population of a *polis* to maintain regular close connections with the city could be as little as 5-8 km, although this is based on the effective radius for transportation of goods to market. The radius for maintaining social relationships may have been wider, but the 40-50 km cited above is likely to represent a maximum distance for regular contact.[32] Beyond distance, however, regional ties seem to have been much less secure and assumptions about obligations of social support were less clear-cut.

One of the paradoxes mentioned above is that although *vicinitas* is essentially a geographically-bounded relationship based on local roots and origins, Cicero expands it well beyond a relationship with an individual's town or region of origin. In a letter to L. Lucceius,[33] he cites their ownership of neighbouring properties at

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26 Cic. *Comm. Pet*. 24.2, 30.2, 31.3, 32.7, and section 3, below.

27 In the *Pro Cluentio*, for instance, Cicero describes Oppianicus as socially ostracised by his peers at Larinum. He also asserts that the Fabricius brothers, from Aletrium, who were also involved in the case, lost the support of their fellow citizens (Cic. *Cluent*. 41, 49), and that Vatinius was reviled by his *vicini* and fellow-citizens (Cic. *Vat*. 16, 39).

28 Cic. *Planc*. 21-22. Cic. *Muren*. 47 demonstrates that *vicinitas* was not restricted to the immediate community.

29 Cic. *Rab Perd.* 8: *cum tanto studio C. Rabirio totius Apuliae, singulari voluntate Campania ornetur, cumque ad eius propulsandum periculum non modo homines sed prope regiones ipsae convenerint, aliquanto etiam latius excitatae quam ipsius vicinitatis nomen ac termini postulabant?* ("when all Apulia honours C. Rabirius with so much enthusiasm and Campania with such remarkable goodwill; when, to avert his danger, not only men but entire regions have assembled, actuated by an interest too widespread to be attributed to mere neighbourly feeling..."). Cf. also Cic. *Planc*. 22-23 for demonstrations of support which extended beyond the immediate neighbourhood. For the political implications (and their unpredictability), see Millar 1998, 29-30.

30 Plin. *Ep.* 2.17.

31 Cic. *Att.* 9.15a; Plin. *HN* 3.100; Laurence 1999, 78-94.

32 Ruschenbusch 1985, 253-263; Hansen 2004, 9-47. See also Millar 1988, 30-32, suggesting a suburbium of c. 30 km around Rome as the area within which people could easily travel to and from the city and engage in public business there.

33 Cic. *Fam*. 5.15. On Lucceius' properties, see Cic. *Cael.* 51-52; *Att.* 6.1.23, 7.3.6; Shatzman 1975, 382.

Tusculum and at Puteoli as conferring mutual obligations of *vicinitas*. He also goes on to say that their connections in Rome strengthen these obligations even further, since "the forum" (i.e. Roman public life) both supersedes and reinforces these obligations of *vicinitas*. The implication is that the physical proximity of his villas and those of Lucceius at Puteoli and Tusculum would have been sufficient, even had they not had other social connections in Rome, although the Roman connections appear to have outweighed those of *vicinitas* outside Rome. Elsewhere, he asserts that a good Roman is obligated to be fair and honest in his business dealings, including those which involve dealings with neighbouring houses and estates, again placing the emphasis on *vicinitas* as conferred by ownership of neighbouring properties rather than by shared origin.[34] Since many senators and other notables of this period owned estates and houses in many areas of Italy, the idea that neighbours of all of these, or people who lived in the towns near them, had social obligations to them on grounds of *vicinitas* represents a significant scaling-up of the idea of neighbourhood loyalty, and of the scope of social networks based on it.[35]

The strength of these ties depended on frequency of visits to a property, the nature of contacts with the local community, and many other factors. Cicero owned numerous estates throughout Italy[36] and was patron of several cities, including Locri in the far South, but we hear little of any real engagement with communities outside southern Latium except where he had personal close personal contacts within the local elite. His letters demonstrate that he spent considerable amounts of time at his properties on the Bay of Naples, and included local notables such as the Puteolans Cluvius, Vestorius and Vettienus amongst his friends.[37] Such secondary ties of *vicinitas* may underlay his involvement with the financial affairs of Atella, a *municipium* in Campania, c. 30 km north of Puteoli. Cicero wrote to C. Cluvius on behalf of Atella to ask for help in expediting collection of rents from land owned by the community. The relation of *vicinitas* with both Cicero and Cluvius seems to lie in the fact that they both owned villas at Puteoli and spent a considerable amount of time there. Cicero also seems to have maintained close connections with the city of Volaterrae, with which he had a close connection through his friendship with Caecina, who belonged to one of the leading families of the city.[38] Additionally, he may have cultivated connections with Bruttium, and in particular with the main cities of Vibo and Rhegium, but the evidence for this is much more patchy, and the fact that most of this has to be inferred rather than being openly discussed by him –as is the case for his connections with Volaterrae or southern Latium– suggests that these were less important to him and less active contacts.[39] *Vicinitas* was, therefore, a relationship centred on shared origins, but also ranging somewhat beyond this.

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34 Cic. O*ffic.* 2.64.3. Cf. Cic. *Att*. 5.10.5; Plin. *HN* 34.40.3; Varro *RR* 1.16.2, 1.18.7, 3.1.10.

35 Wiseman 1971, 47-48; Deniaux 1993, 91-95.

36 Cicero's villas, which he seems to have frequented regularly, include two properties at Tusculum, two at Cumae, and villas at Antium, Formiae, Puteoli, Astura and Pompeii, as well as the family estates at Arpinum. In addition, he owned several smaller *deversoria* which he could stay at when travelling (Shatzman 1975, 403-409).

37 Cic. *Att*. 6.2.3, 13.46; *Fam*. 13.56; Wiseman 1971, 49; Andreau 1983, 9-20.

38 Cic. *Att*. 1.19; *Fam*. 13.4-13.5; Rawson 1978; Deniaux 1991.

39 However, this is far from clear. Putortì (1934, 534-44) argues that the frequency and closeness of Cicero's contacts with Bruttium have been underestimated, citing his journeys through the region in 58 and 44 BC, his *hospitium* with Valerius Sicca and P. Valerius, and several letters (e.g. Cic. *Att*. 16.6; *Fam*. 7.19) addressed from Bruttium in 44.

3. *Vicinitas* in action

Vicinitas was not just a rhetorical device or a way of defining social position. As used by Cicero, it implied social and moral obligations. These were less clearly defined than those of clientship, or even looser connections such as *hospitium*, but they could be utilised to obtain favours and influence actions in a wide range of legal, political or economic contexts. Cicero's most direct references to the obligations of *vicinitas* occur in his speeches. In the letters, he is frequently more oblique in his references to social ties based on neighbourhood and they are often inferred rather than spelt out explicitly. It is not, therefore, surprising that the most vivid descriptions of *vicinitas* in action occur in the context of legal cases.

Support, or lack of it, from *municipales* and *vicini* was used as a tool by both prosecution and defence. Cicero uses this tactic frequently, arguing in his defences of Plancius, Rabirius and Roscius that ties of *vicinitas* obliged the people from their part of Italy to come and support them.[40] This had both rhetorical and practical value. Roman trials contained a strong element of theatre, and the presence of supporters in court was important.[41] A good turn-out of local support was an asset. The fact that obligations of *vicinitas* and other social relations were not invariably acted upon meant that the presence of a good number of supporters served as a testament of popularity and hence good character.[42]

Vicinitas could also be used to mobilise hostility, something which Cicero exploited in the defences of Murena and Cluentius. Murena's situation indicates that *vicinitas* did not always guarantee of support, as noted above. One of his accusers was both a *vicinus* and an *amicus* of his family, demonstrating that the obligations of *vicinitas* had their limits or could be avoided.[43] Cicero's first connection with the defence of Cluentius came about because a deputation of the citizens of Aletrium, which is close to Arpinum, called upon him as a *vicinus* to represent the Fabricii, two brothers from Aletrium, who were implicated in the case.[44] Later, the *municipium* of Aletrium formally withdrew support from the Fabricii, who were now deemed to be a liability to the good name of the city and no longer had the goodwill of their *vicini*, although Cicero continued to defend the case.[45] Perhaps the most striking claim which he makes for the way in which *vicinitas* could be used to express social approval or disapproval is the way in which local networks of contacts were used to undermine Sassia, Cluentius' mother, as she journeyed from Larinum to Rome. He provides a vivid description of the way in which news of her imminent arrival was passed from community to community along the Via Appia, via networks of contacts between them, prompting the inhabitants of the cities through which she passed to ostracise her and deny her hospitality as she travelled.[46] How far any of this is factually accurate is, of course, a matter of some doubt. Cicero's forensic techniques and the conventions of Roman law-courts placed considerable emphasis on demonstrating character and

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40 Cic. *Planc.* 21-24; *Rosc. Am.* 16, 27; Lomas 2004, 102-106, 110-116.
41 Hall 2014, 45-61, 99-128; Rosillo López 2017b.
42 Yakobson 1999, 94-95.
43 Cic. *Muren.* 56; Yakobson 1999, 94-95.
44 Cic. *Cluent*. 46-49.
45 Cic. *Cluent*. 56-57.
46 Cic. *Cluent*. 192-194; Lintott 2008, 36-37. For travel and the dissemination of information, both within communities and along road networks, see Laurence 1999, 81-82, 90-94; Rosillo López 2017c.

creating a sympathetic narrative for the jury, and most of these instances are clearly geared towards doing just that.[47] Nevertheless, these anecdotes and assertions would not have been effective unless they reflected an underlying social reality.

Social networks and ties based on *vicinitas* were important in many areas of Roman life beyond legal hearings. Local ties acted as a vehicle for mobilising political support at election time, which could be exploited by ambitious senators of Italian origin.[48] Roman voting tribes were geographically disparate and neighbouring communities often belonged to different tribes. The seven *municipia* which Cicero cites as supporting Plancius, for instance, were spread between four different tribes.[49] Claims of *vicinitas* could, therefore, have been used to mobilise votes for Plancius across several tribes in the election which gave rise to the bribery charge, if all the cities involved were able to send supporters to Rome.[50] Although there are differing views on whether Italians were able to attend elections or legislative assemblies in sufficient numbers and sufficiently regularly to be an effective political force, it is very likely that they did have a significant impact.[51] There are instances of candidates canvassing in Italy and Cisalpine Gaul at election time, and of Italians coming to Rome –or expected in Rome– to vote from as far afield as Picenum and Cisalpine Gaul,[52] and the obligations of *vicinitas* could be useful as a means of gaining support. Cicero describes Murena as being escorted during his election campaign in 63 BC by his *vicini* as well as his friends, clients, former soldiers and members of his voting-tribe, and also indicates that a levy of troops in Umbria conducted by Murena had put the Umbrian voting tribes under an obligation to him, while the *Commentariolum Petitionis* also discusses at some length the importance of cultivating one's *vicini* and involving them in election campaigns, especially for *novi homines*.[53]

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47 May 1988, 21-39; Lintott 2008, 33-37; Guérin 2011. An additional complication is that Cicero's speeches as published were not necessarily what he delivered in court, and his presentation of characters and issues may have been significantly different in the written versions (Lintott 2008, 15-31).

48 Cf. in particular Wiseman (1971, 138-142), Gabba (1986), and Yakobson (1999, 66-78), who argue that the fluidity of elections and voting patterns meant that Italians, and ability to mobilise municipal support, were important factors in this period. Taylor (1966, 66-69) argues that buying property in areas belong to several voting tribes to give a foothold in communities spread across the thirty-five tribes may have been a deliberate electoral strategy, particularly for *novi homines*.

49 Atina, Venafrum, Casinum and Allifae all belonged to the Terentina tribe, but the others were spread between the Cornelia (Arpinum), Romilia (Sora) and Oufentina (Aquinum). *AE* 1981, 212a; *AE* 1985, 269 (Atina); *CIL* X 4860, *AE* 1924, 120; *AE* 1990, 223e (Venafrum); *AE* 1978, 96 (Arpinum); *AE* 1985, 267 (Sora); *AE* 1971, 113; *AE* 1971, 108 (Casinum); *CIL* IX 2335 (Allifae); *AE* 1988, 267 (Aquinum); Taylor 2013, 160-161, 376.

50 Mouritsen (2001, 119-120), who argues that Plancius was an exceptional case and that local networks of support of this type were not usually a factor in elections.

51 Cic. *Muren*. 42, 69; Millar 1998, 28-35; Yakobson 1999; Mouritsen 2001, 118-123; Bispham 2007, 424-429. The electoral significance of Italians probably diminished the further away from Rome they lived, and Millar suggests that the strongest Italian political influence was exercised not by individual voters, but by delegations from *municipia* who brought the municipal voting lists to Rome and canvassed on behalf of the candidates or measures they favoured, as implied in the Table of Heraclea (Crawford 1996, n. 24). However, the Italian vote could be highly effective on occasions when it did turn out (cf. Mouritsen 2001, 120-123). Deniaux (1993, 426) suggests that *vicinitas* may have been a factor in Cicero's attempt to enlist support from Scribonius Curio for Milo's candidacy for the consulship in 53 BC, since Curio was one of Cicero's neighbours at Cumae where both owned villas (Cic. *Att*. 10.4.7).

52 Cic. *Q.f*. 2.3.4 (7); *Att*. 1.1.2; Hirt. *BG* 8.50; Millar 1998, 29-30.

53 *Comm. Pet*. 24.2, 30.2, 31.3, 32.7; Cic. *Muren*. 16-19; Gabba 1986; Mouritsen 2001, 118-123. Millar (1998, 29-30) points out that the turn-out for voters from outside Rome was highly unpredictable, both for elections and for legislative assemblies. Plancius seems to have benefitted from a high turn-out from his home area in 55 BC, at the expense of Juventius Laterensis, whose *vicini* did not attend in the expected numbers. Cf. Cic. *Q.f*. 2.3.4 (7) for Cicero's expectation of groups of voters from Picenum and Gallia Cisalpina to support legislation in 56 BC.

Vicinitas was undoubtedly a useful electoral tool, but the relationship between Italian nobles pursuing a career at Rome and their native municipalities was not a straightforward one. The level of contact required to maintain relationships of *vicinitas* is difficult to quantify and there seems to have been considerable variation. Cicero and Plancius, for instance, represent two contrasting strategies for maintaining connections with their native areas. The Plancii, as described by Cicero, were large-scale municipal patrons who used their influence on behalf of their city, and he attributes the depth of Plancius' support from Atina and the surrounding region as pride in the success of a local family and gratitude for his support for the region.[54] Elsewhere, however, he implies that Plancius was almost exclusively based in Rome and had relatively little contact with Atina. Although he derived substantial support from his locality and enjoyed high status there, he apparently maintained his distance and many of his dealings with the town may have taken place at second hand.[55] Cicero himself, in contrast, had notably close ties with Arpinum. He owned property there which he seems to have visited regularly, and regularly used his influence on behalf of the community.[56] In addition, many of his personal connections are centred on southern Latium. The geographical distribution of his personal interventions and recommendations, on behalf of either individuals or communities, centres heavily on this area and reflects his own personal network of *vicinitas*.[57] Pompey also had a strong regional support base, with a network of supporters from Picenum, where his family owned extensive properties. However, neither *vicinitas* nor any similar form of social tie was a foolproof method of raising support. Local ties might predispose neighbours or people from the same area to support a candidate, but equally they may not. As the example of Murena demonstrates,[58] being a *vicinus* did not automatically translate into political or legal support. The need to cultivate one's *vicini* and maintain regular contact with one's *municipium* was an essential strategy for retaining local influence and maintaining a bond with one's home region. Failure to do so may not have invalidated the bond but risked weakening it. Studies of migration in Mediterranean societies in more recent history highlight the importance attached to maintaining property and social ties with the place of origin, even for people whose main residence is outside the area, and the importance of proximity and regular contact in maintaining social obligations.[59] Nevertheless, there were various ways of maintaining bonds with communities of origin and senatorial families of Italian origin adopted a range of strategies for dealing with their home

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54 Cic. *Planc*. 45-48, 67; Yakobson 1999, 97-102; Lomas 2004, 102-104.

55 The epigraphic evidence suggests that the Plancii were not as active in the provision of civic benefactions as the other leading senatorial families from Atina, such as the Arruntii, the Sentii and several others. Arruntii: Wiseman 1971, n. 41; Licordari 1982, 23; *ILS* 5349. Sentii: Wiseman 1971, n. 387, 388; Licordari 1982, 24. Other possible senators from Atina include M. Petreius, who served under Pompey from 55-49 BC and P. Tettius Rufus, who reached the praetorship under Augustus (Wiseman 1971, n. 314, 425, 426), as well as a Tillius, and a Rubrienius (Salomies 1996, 43-47).

56 Most notably in a famous passage of *De Legibus* (*Leg*. 2.5), but also *Fam*. 13.7 and 13.11, which describe Cicero's attendance at a local festival, involvement in local elections, and attempts to expedite the collection of taxes owed to the *municipium* of Arpinum. Stockton 1971, 1-20, 119; Rawson 1975, 1-15, 31.

57 Deniaux 1993, 70; Lomas 2004, 110-115.

58 Cic. *Muren*. 47.15 and 56.

59 Cronin 1970; Davis 1977, 29-35. Cronin argues that in close-knit communities, even relatives who live at a significant distance or who rarely make contact are more peripheral to the group than non-relatives who are in close contact, suggesting that in some cases, ties to *vicini* can be closer than kinship ties to relatives who live at a distance. However, the arms-length approach of Plancius suggests that in the Roman world this was effective.

areas. Some (such as Cicero) maintained strong personal links while others (such as Plancius) exercised their influence at second hand, relying on family members to dispense patronage or cultivate connections on their behalf.

Despite the usefulness of local connections as a means to a political end, *vicinitas* was not simply a political system. Deniaux, in her study of Cicero's letters of recommendation, suggests that Cicero could be approached as a *vicinus* to help sort out a range of problems, and that he used his own network of *vicini* to assist people who had asked him for help, although he seems to have invoked *vicinitas* less frequently than other social relationships.[60] Many of these letters of recommendation were written to contacts who were provincial governors, requesting their assistance for friends and associates –many of them of equestrian rank– who had business interests overseas. For instance, he wrote several letters of recommendation to Q. Cornificius while he was governor of Africa in 45-43 BC, requesting assistance on behalf of associates with business interests there.[61] He was similarly assiduous in writing to P. Silius, the governor of Bithynia, in 51/50 BC, and to P. Servilius Isauricus during his governorship of Asia, to promote the business interests of friends and associates in those provinces.[62] Many of these are very general, simply asking that the *commendatus* should be given help if requested, or simply recommending them generally as a useful contact. Others are more specific, asking for help in securing inherited property against a rival claimant, or in expediting payment of money owed.[63] They cover a range of different activities, but many are interventions to solve economic problems or local disputes. Cicero's letter to C. Cluvius on behalf of the city of Atella, asking for Cluvius' help in sorting out rents owing to the *municipium* seems to be a case of *vicinitas* enlisted to solve an economic and administrative problem. Atella was not far from Puteoli, where both he and Cluvius had villas and were frequently resident, and both could thus have been approached as *vicini*.[64] He also wrote to the magistrates and decurions of a *municipium* somewhere in southern Latium on behalf of C. Valgius Hippianus over a problem with property owned by Hippianus in the territory of Fregellae,[65] and to his friend L. Papirius Paetus, on behalf of M. Fabius Gallus, asking him to sort out a property dispute concerning a farm owned by Gallus and his brother near Herculaneum.[66]

One notable feature of Cicero's letters is that the relationships of *vicinitas* is more frequently implied than stated overtly. The connection between Cicero or others of his circle and the correspondent are indicated by terms such as *municipalis* or *tribulis*[67] rather than the actual term *vicinitas*, as it is in the speeches. Nevertheless, Deniaux suggests that many of Cicero's recommendations were directed to people who could be regarded as his *vicini*, on the basis that they and Cicero owned

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60 Deniaux 1993, 91-95.

61 Cic. *Fam.* 12.21, 26, 27.

62 Cic. *Fam.* 13.47, 61-72; Deniaux 1993, 427-428.

63 For instance, Cicero's request to L. Muniatius Plancus to intercede with Caesar over a legacy owing to Ateius Capito (*Fam.* 13.29), or his letter to P. Silius requesting help in getting a debt owed by the city of Nicaea to the son of T. Pinnius (*Fam*. 13.61).

64 See above. Cic. *Att*. 6.2.3, 13.46; *Fam*. 13.56; Deniaux 1993, 91, 397-398; Shatzman 1975, 405-406.

65 *Fam*. 13.76; Shackleton-Bailey 1977, 356; Deniaux 1993, 424. The *municipium* is thought to have been either Aquinum or Fabrateria Nova, since they owned most of the former territory of Fregellae, after its revolt of 125 BC and subsequent destruction.

66 Cic. *Fam*. 9.25. The dispute appears to have been over whether the property should be sold or not.

67 E.g. Cic. *Fam*. 13.11, 13.58.

properties in the same areas of Italy.[68] This poses interesting questions about the limits of ties of *vicinitas*. As already discussed, ownership of properties throughout Italy could bring senators into contact with many different communities and create ties of obligation to them. However, the extent to which obligations of *vicinitas* stretched to other Romans who owned neighbouring villas, as Deniaux suggests, is more problematic. Cicero himself hints that in some circumstances it might do so. His suggestion to Lucceius that ownership of neighbouring villas at Tusculum and Puteoli conferred ties of *vicinitas* implies this, although he also implies in the same letter that these are outweighed by their other ties at Rome.[69] Given that many Roman senators owned properties at places such as Tusculum, Puteoli and Cumae, claiming a special tie by virtue of *vicinitas* on this basis seems to be implausible, particularly since Cicero had many other connections to most of the people he approaches on behalf of his *commendati*.[70] His letters of recommendation frequently allude to the strength of the social bonds between himself and his correspondent and he does not hesitate to draw attention to mutual obligations or favours owed which would secure a positive response to his request. These are, however, couched in much more personal terms, referring to bonds of *amicitia* or *familiaritas* and rarely allude to *vicinitas*. Where there are specific local ties between himself and either the recipient of the letter or the person recommended in it, he usually describes them as fellow-citizens (*municipales*) or fellow-tribesmen (*tribules*) rather than generic *vicini*.[71]

This may suggest that *vicinitas* was a weaker and less significant social tie than other relationships such as those of *hospitia*, clientship or being a fellow *municipalis*. Cicero's letter to Lucceius[72] invoking *vicinitas* suggests that it was a weaker bond than the other ties between them, and elsewhere he discusses a hierarchy of obligations in which ties of family and *amicitia* take precedence over those of *vicinitas* in some, although not all, circumstances.[73] Nevertheless, local networks were a useful source of leverage. Cicero's attempts to sort out Valgius' property dispute in the *Ager Fregellanus*[74] had a local dimension, since the *municipium* he dealt with –whether it was Aquinum or Fabrateria Nova– is not far from Arpinum, and as a major local figure, Cicero may well have felt obliged by ties of *vicinitas* to get involved. The letter requesting Papirius Paetus' assistance with a local property dispute at Herculaneum may also be a case in point. Paetus was a close friend and was based nearby, so Cicero seems to be using his local connections, gained by owning several properties on the Bay of Naples including one at nearby Pompeii, to intervene in the

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68 Deniaux 1993, 91-95.

69 Cic. *Fam* 5.15.2: *cum essemus vicini in tusculano, in puteolano. nam quid dicam in urbe, in qua, cum forum commune sit, vicinitas non requiritur?* ("…despite being *vicini* at Tusculum and at Puteoli. For I say nothing of Rome, where, because the forum is common ground, *vicinitas* is not necessary?").

70 Ties of *vicinitas* based on ownership of adjacent villas could also depend on continuity of ownership. Some estates remained in the same families for generations or were passed on to relatives or associates as part of an inheritance, but others could be sold off or change hands by confiscation (Shatzman 1975, 29-31, 104-108).

71 Deniaux 1993, 123, 162-165.

72 Cic. *Fam*. 5.15.2.

73 Cic. *Off*.1.58-59. The highest obligations are those to parents and to one's *patria*, followed by obligations to one's children and the wider family, and then those to friends and *vicini*, although circumstances could dictate which took precedence. Relatives and friends had stronger claims to political and legal support than mere *vicini*, but the reverse was true in some other contexts, such as helping a neighbour with problems affecting his property. Cf. Gell. 5.13-16 on contrasting Roman attitudes to hierarchies of social obligation. David 1992, 195-211.

74 Cic. *Fam.* 13.76.

dispute.[75] Cicero's attempt to enlist Servilius Isauricus' support in on behalf of Caecina may also owe something to local ties. Cicero was a close friend of the Caecina family, but also a patron of Volaterrae, and had strong connections with both the family and the locality.[76] It would, therefore, be unwise to write off *vicinitas* as a factor in all of Cicero's letters of recommendation. There are clearly cases where we can see local ties and contacts as significant factors which underlie Cicero's interventions on behalf of others, or which he tries to exploit for the economic, social or political benefit of his *commendati*, but it might be stretching things too far to see a claim of *vicinitas* as significant in all cases where Cicero and his correspondent own property in the same area. The very fact that Cicero rarely makes a direct appeal to *vicinitas* in letters suggests that in many cases there were other, more immediate, ties of *amicitia* or *hospitium* which could be called on and which created a stronger personal obligation.[77]

Inevitably, *vicinitas* overlaps with other social obligations such as *amicitia*, *hospitium* and *clientela*. It has been suggested that all social relationships of this type (and especially those between Roman senatorial families and members of the Italian nobility) were essentially forms of clientship, analogous to the networks of civic patronage which developed during the empire.[78] However, this underplays the complexity of the issue. Cicero takes considerable pains to differentiate between the various claims of social obligation in a way that suggests he perceived a difference. In his defence of Sestius, he produces a decree of the decurions of Capua, a city of which he was patron, as evidence and takes pains to emphasise that it is not simply a formality which they were obliged to undertake due to various forms of social tie, listing *vicinitas* as something separate from *hospitium* and *clientela*.[79] This is of interest for two reasons. One is that it implies that *vicinitas*, along with the other listed obligations, would have been enough to induce the *Ordo* of Capua to make a gesture of support, even if he had not had a closer connection with the city, and that Cicero sees a clear distinction between various forms and levels of social obligation. He also makes the same distinction between *vicini*, whose support lies in shared

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75 Cic. *Fam*. 9.25. Paetus was a frequent correspondent, to whom there are twelve surviving letters, as well as references in others, and is addressed in intimate terms (Shatzman 1975, 403-409; Deniaux 1993, 92).

76 Cic. *Fam*. 13.66; Lomas 2004, 106-108.

77 Deniaux (1993, 75-108, 135-161) notes that Cicero usually refers to his connections as *amici* or *familiares*, and as tied to him by *observantia* or *necessitudo*. She argues that the choice of terminology is determined by social nuances. Reference to either the subject or the recipient of the commendation as *familiaris* or tied to Cicero by *necessitudo* implied a more socially equal relationship than the use of *observantia*, which she argues implies a degree of inequality in age or social status. However, social relationships such as *necessitudo*, *familiaritas* and *amicitia* were fluid concepts. It was not always clear what mutual obligations were implied by them and these were not invariably regarded as binding in practice (David 1992, 195-211; Yakobson 1999, 78-84).

78 Many of these relationships share characteristics with relationships based on patronage: Eisenstadt – Roniger 1984, 47-50. Cf. Badian 1958, 11-13; Wiseman 1971, 37-46, esp. 37-38; Brunt 1988, 352-359, 377-380; Wallace-Hadrill 1989, 77. The potential changes in the significance of relationships such as *hospitium* to members of the Roman and Italian elites are discussed in Patterson 2006, 142-147, 151-153; Beck 2015; Baudry 2017. David (1992, 195-211) regards all social relationships of this type as closely connected to clientship, but as Yakobson (1999, 78-84) points out, most seem much looser and in practice could be invoked or ignored fairly readily.

79 Cic. *Sest*. 10: *Non recito decretum officio aliquo expressum vicinitatis aut clientelae aut hospiti publici...* ("The decree which I read out is not one which has been extorted from them [i.e. the decurions of Capua] by some tie of *vicinitas* or clientship or public *hospitium*..."). As Kaster (2006, 134-137) suggests, Cicero was being highly disingenuous in claiming that the decree was voluntary, but his presentation of the obligations of the Capuans in terms of *vicinitas* and *hospitium* rather than clientship places it on a more equal and less hierarchical footing.

neighbourhood contacts, and clients, whose ties could derive from a wider range of relationships, in his *post reditum* speech to the people.[80] Although social ties such as *vicinitas* and *hospitium* between Roman senators and Italian notables may have elided into a form of patron-client relationship by the early empire, those of the mid-1st century cannot be dismissed as a mere gloss on a patron-client relationship.

4. Networks and networking in Roman Italy

Paradoxically, however, this high level of interconnectedness did not always lead to co-operation. These were not necessarily stable relationships, and competitive tensions both within and between communities could lead to strife rather than support. Rivalry and competition for status between both individuals and communities was frequently intense.[81] Political and social alliances were very fluid, and as some of the examples cited above demonstrate, neither Cicero nor his associates could rely on social ties such as *amicitia*, *hospitium*, or *vicinitas* as a means of achieving their aims. Local connections were by no means an automatic guarantee of support, either from one's region or one's own municipality.

One tool which may prove useful for examining the social networks of Cicero and his associates is Social Network Analysis (SNA), a tool which is increasingly used in material culture studies to analyse relationships between sites and artefacts.[82] This maps social interactions by modelling them as networks of nodes and connections, in which people, sites or artefacts form nodes on a network, and the interactions and exchanges between them form bridges between these nodes.[83] It has proved to be a powerful tool for analysing relationships between archaeological sites but has been less widely used by ancient historians because of the perceived problem of adapting a quantitative approach to historical evidence.[84] An exploration of a formal Social Network Analysis of Cicero's contacts is beyond the scope of this paper, but some of the results of SNA studies may help to explain tensions between different types of connection and explain why such a dense network of social relationships and obligations did not always secure co-operation or prevent conflict. In particular, it may provide some ways into the tensions between different types and levels of connection, and also explain why such a dense network of social relationships and obligations did not necessarily secure co-operation or prevent conflict.

An influential study which addressed this problem examined networks as examples of "strong" or "weak" networks and evaluated the differences in the ways in which these operate.[85] This model defines the strength of any particular interpersonal tie by a number of factors, including frequency of interaction, length of acquaintance, emotional intensity involved and the level of reciprocal services which characterise

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80 Cic. *RedPop* 3.

81 As Brunt (1988, 31) pointed out, the links of kinship and *amicitia* between the Roman and Italian nobility did not prevent the outbreak of the Social War.

82 Knappett 2001; Malkin *et alii* 2009; Collar *et alii* 2015.

83 Wellman – Berkowitz 1997; Scott 2000; Watts 2004.

84 Woolf 2016, 45-49. There is some debate over whether SNA should be classified as a purely quantitative method, and Knappett (2001, 7-9, 124-127) suggests a distinction between network analysis, which identifies nodes and ties and then tries to quantify them, and network thinking, which seeks to examine relationships between people and things.

85 Granovetter 1973, 1983.

each tie.[86] Ties such as kinship or close friendship, which involve close proximity, frequent interaction and a high degree of reciprocal interaction, count as strong ties, while a mere acquaintance, or a friend of a friend, are defined as weak ties.

Intuitively, we would expect networks of strong ties –typically kinship-based networks– to be more effective in linking groups of people together than networks of weak ties.[87] In fact, the opposite may be the case; networks of weak ties appear to be more effective social networks than networks of strong ties. Although networks which consist mainly of strong ties are close-knit, they can also be inward-looking and exclusive, and a predominantly strong-tie network can form a restricted clique which cannot interact or co-operate effectively with other groups. The stronger the tie between any two individuals, the more likely it is that their networks of social contacts will overlap significantly. If the network contains many weak ties, however, it opens up greater possibilities for these connections to act as bridges, providing shorter routes between points on a network and therefore quicker and more effective transmission of goods, information, or influence, as well as creating effective links between networks. Counter-intuitive though it may seem, Granovetter's studies of the effectiveness of networks indicates that benefits were more likely to be obtained efficiently using weak ties –i.e. more distant relationships– than strong ones. People who were more loosely linked were more likely to have a different circle of contacts and therefore a greater range of influence. Although the social ties with the people approached may be weaker or less direct, it opens up a wider range of contacts and opportunities than would be the case if the person approached only their immediate circle of friends and relatives. In addition, weak ties can function as bridges between different networks.[88]

This has interesting implications for social networks and contacts in early Italy. It is possible that in looking at networks of personal contacts as a force for social and political integration and cohesion, we are expecting the wrong outcomes from them. Networks dominated by strong ties, such as kinship or intermarriage, may lead members of such a network to identify strongly with each other, but they may result in a number of fragmented cliques which be of limited effectiveness in allowing members to achieve particular goals, and in some circumstances lead to friction and factionalism.[89] In contrast, the networks of more distantly-related *hospites*, *vicini*, and friends maintained by Cicero and his contemporaries, resemble Granovetter's "weak tie" networks which rely on a more arms-length degree of contact, and on bridges between networks. Granovetter suggests that these were an effective means of transmitting social, economic and political influence precisely because weak ties had greater social and geographical reach.[90] Relationships based on *vicinitas* are geographically limited but Cicero places great emphasis on the importance of connections with *vicini*. He describes neighbourhood networks of contacts between communities –largely mediated through personal contact between leading citizens–

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86 Granovetter 1973, 1361.

87 Scott 2000, 77-81; cf. Granovetter 1973, 1373-1376.

88 Granovetter (1973, 1364) suggests that bridges between networks are invariably weak ties and cannot be strong ones.

89 Granovetter 1973, 1373-1375; Scott 2000, 78-81.

90 Granovetter 1973, 1373-1375; 1983, 208-209 and 212-215. He argues that elite groups were better placed to take advantage of the opportunities offered by weak tie networks than non-elites because they already had a greater level of geographical mobility and a wider range of contacts; non-elite groups, in contrast, are more likely to rely on localised strong tie networks.

into which he taps via his connections with Arpinum. Even though he retained family connections with Arpinum and took a close interest in the life of the town, he was at some remove from it in the day-to-day sense and at even greater remove from the affairs of other cities in Southern Latium, distance and infrequency of contact being a possible indicator of a weak tie.[91] Nevertheless, he was able to use his Arpinate connections to tap into this network via relatively weak ties if necessary. We can model the relationships of the *Pro Plancio*, as described at the beginning of this article, as a "weak tie" network, in which Plancius' personal relationship with Cicero –which may be a relatively strong tie– links him into a network of regional support via Cicero's relationship with Arpinum and the local network of social connections between Arpinum, Atina and other *municipia*.

One obvious problem with this form of analysis is that evaluating the strength of a tie is difficult when the vocabulary of personal relationship and obligation was so nebulous. In a situation in which *amicus* could be used of both a life-long personal friend, a transient political alliance, or someone whose relationship was closer to being one of *clientela*, it can be difficult to differentiate strong from weak ties. Equally, in a culture with no means of rapid transport or communication, frequency of direct face-to-face interaction is not always a helpful index of the strength of a relationship. Nevertheless, the "weak tie" network may be a useful model for understanding personal interactions in Italy and may help to explain the paradox of why networks which are apparently close-knit do not always result in integration and cohesion, and yet others which are much more ill-defined seem to have had a significant role in linking Italian communities and individuals together.

5. Local and Roman identities in Ciceronian Italy

Finally, we must ask why Cicero focuses so much on *vicinitas* and whether he is an exception or whether this was a more general preoccupation amongst the Italian and Roman elites. Neighbourhood networks, along with other forms of social network, were part of a long-established pattern of social behaviour in Italy. They can be traced in earlier periods of Roman history and continued to operate until well into the Principate.[92] For the generation after the Social War, however, they may have assumed greater significance. This period was characterised by ambiguities and tensions between Roman and local identity as the aristocracies of Italy came to terms with the profound changes in notions of identity and in the ways in which they interacted with their own communities and with Rome. This involved not only the Italians adjusting to the transition from independence to Roman citizenship, and all the cultural and administrative adjustments that went with this, but also the Roman elite adjusting to the increased competition for power and influence which resulted from the extension of Roman citizenship.[93] The competing claims of Roman and local identity were, therefore, very much a key issue.

There are many instances in which we can see this tension, and many variations in how the Italian elites responded to their changed situation. The response of leading

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91 Granovetter 1973, 1361-1362.

92 Roncaglia 2011.

93 D'Arms 1984, 440-467.

Italians to Rome was influenced by a wide range of factors such as family history and existing social contacts with senatorial families, business interests, and a huge variety of local considerations.[94] Some, like the Roscii, maintained social contacts with highly placed senatorial families, and even intermarried with the Roman elite, but their public lives and interests remained focused on their own areas, while others were more focused on Rome.[95] For both groups, however, *vicinitas* was an important element in their status and the ways in which they interacted with both their areas of origin and their Roman peers.[96] Cicero himself provides a good illustration of this. He has sometimes been assumed to have a general interest in, and affinity with, the municipal elites because of his own background, but the distribution of his personal municipal contacts and the way in which he represents these in this works suggests a more specific focus on his own region –Arpinum and the surrounding area– and the communities with which he had personal ties of patronage.[97]

Although *vicinitas* is a relatively loose and ill-defined form of social connection, Cicero's references to it throughout his works indicate that in the first century BC it had considerable social and moral force. It was a means of linking individuals and families within communities and localities and conferred social and political obligations which could be used to generate legal and political support and as such, it played an important role in how Roman society and politics functioned, and in the relationship between Rome and the rest of Italy. It was one of a group of social ties based on hospitality (*hospitium*), shared place of origin, or personal affinity (*necessitudo*, *familiaritas*, *amicitia*), which are comparatively weak and ill-defined ties, but which could, nevertheless, have a powerful impact on how individuals interacted. The fluid nature of relationships such as *vicinitas* was a factor which contributed to their effectiveness. As Social Network Analysis demonstrates, "weak ties" of this type, which carry less binding levels of social obligation which may be easier to ignore than stronger social ties, can, nevertheless, be highly effective in building flexible and inclusive networks and in building bridges between networks. Although the disparities in status between the senatorial order and the wider elites of Roman Italy were growing more apparent in this period, these connections were not simply an extension of a patron-client relationship. Instead, they were powerful connections which enabled communication of influence, ideas and information between members of the elite.

Vicinitas and the power of origins had a symbolic as well as a practical function. A prestigious place of origin or family tree with connections outside Rome (even if mainly or entirely fictive) could become an important element of personal/family status and identity. Origins and connections beyond Rome may have been important as a means of establishing a distinctive family and personal identity which could be used to social and political advantage.[98] Even long-established senatorial families emphasised their Latin, Sabine or Etruscan roots, a strategy which allowed them to

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94 Lomas 2004, 116-117.

95 This was a well-established attitude amongst municipal notables, even those who were eligible for office before the Social War. Cicero's own grandfather was urged to stand for election at Rome but refused (Cic. *Leg*. 3.36). See Wiseman 1971, 92-93 for additional examples, and Farney 2007 on the variations in representations of municipal identity.

96 Wiseman 1971, 33-52; 1983, 299-300; Bispham 2007, 430-436.

97 Cic. *Leg*. 2.5; Vasaly 1993, 31-33; Lomas 2004, 110-116.

98 Bispham 2007, 430-436; Farney 2007.

co-opt the prestige of Rome's foundation myths, while others which were less well-established or from less prestigious and more recently incorporated areas were forced to adopt alternative strategies. As Farney argues, this use of ethnic/regional background to establish a recognisable political "brand" was essential in the context of Roman aristocratic competition. However, it also opened up the possibility of claiming *vicinitas* with regions or *municipia* outside Rome. *Vicinitas* could, therefore, form part of personal/family identity, as well as acting as a tool for social and political interaction.

It is this long-standing link between local identity, ritualised social relationships, and political behaviour which underpins the continuing importance of *vicinitas*, even in the very different conditions of the mid-1st century BC. The pull of local loyalties is still very strong, even for those, such as Cicero himself, who spent much of their lives in Rome, and is not, at this date, necessarily weaker than the impulse to integrate with the senatorial elite at Rome. Some areas of Italy are notably conservative in their social and economic structures and behaviour, and correspondingly lacking in elite integration with Rome. Equally, a range of individual choices was possible on how far to integrate into the Roman elite, and a range of different strategies for doing this. Cicero himself in the D*e Legibus* debates aloud the issue of his identity as a Roman and an Arpinate, but elsewhere he shows a very strong sense of *Romanitas*. He remains caught up in a powerful web of regional loyalties and obligations, while at the same time balancing these against an overriding Roman identity. This tension between Roman and regional identity was clearly one which had strong resonances with Cicero –a first-generation consul from an Italian background– so it is not surprising that the issue of local obligations and local identities surfaces so prominently in his work. He is by no means unique, however, and corroborative evidence of networks of elite regional contacts and the ways in which they could be utilised as vehicles to further personal advancement or political aims, is strong enough to indicate that for many newly-enfranchised Italians, they remained a key element of this transitional period of history. It is no accident that *vicinitas* attracted most interest in the period of intense change and re-evaluation of local and Roman identities which took place in the first century BC.

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