

Central Europe and the Portuguese, Spanish and French Atlantic, 15th to 19th centuries

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Introduction

During the past decades, research on Europe's maritime engagement with the Atlantic World contributed to a better understanding of the historical development of long-distance trade between several continents bound together by the Atlantic Ocean. With the institutionalization of Atlantic history as "an analytic construct and explicit category of historical analysis"¹, scholars aimed to overcome traditional national colonial and imperial historiography yet still continued to focus on a rather British, French, Portuguese or Spanish Atlantic. Only recent studies have taken a broader perspective at the Atlantic economic systems and commodity chains along with merchant colonies located in Atlantic marketplaces and seaports.

This article argues that Central and Northern European merchandize and merchants played a quite important role within the economic systems of the Atlantic World during the Early Modern period. Based on a comparative approach, it will analyze the relations between the Portuguese, Spanish and French Atlantic on the one hand and Hamburg on the other as one of Northern Europe's most important marketplace and redistribution centers. By this saying, we shall first look at the evolution of commodity flows and intra-European shipping between Northern and Central Europe and the Atlantic Basin. This

¹ Jack P. Greene, Philip D. Morgan, "Introduction: The Present State of Atlantic History", in *Atlantic History: A Critical Appraisal*, ed. Jack P. Greene, Philip D. Morgan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 3-33.

following, we shall analyze and compare the historical development of the German and German-speaking merchant communities, situated in four strategic Atlantic marketplaces and seaports: Lisbon, Cádiz, Bordeaux and Nantes.

We will apply the chronological and structural framework of Carla Rahn Phillips who roughly distinguishes between three major periods: first: the rise of the Iberian Atlantic empires until the beginning of the 17th century, second: the relative stagnation and period of decline until the decade of 1680 followed by the ascent of the French Atlantic empire and lastly: the almost continuous economic growth until the disintegration of Western Europe's Atlantic empires in the 'New World' during the Age of Revolutionary Wars until 1830.²

Setting the map

Before observing and analyzing the socio-economic relations between the Atlantic empires and Northern and Central Europe throughout the Early Modern period, we shall first define the geographic spaces and people. The present study is based on a comparison of the trade relations between four representative French, Portuguese and Spanish seaports, namely Bordeaux, Nantes, Lisbon, Cádiz and their trade relations with Hamburg. Although each Atlantic seaport was characterized by local geographic, political, juridical and socio-economic criteria, the present study aims to provide a comparative look at the historical development of Central Europe's entanglements within the context of Western and Southwestern European Atlantic economies.

In contrast to any other Atlantic port city of our study, Lisbon was Portugal's capital and held the status of the political, juridical and socio-economic center of the kingdom since the Late Middle Ages. Since the Age of maritime exploration, Lisbon also became the metropolis of the Portuguese empire and major marketplace for foreign trade. During the Union of the Two Iberian Crowns (1580-1640), Portugal maintained its status as an independent kingdom and empire. Both, Spain and Portugal were ruled by the same Spanish king.

² Carla Rahn Phillips, "The growth and composition of trade in the Iberian empires, 1450-1750", in *The Rise of Merchant Empires: Long-Distance Trade in the Early Modern World, 1350-1750*, ed. James D. Tracy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 37, 100-101.

Cádiz and Seville were Spain's most important Atlantic port cities and marketplaces. Although the *Casa de la Contratación* was set up in Seville in 1503 and only transferred to Cádiz in 1717, both cities were the monopoly ports for the Spanish Trans-Atlantic trade with the Americas until the Spanish American Wars of Independence. In contrast to Seville, an inshore port with lesser capacity for the augmenting oceangoing vessels with higher capacity and draught, Cádiz was an Atlantic seaport that offered a natural adaptability for the Trans-Atlantic and intra-European shipping.

Bordeaux and Nantes were the two most important French port cities involved in the French Trans-Atlantic slave trade since the early days of the *Compagnie du Sénégal*, found in 1674. During the course of the following century, Bordeaux advanced to become France's most important port for the re-exports of colonial products for Northern and Central Europe and Nantes became France's most important port of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade.

Hamburg, one of Central Europe's most important port cities and marketplace was a Free and Hanseatic city within the territory of the Holy Empire. This special legal and political status allowed Hamburg to have its individual legislation and policies with foreign nations. Its geographical position inshore the estuary of the Elbe River, that links the Central European hinterland regions of Bohemia, Silesia and the Central German plains with the North Sea was yet another factor for its economic growth as a redistribution hub and processing center for textiles, metal wares and sugar refineries since the late 16th century.

In the present study, the term Central Europe includes the territories of the Holy Empire as well as the Swiss Confederation i.e. Germany, Poland, the Baltic States as well as the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Switzerland. The terms German and German-speaking merchant colonies and communities include merchants from the Free and Hanseatic cities of Hamburg, Bremen and Lübeck as well as former Hanseatic cities such as Danzig (today's Gdansk), Königsberg (today's Kaliningrad) along the territories that formed the Holy Empire and the Swiss Confederation during the time period of our observation.

Atlantic empires and Northern and Central Europe: 15th to 17th centuries

Long-distance trade relations between Western and Southwestern European port cities and marketplaces such as Lisbon, Cádiz, Seville along with Bordeaux, Nantes and La Rochelle and Central and Northern European seaports and marketplaces such as Bruges, Antwerp and Hamburg predate the era of maritime discoveries and expansion into the Atlantic Basin. Since the mid 14th century, these trade relations were mainly characterized by the exchange of agricultural and forestall produce along with metal wares and textiles. The range of commodities comprised salt, fruits and wine in a west-east direction and timber as well as tar for shipbuilding along with grain, brass and copper wares, woolens and linens in an east-west direction.

Until the late 16th and early 17th centuries, foreign trade relations between Northern and Central Europe and Western and Southwestern Europe was mainly based on the principles of trade posts and factors. Situated inshore the estuary of the Scheldt River, the harbor of Antwerp was Europe's most important marketplace and redistribution center for intra-European commodities as well as overseas colonial products. European merchants had successfully established their branches and were organized in merchant colonies or nations. In this regard, Europe's foreign trade networks were directed towards one singular center that was linked with nearer and farer away markets by sea. The second half of the 16th century saw profound changes within the economic structures and practices. During the Eighty Years War (1568-1648), Antwerp and the estuary of the Scheldt River were under the siege by the Dutch for several years. The conflict for the Habsburg Netherlands however caused a chain of profound changes: First, "the European entrepôt function and its leading entrepreneurs gravitated toward the Northern Netherlands with Amsterdam as its center."³ Second, Hamburg's neutrality during the Eighty Years War was one of the key elements that led to an intensification of the trade relations between the Iberian Peninsula and the city on the Elbe River.⁴ Third, the shift from Antwerp towards Amsterdam and Hamburg provoked a retreat of the Portuguese (and Spanish) crown's foreign trade activities in favor of

³ William R. Thompson, *The Emergence of Political Economy* (London: Routledge, 2000), 115.

⁴ Jorun Poettering, *Handel, Nation und Religion – Kaufleute zwischen Hamburg und Portugal im 17. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 26-28; Klaus Weber, *Deutsche Kaufleute im Atlantikhandel 1680-1830. Unternehmen und Familien in Hamburg, Cádiz und Bordeaux* (München: C. H. Beck, 2004), 102-106.

private merchants.⁵ Furthermore, Antwerp was one of the refuge places of the Iberian Sephardim Diaspora who had been an important part of the endemic Portuguese and Spanish socio-economic elite during the 16th century. These communities, who had settled in Amsterdam and Hamburg, continued to be an important factor of the Iberian foreign trade with Central and Northern Europe, especially in the case of the Brazilian sugar trade.

During the second half of the 17th century, France saw a period of economic growth within its geographical boundaries. This prosperity was soon followed by the creation and ascent of the French colonial empire and the introduction of the plantation economies in the Caribbean, namely Saint-Domingue. The revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685) and the following period at the turn of the 17th century as Klaus Weber notes “The 1680s and 1690s, decades that witnessed significant Huguenots migration to Hamburg, coincided with French colonial expansion in the Caribbean, Saint-Domingue and some smaller islands became the principal producers of commodities like sugar, coffee and indigo. French Atlantic seaports, traditionally strongholds of French Protestants increasingly provided colonial goods for Central European and Baltic markets, with Huguenots as major agents in the trade.”⁶

As an ambivalent situation, Northern and Central European merchants, mainly Protestants, settled in Iberian port cities such as Cádiz, Seville, Lisbon, Bordeaux and Nantes. Here they enjoyed socio-economic privileges such as the lesser payment of taxes and customs than the local merchant community, even when these port cities – or at least the autochthonous inhabitants – were Roman-Catholic. It is remarkable to note, that either the Iberian Sephardim or the French Huguenots, who once were an important part of the endemic socio-economic elite, were replaced by foreign merchants.

⁵ Jorun Poettering, 22-23.

⁶ Klaus Weber, “French Maritime Merchants in Hamburg since 1680”, in *The Encyclopedia of Migration and Minorities in Europe – From the 17th Century to the Present* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 393.

Political Economy of Atlantic Empires and Central Europe: 17th to 18th centuries

One of the attributes that was shared by all European Atlantic empires was the practice of *Mare Clausum*. With a history dating back to the treaties of Tordesillas and Zaragoza, both Iberian empires claimed exclusive rights to navigation, commerce and territorial ownership of the new discovered lands and seas.⁷ With the creation of Western European Atlantic empires, in our case the ascent of the French colonial empire, during the mid 17th century, *Mare Clausum* or *L'exclusif* became one of the principles of overseas economic policies and protection mechanisms for national European economic growth. Until the Age of Revolutionary Wars and the disintegration of the Atlantic empires at the end of the 18th and early 19th centuries,⁸

How do Northern and Central European commodities, commodity flows and merchants fit into the economic systems of French, Portuguese and Spanish colonial trade within the Atlantic Basin? Since the early days, of maritime exploration and the creation of new overseas markets, European economy saw a gradual shift from traditional transport routes and commodity flows from the Mediterranean in the South towards Antwerp. The economic decline of the Antwerp market during the late 16th and early 17th centuries caused a long-term decentralization of commodity flows and favored the economic growth of Western and Southwestern European Atlantic seaports. The settlement of foreign merchant communities in Lisbon and Cádiz along with Bordeaux and Nantes was in the mutual interest of both sides: the Atlantic sea powers and the foreign merchants, in our case the German and German-speaking colonies.

First, Atlantic empires were in demand of Northern and Central European products destined for their overseas markets. The range of commodities comprised barter goods, namely metal wares and textiles, for the Trans-Atlantic slave trade along with consumers' goods in general.⁹ Following the affirmation of Herbert S. Klein, Western African markets demands at the turn of the 17th century shifted from Indian cottons

⁷ Niels Wiecker, *Der iberische Atlantikhandel. Schiffsverkehr zwischen Spanien, Portugal und Iberoamerika, 1700–1800* (Stuttgart: Steiner-Verlag, 2013), 38-44.

⁸ In the case of France, *Mare Clausum* and the *L'exclusif* were introduced by the decret of Louis XIV in 1670: Philippe Gardey, "Les colonies marchandes étrangères à Bordeaux au XVIII^e siècle", in *Revue d'Histoire Maritime* 17 (2013), 351.

⁹ For a typology of European commodities destined for the Trans-Atlantic slave trade: Stanley B. Alpern, "What Africans got for their slaves: A master list of European trade goods", *History of Africa* 22 (1995): 5-43.

towards German made linens as the prime textile import.¹⁰ Although France's textile industries such as the linens from Brittany were directly involved in the economic growth that was caused by the demand of textiles as barter goods for the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, Central European linens, especially *Platillas*, fine white linen originally made in Silesia¹¹ was largely imported from Hamburg.¹² In contrast to the French case, the Iberian empires traditionally depended on a higher scale on foreign textile transshipments into the Atlantic via Cádiz and Lisbon as they lacked in a national textile industry. During the course of the 17th and early 18th centuries, Spanish textiles were mainly imported from France, a situation that would change in favor of Silesian and Westphalian linens during the course of the 18th century.¹³ At the same time, Portugal continued its strong trade relations with England from where it imported the majority of its manufactured goods. Yet, the English linen exports to Portugal deserve a revision because, as Margrit Schulte Beerbühl and Klaus Weber have showed, the majority of English linens brought to the Atlantic markets were formerly imported from Germany.¹⁴ Second, Northern and Central Europe was the major consumers market for overseas commodities brought in by the maritime trading powers of Western Europe, namely sugar, dyestuffs as well as tobacco, hides and cotton. Before the ascent of the French empire, Portugal was Hamburg's major sugar and tobacco supplier during the 17th century but lost its position to the French dominance of these sectors during the 18th century.¹⁵ As Carla Rahn Phillips and Paul Butel have showed the importance of the transshipment of colonial products towards Northern and Central Europe¹⁶, the

¹⁰ Herbert S. Klein, *The Atlantic Slave Trade. New Approaches to the Americas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 116.

¹¹ Stanley B. Alpern: 9.

¹² Margrit Schulte Beerbühl, Klaus Weber, "From Westphalia to the Caribbean: Networks of German Textile Merchants in the Eighteenth Century", in *Cosmopolitan Networks in Commerce and Society*, eds. Andreas Gestrich, Margrit Schulte Beerbühl (London: German Historical Institute, 2011), 88-89; ADLA Nantes, C 716-717; ADCM La Rochelle, 41 ETP 209/6523.

¹³ Paul Butel, "France, the Antilles and Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: renewal of foreign trade", in *The Rise of Merchant Empires: Long-Distance Trade in the Early Modern World, 1350-1750*, ed. James D. Tracy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 162; Klaus Weber, "Linen, Silver, Slaves and Coffee: A Spatial Approach to Central Europe's Entanglements with the Atlantic Economy", in *Culture & History Digital Journal* 4.2 (2015): 7. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3989/chdj.2015.020>.

¹⁴ Paul Butel, Idem, ibidem; Margrit Schulte Beerbühl, Klaus Weber, 56-59.

¹⁵ Jorun Poettering, *Hamburger Sefarden im atlantischen Zuckerhandel des 17. Jahrhunderts* (MA thesis: University of Hamburg, 2003), 77, 92; Klaus Weber, *Deutsche Kaufleute*, 160, 387-388, 390; Paul Butel, 157, 166.

¹⁶ Carla Rahn Phillips, 54-73; Paul Butel, 168.

commodity flows gradually shifted from the Iberian Peninsula towards the French Atlantic seaports. In comparison, Spanish exports to Hamburg were rather focused on hides along with dyestuffs and medical plants; sugar or even cacao did not play any important role.¹⁷

Third, as trade with the French, Portuguese and Spanish colonies was restricted and exclusively directed to the motherlands of the respective empires, foreign merchants, in our case German and German-speaking merchants, had to settle in Atlantic seaports and marketplaces in order to gain legal access to the overseas world.¹⁸ At the same time as growing demands on imports from Northern and Central Europe were accompanied by rising exports from the Atlantic in the opposite direction, a single merchant or merchant firm who was involved in the import and export trade eventually could profit from both business areas and directions at the same time. As noted in the prior chapter, the transshipment of commodities between Atlantic empires and Northern and Central Europe was gradually taken over by Northern and Central European privateers who also benefitted from lesser shipping costs¹⁹. Since the second half of the 16th century onwards, Dutch shipping advanced to become the most important intermediaries between far away marketplaces due to their favorable shipping efficiency. It was Dutch shipbuilding technologies that permitted a lower ratio of men per ton than any other European nation at that time, a fact that ultimately resulted in lower transport costs and higher profits.²⁰

¹⁷ Klaus Weber, *Deutsche Kaufleute*, 89, 388.

¹⁸ Margrit Schulte Beerbühl, Klaus Weber, 56.

¹⁹ Pierrick Pourchasse, "L'immigration négociante ou le développement d'un capitalisme sans frontières au XVIII^e siècle", in *Les Étrangers dans les ville-ports atlantiques-Expériences françaises et allemandes XV^e-XIX^e siècle* ed. Mickaël Augeron and Pascal Even (Paris: Les Indes Savantes, 2013), 323.

²⁰ Jaap R. Bruijn, "Productivity, profitability and costs of private and corporate Dutch ship owning in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries", in *The Rise of Merchant Empires: Long-Distance Trade in the Early Modern World, 1350-1750*, ed. James D. Tracy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 174-178.

From Revolutionary Wars to the Disintegration of Atlantic empires: 18th to 19th centuries

The era of the Revolutionary Wars and the disintegration of the French, Portuguese and Spanish Atlantic empires were characterized by profound changes of the relations between the motherlands of the Atlantic empires and Northern and Central Europe. Until the decades of the 1780s and 1790s, Europe in general saw a period of economic growth that was only interrupted by the Seven Years' War (1756-1763). This prosperity of the European Atlantic empires was based on the colonial trade, the slave trade and the plantation economies abroad²¹. Central European marketplaces and proto-industries such as the Silesian and Westphalian linen textile production and the Hamburg sugar refineries were strongly involved in the entire economic cycle of transshipment of either manufactured goods or colonial products. As Paul Butel demonstrated the effects of this pattern for the French case by affirming that "the transshipping trade that animated France's commercial empire depended on the Antilles trade [...]. French trade could not maintain its growth except by re-exporting to northern Europe"²², the same also applied for the Spanish and Portuguese empire. Nevertheless, colonial trade was only one of the several fields of activities employed by Northern and Central European merchants. The traditional export of salt, wine, vinegar, fruits among other agricultural products in a west-east direction and the imports of grain, timber, tar along with glass and metal wares maintained a significant share of the assortment imported from Northern and Central Europe²³.

During the course of the second half of the 18th century, German and Swiss businessmen and entrepreneurs were not only involved in the transshipment of commodities, they too were involved in the expedition of French slave trade ships as well as the installation of proto-industrial textile manufactories in Bordeaux, Nantes and Lisbon.²⁴ It is to no wonder that this particular period of economic prosperity saw the strongest presence of foreign merchants in strategic French, Portuguese and Spanish Atlantic port cities. The process of disintegration of the European Atlantic empires

²¹ José Jobsohn de Andrade Arruda, "Colonies as mercantile investments: The Luso-Brazilian empire, 1500-1808", in *The Political Economy of Merchant Empires – State Power and World Trade. 1350-1750* James D. Tracy ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 364-367.

²² Paul Butel, 168.

²³ Klaus Weber, *Deutsche Kaufleute*, 160, 387-388, 390; Paul Butel, 157, 166.

²⁴ Margrit Schulte Beerbühl, Klaus Weber, 89-90; Stefan Sigerist, *Schweizer in europäischen Seehäfen und im spanischen Binnenland - Biographische Skizzen zu Emigration und Remigration seit der frühen Neuzeit* (Bochum: Winklerverlag, 2015), 56-58.

varied from country to country. The following singular case studies combine the analyses of socio-economic factors and the reaction towards the political changes by the German and German-speaking communities of Bordeaux, Nantes, Cádiz and Lisbon. As Paul Butel, Klaus Weber and Philippe Gardey showed, Bordeaux had become France's major seaport regarding the re-exports of colonial products towards Northern and Central Europe. Since the American War of Independence, Hamburg had become France's main export destination for French sugar, coffee and indigo, for example. At the same time, Nantes had advanced to become France's major Trans-Atlantic slave trade port. In comparison with Bordeaux, Nantes maintained its economic relations with the Netherlands that represented the major trade partner for Northern and Central European imports and re-exports of colonial products, followed by Hamburg. The largest community of German merchants in France was situated in Bordeaux (68 in 1784, 102 in 1787) whereas a significant lesser number of German merchants were operating in Nantes (14 in 1789) at the same time.²⁵ German merchants and trade firms²⁶, who operated in Bordeaux mostly originated from Hanseatic towns and Hamburg.²⁷ In Nantes, the geographic origins of the Germans were rather diversified and comprised Hanseatic seaports as well as cities such as Cologne, Saarbrücken and Stuttgart. The Swiss community comprised merchants and textile entrepreneurs who emigrate from cities such as Basel, Biel, Neuchâtel and Zurich.²⁸

The turn of the 18th century and the end of the French colonial empire of the Ancien Régime was rather characterized by a process of adaptation than an abrupt change. German and German-speaking merchants who were involved in the transshipment business of colonial products and Central European commodities either migrated to other marketplaces, namely London, or tried to adapt themselves to the new circumstances by focusing on the transshipment of regional and national French commodities and wine in particular. Although Bordeaux had lost its position as France's

²⁵ Philippe Gardey, 361; Pierrick Pourchasse, "Les communautés marchandes de l'Europe du Nord dans les ports bretons au XVIII^e siècle", in *Le monde en Bretagne, la Bretagne dans le monde. Voyages, échanges et migrations* ed. Elsa Carrillo-Blouin (Brest: CRBC-UBO, 2006), 88.

²⁶ The term German in this case refers to the territories loosely known as the Holy Empire and the Hanseatic towns.

²⁷ Paul Butel, "France, the Antilles and Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: renewal of foreign trade", 166-167; Klaus Weber, *Deutsche Kaufleute*, 174-176; Philippe Gardey, "Les colonies marchandes étrangères à Bordeaux au XVIII^e siècle", 360-362.

²⁸ The term Swiss in this case refers to the territories of the Swiss Confederation and includes the region of Neuchâtel, a former Prussian principality.

most important port of transshipment from and towards the Antilles, the German and German-speaking communities seem to not have suffered from a rapid change as the number of marriages celebrated within these communities indicates. Comparing the figures of marriages during the peak years 1782-1786 (26) with the ones of the crisis years 1809-1813 (24), the figures remained almost identical.²⁹

Spain accompanied the general trend of growing transshipment volumes from and towards Hamburg during the decade of the 1780s. It particularly profited from the outbreak of the French Revolution since some plantation productions were moved from Saint-Domingue towards Cuba. However, the general political environment of instability during the decade of the 1790s provoked profound changes of the economic relations between the Spanish Americas and Hamburg. As Adelir Weber confirmed, , already in 1792 Spain was not able to maintain and guarantee its national Trans-Atlantic shipping and had to change its policy in favor of allowing neutral vessels. Soon, Spanish merchants who were already established in Hamburg started to invest in the new form of direct shipping between Hamburg as one of Central Europe's most important marketplaces and the Spanish colonies.³⁰ This important part of the overall mosaic of socio-economic changes also helps to understand the decline of the German and German-speaking communities in Spanish seaports and marketplaces that continued during Napoleonic Wars and the Continental Blockade:

With the opening of the colonial policy of the *L'exclusif* and *Mare Clausum*, Cádiz lost its position and function as Spain's formerly most important transshipment port and intermediary between the Atlantic World and Northern and Central Europe.³¹

Similarly as in France, the German and German-speaking communities of Cádiz grew during this period and were actively involved in the maritime trade with Central and Northern Europe. Following the figures presented by Margrit Schulte Beerbühl and Klaus Weber, the German and German-speaking merchants in Cádiz ranged from 80 to 100 individuals during the 1780s and 1790s.³² In comparison with Bordeaux, it appears that the German community of Cádiz was more strongly affected by the loss of the

²⁹ Silvia Marzagalli, "Le négoce allemand et le commerce de Bordeaux pendant la Révolution et l'Empire : continuités et ruptures dans des réseaux d'échanges", in *Présence de l'Allemagne à Bordeaux du siècle de Montaigne à la veille de la Seconde Guerre Mondiale* ed. Alain Ruiz (Bordeaux: PUB, 1997), 77-87.

³⁰ Adelir Weber, *Relações comerciais e acumulação mercantil: Portugal, Hamburgo e Brasil entre a colônia e a nação* (PhD thesis: University of São Paulo, 2008), 131-132.

³¹ Klaus Weber, *Deutsche Kaufleute*, 115-116.

³² Margrit Schulte Beerbühl, Klaus Weber, 75-76.

Trans-Atlantic trade than the Bordeaux community. Apparently only some firms were able to either maintain their businesses such as the Bohemian Glass traders or entered new business areas such as the wine and spirits business.³³

The Portuguese Atlantic Empire accompanied the general trend of economic growth and re-exports of its colonial products towards Northern and Central Europe. For centuries and since the Methuen Treaty of 1703, England had been Portugal's major European trade partner. As the Methuen Treaty was based on the military and economic alliance of both parts and the lesser taxation on Portuguese wines exported to England and the import of textiles.³⁴ As we have noted above, the commodity flows of English textile exports into the Atlantic, in our case the exports to the lusophone Atlantic via Portugal deserve some special attention as these could also well have comprised German made linens, too.³⁵

Recent research for the economic relations between Portugal and Hamburg suggest that Portugal's Brazil trade shortly benefitted from the crisis years of the French Ancien Régime, a fact similar to Spain's Cuba trade. This short-lived period of the decades 1780s and 1790s was followed by the Napoleonic Wars and the Continental Blockade. As a result of the crisis years during the Napoleonic Wars and Continental Blockade, Portugal that was in need of a strong military alliance of England opened its Brazilian ports direct English shipping in 1808. Since then, Lisbon, Portugal's metropolis of the kingdom and empire, slowly but steadily lost its importance as the empire's most important entrepôt and port of transshipment. In 1827, Portugal signed a treaty that granted the same rights of direct shipping from and towards Brazil to the Hanseatic towns of Bremen, Hamburg and Lübeck.

Recent research of the German and German-speaking merchant communities of Lisbon during the long 18th century, especially the years between the 1730s and 1830, suggests a quite significant quite significant number of merchants and entrepreneurs who traded in Lisbon (90 between 1730 and 1830, 72 between 1780 and 1810, 27 in 1815 and 21 in 1823).³⁶ As in Bordeaux, the majority of the German merchants originated from the

³³ Klaus Weber, *Deutsche Kaufleute*, 116; Margrit Schulte Beerbühl, Klaus Weber, 81-83.

³⁴ Leonor Freire Costa, "Relações com o exterior", in *História Económica de Portugal – 1700-2000* ed. Pedro Laíns & Álvaro Ferreira da Silva (Lisbon: Imprensa de Ciências Sociais, 2010), vol. 1, 282-287.

³⁵ Note 14, p. 7: Margrit Schulte Beerbühl, Klaus Weber, 56-59.

³⁶ *Genealogisches Findbuch zu den Kirchenbüchern der Deutschen-Evangelischen Kirchengemeinde in Lissabon, Kirchenbuch I-III (1761-1899)*, private archive of the German Protestant Church Community in Portugal; Carlos Guimarães da Cunha, *Negociantes, Mercadores e Traficantes no Final da Monarquia*

Hanseatic towns of Hamburg, Bremen and Lübeck. The steady decline of the members of the German and German-speaking communities was not only a result to the crisis years of the Portuguese Trans-Atlantic trade and its implications for the transshipment from and towards Hamburg, especially during the first two decades of the 19th century. Prosopographical analysis of the communities also showed that a relatively high number of merchants died of illnesses after having reached a high age of 60 to 80 years.

Summing up it can be said that the former major seaports of the French, Spanish and Portuguese Atlantic empires lost their importance as transshipment ports between the Atlantic overseas territories and the Northern and Central European markets. German and German-speaking merchants faced a period either migration to their lands of origin or other marketplaces, namely London. Others tried to adapt their business areas to the exports of national French, Portuguese and Spanish products along with the imports of Northern and Central European commodities, i.e. the one of the foundations of intra-European commodity flows before the ascent of the colonial empires.

Comparing the German and German-speaking merchant communities

After having observed the historical development of the socio-economic relations between Central Europe and the Atlantic, we shall complete the analysis with a prosopographic survey of the German and German-speaking merchant communities of Bordeaux, Nantes, Cádiz and Lisbon in a broader perspective. Central and Northern European as well as Western and Southwestern European merchant communities can be characterized by different sets and criteria of social mobility. On the one hand, the Iberian Sephardim community and later on the French Huguenots emigration to Bruges, Antwerp, Amsterdam and Hamburg was triggered by religious discrimination and persecution that ultimately led to a Diaspora of parts of the respective endemic socio-economic elites. On the other hand, Protestant Central and Northern European merchants who established themselves in strategic Atlantic port cities enjoyed socio-economic privileges such as the lesser payment of taxes and customs than the local merchant community, even when these port cities – or at least the autochthonous inhabitants – were Roman-Catholic.

Absoluta (Lisbon: Edições Colibri, 2014), 46; for further information on the Hamburg-Portugal trade see my PhD research and dissertation project “Central European Trade via French and Portuguese Seaports - Trans-National Networks and Merchandise” at the European-University Viadrina, Frankfurt (Oder); Germany.

As we have seen above, Northern and Central European merchant communities in French, Portuguese and Spanish Atlantic seaports were found on the origins of a trade post system and German or Hanseatic consulates that represented the socio-economic interests of the merchant and merchant firms in Bordeaux, Cádiz and Lisbon. In the majority of German and German-speaking settlements and migration towards these port cities, kinship and family ties were the key elements to the expansion of economic success.

In many of the cases, new arrivals from Hamburg, Bremen, Frankfurt (Main) among other German marketplaces were sons of established merchant families who went on their apprenticeship years abroad. Their access to the local society and merchant community was either facilitated by a family member who ran a branch of the family firm there or by an entrusted agent or commissioner who represented the firm in that place. Other forms of gaining access to the local socio-economic stratum of society were by becoming an associate of an existing merchant firm. This form however differed from the prior listed ways as it was simply not based on the principles of kinship but on individual social status along with individual financial circumstances and possibilities.³⁷

During the course of the 17th and 18th centuries, business success was mainly based on family structures and kinship.

In contrast to this, Religion was one of the elements that were used for ethnic affiliation and belonging to a specific group of people or “nation” during the Early Modern period.³⁸ Until the mid 18th century, Protestant merchants from Northern and Central Europe in France and on the Iberian Peninsula who operated in Bordeaux, Nantes, Cádiz, Seville or Lisbon, would convert to Roman-Catholicism. In conjunction with this step, Protestant merchants and foreigners in general tried to gain socio-economic privileges such as a facilitated access and integration into the endemic society or to escape the Iberian Inquisition³⁹. During the course of the second half of the 18th century, religion seems to have lost its importance when it comes to international business. As

³⁷ Klaus Weber, *Deutsche Kaufleute*, 179-185

³⁸ Jorun Poettering, *Handel, Nation und Religion*, 18-19.

³⁹ Jorun Poettering “Kein Banghase sein”. in *Hamburger Kaufmannslehrlinge im katholischen Lissabon des 17. Jahrhunderts*, in *Portugal und das Heilige Römische Reich (16.-18. Jahrhundert)*. *Portugal e o Sacro Império (séculos XVI-XVIII)* ed. Alexandre Curvelo, Madalena Simões (Münster: Aschendorff, 2011), 207-216.

Protestant merchants gained in importance within the local French, Portuguese and Spanish economic systems, these individuals no longer seemed to have continued this practice. Moreover, it appears that the Protestant merchants in Bordeaux, Nantes and Lisbon have gained social privileges such as the right to cemeteries and own churches.⁴⁰ Another research approach for the better understanding of the German and German-speaking communities in French, Portuguese and Spanish seaports is to observe the marriages celebrated during the long 18th century. In the case of Lisbon, new research showed that out of the 86 German individuals, counting males only, 16 merchants married women who originated from territories of the Holy Empire or were second generation Germans born in Lisbon. 6 merchant married women from Great Britain, the remaining nationalities were Portuguese (2), Swiss (2), Danish (1), and Irish (1). 39 individuals were registered as not married and the situation of 17 individuals is not certain. When comparing these findings with the analysis of the German and German-speaking communities of Nantes, the practice of endogamy marriage seem to have been a rather local Lisbon and Nantes practice that also applied for the local Swiss communities than an overall pattern.⁴¹

In comparison to these figures, the majority of Germans in Bordeaux married French women (38 of 63) and only 15 Germans celebrated an endogamic marriage. The figures for Cádiz show a similar pattern of trans-national marriages between Germans and Spanish.⁴²

Nevertheless, these marriages were mainly arranged between two families who had shared business or actually were business associates such as the case of the marriage between Bromley Illius and Christina Poppe on September 8, 1786 illustrates. Both were born in Lisbon and second generation of Bremen merchants who had installed their business in Portugal's capital for decades.⁴³ In contrast with the habit of endogamic or non endogamic marriages, that seems to have been conditioned by local factors and

⁴⁰ Klaus Weber, *Deutsche Kaufleute*, 176-179; Paul Wilhelm Gennrich, *Evangelium und Deutschtum in Portugal* (Berlin, Leipzig: Walter de Gruyter, 1936), 40-46; Heinrich Katzenstein, *Um comerciante hanseático em Lisboa: Nikolaus Berend Schlick* (Lisbon: s.l., 1949).

⁴¹ *Genealogisches Findbuch zu den Kirchenbüchern der Deutschen-Evangelischen Kirchengemeinde in Lissabon, Kirchenbuch I-III (1761-1899)*, private archive of the German Protestant Church Community in Portugal; ACM Nantes series GG507, GG 508; Bibliothèque Municipale Nantes MS 1031.

⁴² Klaus Weber, *Deutsche Kaufleute*, 122-124, 176, 352-361, 370-379.

⁴³ *Church book of the German Protestant Church Community*, DEKL KB1, private archive of the German protestant Church Community in Portugal, 328-329.

circumstances, the policy of marriages within the same social stratum is more evident and a trans-national pattern.⁴⁴

Final observations

The historical development of the French, Portuguese and Spanish Atlantic empires and their socio-economic relations with Northern and Central Europe during the Early Modern period was characterized by some overall trans-national political and socio-economic patterns and its local expressions.

The policies of *Mare Clausum* and *L'exclusif* applied by the French, Portuguese and Spanish Atlantic empires aimed to exclude foreign merchants from a direct trade with the overseas colonies. At the same time, Central and Northern Europe were an important factor for the economic growth of the European Atlantic empires as they produced and furnished important barter and consumers goods for the Atlantic economies and, in return, were one of the most important consumers markets for overseas colonial products. The installation of German and German-speaking merchant colonies situated in strategic Atlantic port cities such as Bordeaux, Nantes, Cádiz and Lisbon was in the mutual interest of both: the Atlantic empires and the merchants themselves. As much as they were not permitted a direct participation in the Trans-Atlantic trade with the colonies, they were the link between the ports of transshipment of the motherlands of the colonies and marketplaces such as Hamburg and Amsterdam. With the opening of the *Mare Clausum* and *L'exclusif* policies during the Age of Revolutionary Wars and the disintegrations of the Atlantic empires during the turn of the 19th century, Atlantic seaports lost their importance as transit ports in favor of direct shipping.

⁴⁴ Silvia Marzagalli, "Trade across Religious and Confessional boundaries in Early Modern France", in *Religion and trade – Cross-Cultural Exchanges in World History, 1000-1900* ed. Francesca Trivellato Leor Halevi & Cátia Antunes (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 171.