

*Maritime communities: self-organised
networks on Portuguese Overseas
Expansion in the Early Modern Age*

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5th International Congress of IMEHA
Greenwich, 26 June 2008
Session: Maritime Communities II

1. Primary theoretical assumptions

- Aims: look on the other side of the mirror on what concerns the construction and the maintenance of European empires during the Early Modern Age.
- Theoretical assumptions followed: the ones of DynCoopNet ("Dynamic Complexity of Cooperation-Based Self-Organizing Commercial Networks in the First Global Age")

DynCoopNet Primary assumptions

- In the Early Modern Age (15th. to 18th, centuries), the world economy was increasingly characterized by widespread collaboration across the boundaries of countries and continents, which was made possible by new means of global communication and the built of formal but also informal networks, frequently multinational.
- The cooperation-based self-organizing networks were characterized by a diffusion of authority and frequently by-passed the segmented political hierarchies characteristic of the period's governments.

DynCoopNet Primary assumptions

- Cooperation tied together several self-organizing networks.
- The world economy became, at this period, a dynamic, open, complex, non-linear system.
- Variations among sub-systems constitute an aspect of the system's complexity.

2. Main theoretical assumptions of this paper

- The role of Modern State in the construction of European empires is undeniable.
 - The complex systems produced and coordinated by central power depended, frequently, on the cooperation of individuals;
 - The performances of self organising networks, working in favour or even against state policies and systems are central to understand informal ways of building overseas empires;
 - The construction of global interactions, based on self organising networks, produced some dynamics that over crossed political, religious and economic frontiers – which we have to identify and study.
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3. The Portuguese case

□ Inquire grid:

- 1. the role of state and individuals on the construction of Portuguese overseas settlements;
 - 2. the role of state and individuals in the maintenance of the Portuguese expansion;
 - 3. the role of monopolistic policies versus self-organising trade networks in the construction of a global economic system.
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The role of state and individuals on the construction of Portuguese settlements

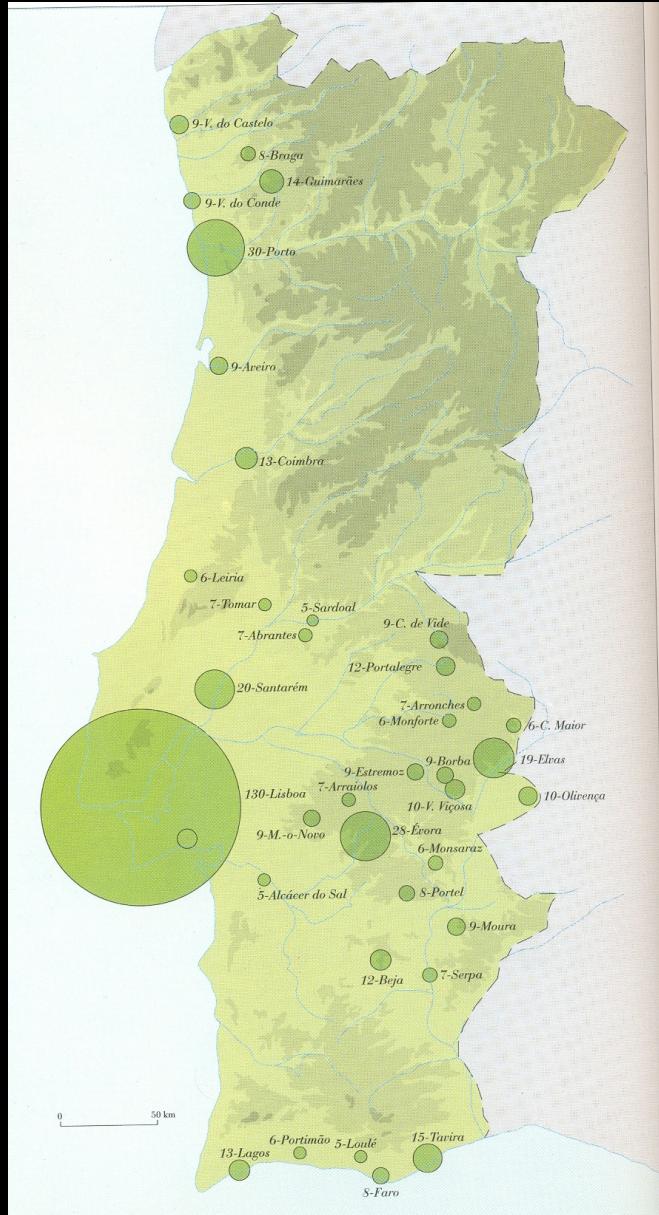
Discussing

- Overseas settlements model in the Atlantic – the hereditary captaincies
 - Cabo Verde and S. Tomé – the “lançados”
 - Brazil and India – central government without excluding individual initiatives
 - The *Estado da India* (India state)
 - Crown vs. individuals
 - Formal and informal colonisation
 - Sub-colonisation phenomena (Ex.: Macau)
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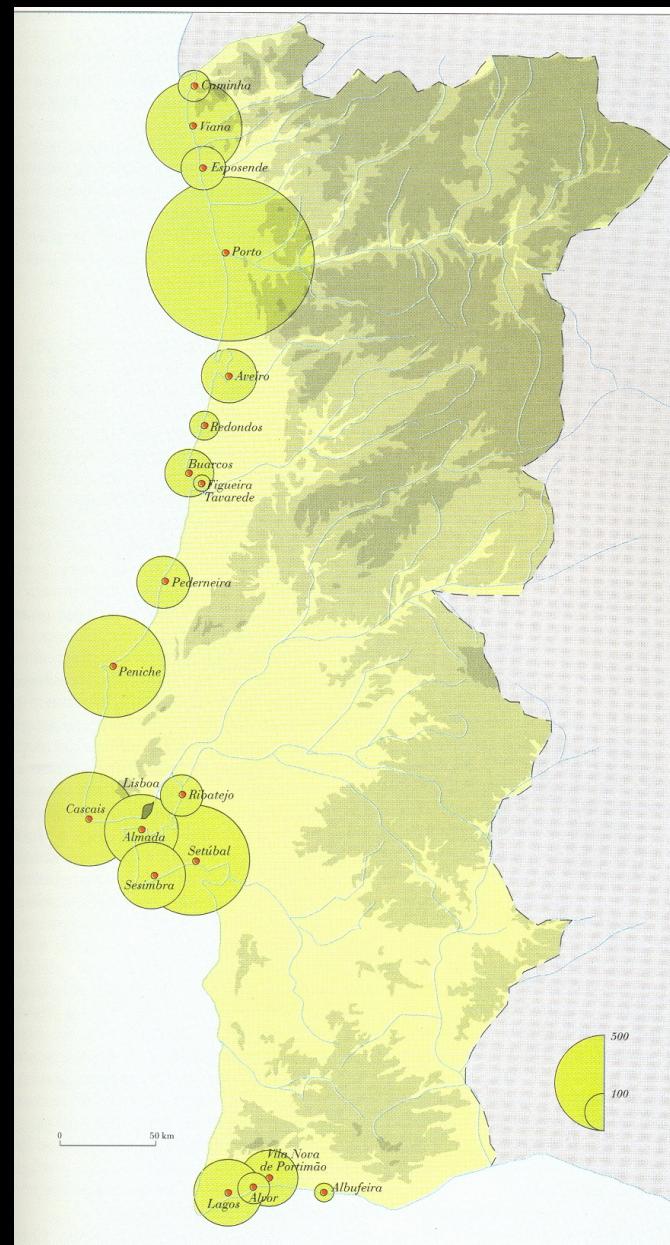
The role of individuals in the maintenance of the logistics of Portuguese expansion - Cooperation patterns

- In the 15th. and 16th. Centuries, Portuguese crown didn't have a royal armada, official army or royal shipyards able to respond to the increased needs of the "Empire"
 - All those logistic means are guaranteed by individuals that responded to the logistic needs of the crown, while they were favourable to them, with self organised initiatives
 - Portuguese crown had a very clear perception of its dependency on the voluntary involvement of individuals  tried to catch their commitment with privileges, grants, subsidies and mandatory regulations
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Main Portuguese Seaports Population Distribution (1527-1532)

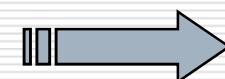


Distribution of seafaring communities in 1620

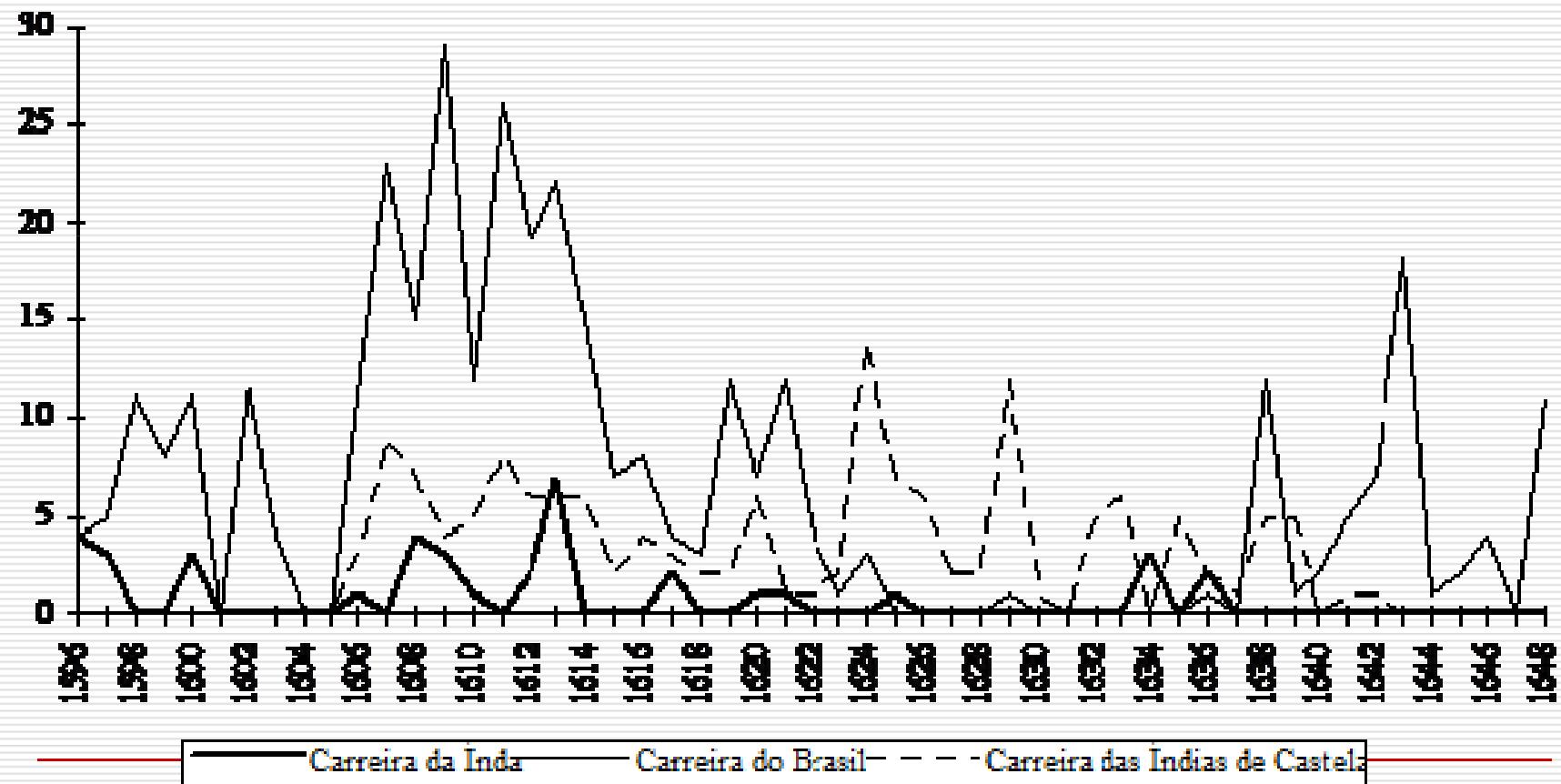


Fonte: Mattoso,
III, 232, 238

The role of state and individuals in the maintenance of the logistics of Portuguese expansion - Defection patterns

- Individuals: defection to include military equipment on board and to respect minimum crews
 - Individuals: defection to compulsive and mandatory recruitment of seamen and ships
 - Individuals: Spontaneous and opportunistic choices  defection of imperial needs
 - State: incapacity to provide defence structures and resources  defection in warfare.
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Pilots examinations (1596-1648)



The role of state and individuals in the maintenance of the Portuguese expansion - Cheating patterns

- Contraband of ships
- Smuggling
- Espionage
- Illegal emmigration



- > Globalising patterns of cooperation
 - > Self-organising networks
 - > Individual interests against central power strategies
 - > Informal cooperative behaviours against political supremacies and rivalries.
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Monopolistic policies versus self-organising trade networks

- Portuguese commercial expansion based on monopolistic strategies leaded by the crow? More complex approaches are needed.
 - Except Cape Route until the 1570th, and the Mina gold, the most part of overseas trade routes were part of a system lacking a centralizing power and a central logistic, as the Brazilian sugar or all the Atlantic Islands'.
 - Even slave trade was ruled by self-organised trade networks, even if dependent on royal permissions – also guaranteed by influential networks.
 - Multiple Portuguese seaports: leaders in the direction of trade flows in which the central power direction was not required, giving considerable leeway to individual initiative.
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Self-organised trade networks: the role of maritime communities

- Seafarers – pluriactivity and plurifunctionality (technical performances/ ship-owners/ ship freightage/ trade agents/ trade intermediaries/...)
 - Seafarers – essential links between the metropolitan territory and overseas settlements
 - Seafarers – essential links in trade networks based on trust and reputation
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Self-organised networks: the role of maritime communities

- System of communications:**
 - **Seafarers: responsible for the transfer of news, information, goods and capital**
 - **Seafarers: sustainability of a flow unable to be assured by the administrative system supported by central power.**
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Final questions and theoretical implications

- Could the answer to understand economic sustainability of an empire be found in its economic agents and their entrepreneurial initiatives rather than in the politic, military and commercial power of the state?
 - Can we apply this analytical approach to all the European colonial states?
 - At what level can we identify these mechanisms at a global level, overtaking political and religious frontiers?
 - Could we analyse the leadership of European states in different basis, those of cooperation based on self-organised networks, rather than in competition patterns?
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Final questions

- Did European empires sustained themselves on cooperative basis and networks, besides states, besides central policies, beside wars and rivalries?
- Did maritime communities, including seafarers, had a central role that still needed to be studied?
- Maybe we should we give up centring our attention on the structures, the systems, the State and concentrating our selves on individuals and their connections...

This is the challenge of DynCoopNet project, itself a self-organised, transnational and transdisciplinary research project...
