

**Global and local interactions in the Portuguese
overseas empire
The construction of social identities in seafaring
communities**

**Amélia Polónia
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Assumptions and aims

- ASSUMPTIONS:

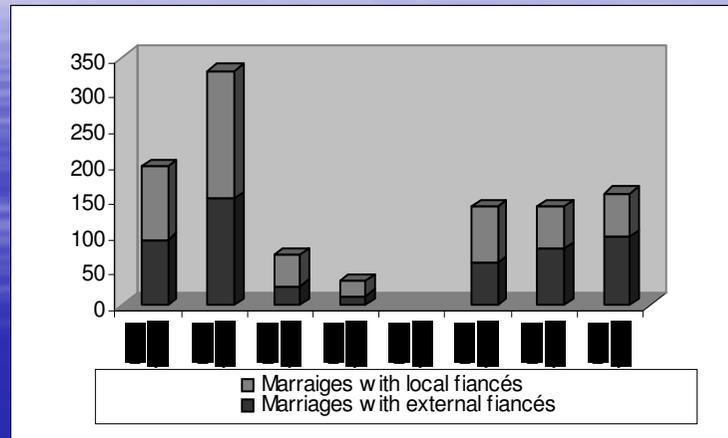
- The need to study the global interactions of European overseas expansion in the Portuguese society, particularly in seaport and maritime communities
- The need to quest a possible “globalisation” of values, professional frameworks, familial, social, demographic and religious behaviours that extrapolate geographical and political frontiers, or even the confessional ones.

- AIMS:

- The definition of social identities in seafaring communities, according to conclusions derived from case studies on Portuguese maritime communities (16-17th centuries);
- The comparison of the model achieved with other European studies centred on maritime communities.
- The proposal of research projects on the theme of Globalization throw Cooperation in the Early Modern Age

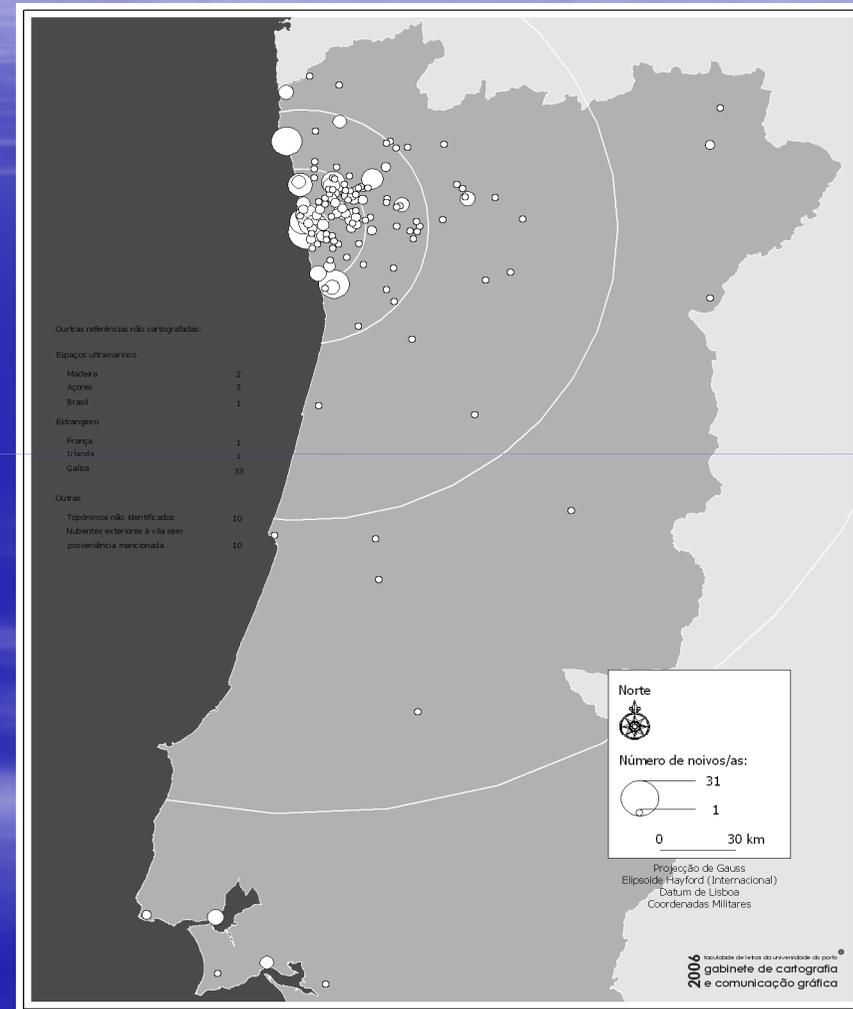
Vila do Conde demographic indicators

Marriages in Vila do Conde, 1566-1640



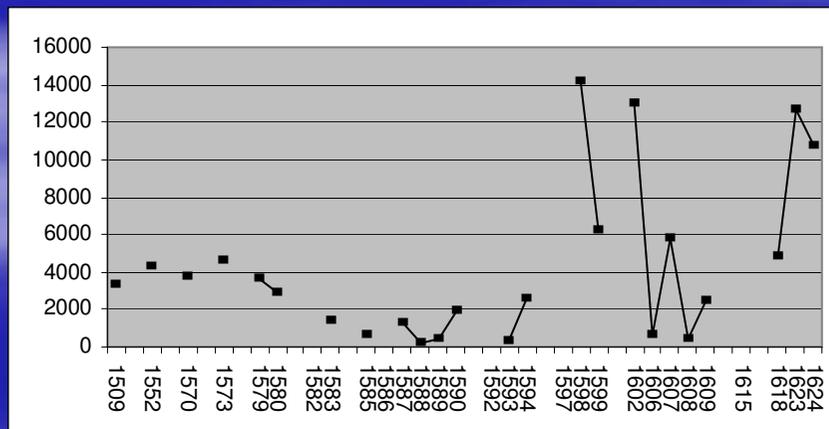
Source: ADP, Parish Records, V. Conde, Marriages, books 1 and 2.

Fiancés provenance



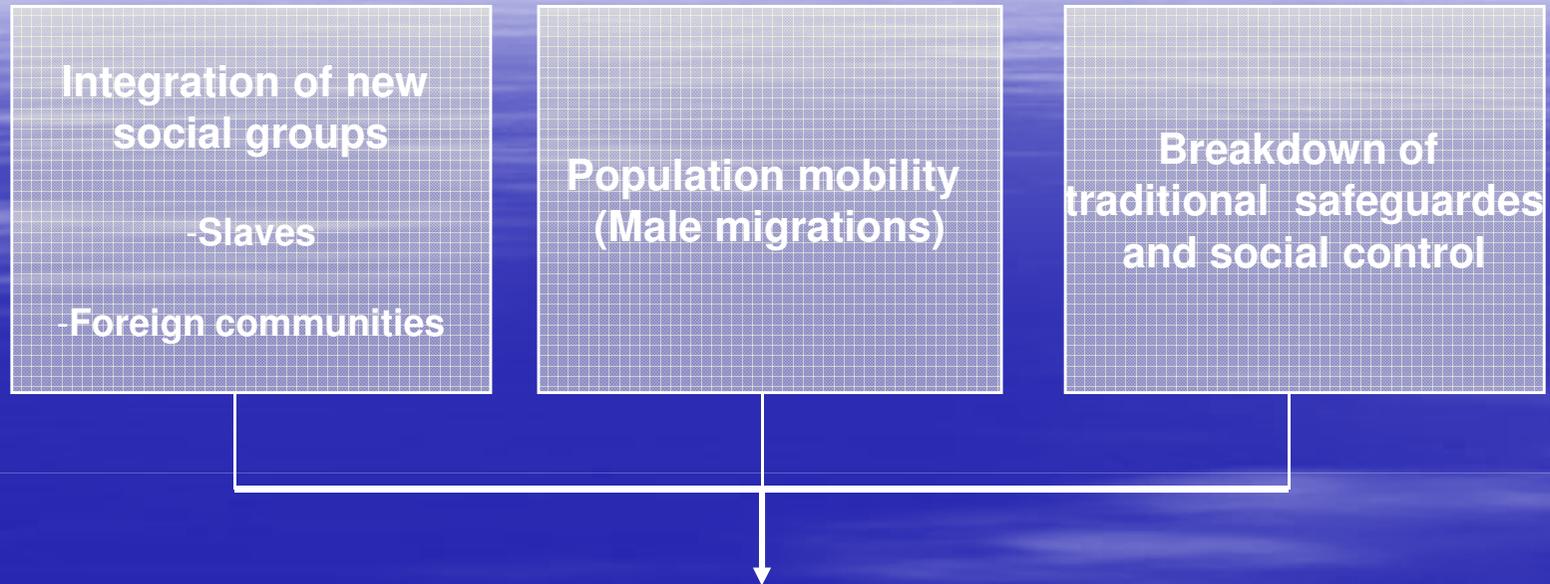
Source: POLÓNIA, 2007

Annual Spending on Foundlings, 1509-1624



Source: AMVC, lv. 16, fl. 200v.-211v.; and lv. 827 a 853

SOCIAL OCCURENCIES IN SEAFARING COMMUNITIES



Increasing rates of

- . Prostitution
- . Bigamy and poligamy
- . Exceptional sexual deviance
- . Illegitimacy
- . Poverty

DEMOGRAPHIC CONTEXT IN SEAFARING COMMUNITIES

Male Absences

High premature death rate

Lower male rate

Increase in inter-generational intervals

Early widowhood

High rate of single women

- Dilution of the extended family model

- Strengthening of ties between husband and wife

Low fertility rate

- Lower number of children
- High number of childless marriages

Consolidation of the nuclear family model

Increase in the female proportion in the demographic structure



LABOUR CONTEXT – Female integration as labour force

Increased needs resulting from naval logistics

Demand for labour

Demand for female labour

Single women and widows:
greater opportunities for self-sufficiency

Married women: greater participation
in family income

Increase in female participation in the world of work



FAMILY CONTEXT IN SEAFARING COMUNITIES

Tending toward single parental

Women: heads of families

Substitution of male roles
by female roles

Education

Endowments

Guardianships

Control of socio-cultural
representations
Furthering of female
education

Orientation of social
strategies through
matrimonial strategies

Orientation of the lives
and fortunes of minors

- Reinforcement of female roles in conducting family life
- Extrapolation of traditional family roles
- Extrapolation from the private sphere to the public sphere
- Female centrality in family life within a patriarchal social structure



SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT – Female Protagonism

Need to guarantee the maintenance of the economic system

Need to guarantee social normality

Women: economic agents

Women: participating agents in social dynamics

- Financial investments
- Trade
- Asset transactions
- Collections
- Crédit
- Ship Management
- Shipbuilding

Increase in the public representation and visibility of women

- Guardianship
- Endowments
- Releasing slaves
- Administrating chapels
- Captive ramson
- Judicial interventions
- Involvement in notarial deeds

Increase in alphabetisation and literacy

- Increase in female protagonism in economic and social regulation processes
- Adaptation of a new model of female socio-economic participation to the traditional predominantly patriarchal model



Seafaring Communities

Navigation

Trade

Emigration

Male Absences

Family
Context

Demographic
Context

Labour
Context

Socio-
Economic
Context

- ❑ Reinforcement of female roles
- ❑ Extrapolation of traditional family role
- ❑ Extrapolation from the domestic sphere to the public sphere
- ❑ Consolidation of the nuclear family model

- ❑ Increase in the female proportion in the demographic structure

- ❑ Increase of female participation in labour

- ❑ Increase of female protagonism in economic and social regulation processes
- ❑ Adaptation of the new model of female participation to the old social, predominantly patriarchal, model

Increase of female protagonism in the family, social and economic context

SEAMEN: SOCIAL EXCLUSION VS. SOCIAL INTEGRATION

- Individuality = Group Identity/ Social Difference
- Group solidarity // Social exclusion
- Contemporary pictures of seamen: a marginal universe and an inadequate behaviour = Suspicion
- Universe of a cultural porousness = Social danger
- Distinctive religious practices and devotions = Religious deviance

Globalisation of a common profile?

Common features (Portuguese, French and Dutch historiography)

- multi-functionality and multi-activity of seafarers
- solidarity that unite them, despite their differences
- the importance of reputation, prestige and trust as a framework for the internal relations of these communities
- specificities patterns in terms of demographic system and family structures
- strong female input in the world of work, in the family, social and economic spheres
- specificity of religious practices spirituality
- cosmopolitanism and strong population mobility
- representation of seafarers as agents of instability and internal conflict in maritime societies, sparking attitudes of suspicion and mistrust.

Beside the common features,
the mechanisms of Cooperation...

(European Collaborative Research) TECT: “The Evolution of Cooperation and Trading” Program

- **Dynamic Complexity of Cooperation-Based Self-Organizing Networks in the First Global Age (DynCoopNet)**
19 national projects
PL: Dr. Ana Crespo Solana, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC), Spain; Prof. Dr. J. B. Owens, Idaho State University, USA
- **Cooperation in corvids (COCOR)**
7 national projects
PL: Prof. Ronald Noë, Université Louis Pasteur, Strasbourg, France
- **The Social and Mental Dynamics of Cooperation (SOCCOP)**
10 national projects
PL: Prof. Herbert Gintis, Central European University (CEU), Budapest, Hungary
- **Cooperation in mutualisms: contracts, markets, space, and dispersal (BIOCONTRACT)**
6 national projects
PL: Prof. Naomi Pierce, Harvard University, US
- **Sustaining eco-economic norms for a sustainable environment (SENSE)**
3 national projects
PL: Prof. Simon A. Levin, Princeton University, US

DynCoopNet

PRIMARY ASSUMPTIONS

- 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.
- These cooperation-based networks served as the source of the creativity and innovation necessary to respond in a flexible manner to the era's endemic disruptions to commodity, information, and capital flows occasioned by wars, disease epidemics, arbitrary government action, or natural disasters, and the transportation problems associated with weather, distance, energy costs, and the available technologies.
- There were significant variations in cooperative behaviour, and these were shaped by cultural information and institutions specific to place and by the geographic position of a place within the webs of circuits used by commercial networks

DynCoopNet

METHODOLOGY

- Convergence of methodologies unusual in the historical social sciences, such as the application of GIS methods (Geographical Information Systems) and mathematical modelling, in order to reveal the mechanisms of cooperation that enabled the establishment and maintenance of often long-distance communication networks.

TEAM

- Multi-disciplinary involving geographers, historians, economists, sociologists and mathematicians and international (researchers from Europe, India, Australia Israel, Mozambique, USA)

AIMS

- Study the nature of cooperative networks linking various locations during the first global age and to ascertain the self-organizing networks over various temporal scales and both local and regional spatial scales  a major tool to re-evaluate worldwide dynamics from a new perspective, centred on the human factor, including those involving seafarers.

DynCoopNet

- Workshop “Trust, Reputation, Defectors, and Sustaining Social Norms: Studying spatially complex cooperative relationships in ways that connect TECT projects” (Porto, 26-29 March 2008)



EUROCORES Programme
European Collaborative Research

