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

Integration of new social groups
- Slaves
- Foreign communities

Population mobility (Male migrations)

Breakdown of traditional safeguards and social control

Increasing rates of

- Prostitution
- Bigamy and polygamy
- Exceptional sexual deviance
- Illegitimacy
- Poverty
DEMOGRAPHIC CONTEXT IN SEAFARING COMMUNITIES

- Male Absences
  - Lower male rate
    - High premature death rate
      - Lower number of children
        - High number of childless marriages
      - Early widowhood
        - High rate of single women
      - Increase in inter-generational intervals
        - Consolidation of the nuclear family model
      - Low fertility rate
        - Decrease in the female proportion in the demographic structure

- Dilution of the extended family model
- Strengthening of ties between husband and wife

Increase in the female proportion in the demographic structure
Consolidation of the nuclear family model
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 COMMUNITIES

Tending toward single parental

Women: heads of families

Substitution of male roles by female roles

Education
- Control of socio-cultural representations
- Furthering of female education

Endowments
- Orientation of social strategies through matrimonial strategies

Guardianships
- 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

Women: economic agents
- Financial investments
- Trade
- Asset transactions
- Collections
- Crédit
- Ship Management
- Shipbuilding

Need to guarantee social normality

Women: participating agents in social dynamics
- Guardianship
- Endowments
- Releasing slaves
- Administering chapels
- Captive ramson
- Judicial interventions
- Involvement in notarial deeds

- Increase in the public representation and visibility of women
  - 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
- Reinforcement of female roles
- Extrapolation of traditional family role
- Extrapolation from the domestic sphere to the public sphere
- Consolidation of the nuclear family model

Demographic Context
- Increase in the female proportion in the demographic structure

Labour Context
- Increase of female participation in labour

Socio-Economic Context
- 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…
EUROCORES
(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
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 as 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)