

The Flemish and German Nation of Seville

Collective Strategies and Institutional Development of the Northern European Merchant Community in Seville, Spain (1568–1598)

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Abstract

This article studies how northern European migrants adapted their collective strategies to Seville's institutional framework in the last third of the sixteenth century and how these strategies shaped the emergence of the so-called Flemish and German nation. It analyzes the group's motivations to refuse the creation of a particularized commercial institution, as well as the alternative institutional mechanisms they developed to organize themselves in southern Spain. The article sheds light on the role of open-access institutions in Spain to facilitate long-distance trade and gives a new insight into the evolution of the commercial connections between the Spanish monarchy and the Dutch Republic during the Eighty Years' War.

Introduction

The outbreak of the Eighty Years' War (1568–1648) paradoxically marked the beginning of a golden age for the northern European presence in Seville, Spain's economic capital at the time. By the end of Philip II's reign in 1598, Dutch, Flemish, and German migrants jointly formed the largest foreign community in the city, despite the fact that, due to the war, their commercial activity was often prohibited. Philip II decreed up to three embargoes on the trade between Spain and the Low Countries: in 1574–1579, 1585–1590, and 1595–1596.¹ However,

¹ I. López Martín, 'Embargo and protectionist policies. Early modern Hispano-Dutch relations in the western Mediterranean', *Mediterranean Studies* 7 (1998).

with the support of the local oligarchy, the community of migrants from the southern and northern provinces of the Low Countries – known as *flamencos* – and from the Hanseatic cities and other places in the Holy Roman Empire – known as *alemanes* – thrived.² Northern European merchants residing in Seville gained control over the trade of strategic commodities in Spain, such as the importation of Scandinavian timber and the exportation of Andalusian salt, and engaged in the lucrative trade with the Americas, known as the *Carrera de Indias*. In 1604, recognizing their growing importance, Philip III granted the community the right to found a fraternity – a religious congregation – dedicated to Saint Andrew, patron saint of Burgundy, and to build a chapel to house its celebrations. By then, the community, known as the ‘Flemish and German nation of Seville’, had become the largest and most influential foreign group in the region.³

During the last third of the sixteenth century, the emergence of the Flemish and German nation coincided with the commercial rise of Amsterdam.⁴ The northern European community residing in southern Spain played an important role in this rise for two main reasons. Firstly, the consolidation of the community facilitated the Mediterranean expansion of Dutch shipping networks through the Strait of Gibraltar, the *straatvaart*. Secondly, it gave them access to the Spanish colonial market. The commercial axis that developed between Amsterdam and Seville came to concentrate most of the trade between Spain and northern Europe during the Eighty Years’ War.⁵ Concerned about this, the Spanish monarchy tried several times to promote the creation of a particularized commercial institution for the trade between Andalusia and northern Europe. The first attempt was made in 1576, when one of Philip II’s strongmen, Francisco Duarte, negotiated with the *flamencos* and *alemanes* of Seville the creation of a convoy system, similar to

2 E. Stols, *De Spaanse Brabanders, of de handelsbetrekkingen der Zuidelijke Nederlanden met de Iberische Wereld, 1598-1648* (Brussel 1971) 58.

3 M. Gamero Rojas and J.J. García Bernal, ‘Las corporaciones de nación en la Sevilla moderna’, in: García García and Recio Morales (eds.), *Las corporaciones de nación en la Monarquía Hispánica (1580-1750). Identidad, patronazgo y redes de sociabilidad* (Madrid 2014) 349-351. See also J. M. Díaz Blanco and M. F. Fernández Chaves, ‘Una élite en la sombra. Los comerciantes extranjeros en la Sevilla de Felipe III’, in: Enrique Soria Mesa et al., *Las élites en la época moderna, la Monarquía española. Volumen 3: Economía y poder* (Córdoba 2009) 35-50.

4 See, for instance, J. De Vries and A. Van der Woude, *The first modern economy. Success, failure and perseverance of the Dutch economy, 1500-1815* (Cambridge 1997) or J. Israel, *Dutch primacy in world trade, 1585-1740* (Oxford 1989).

5 G. Jiménez Montes, *A dissimulated trade. Northern European timber merchants in Seville (1574-1598)* (Leiden 2022).

the one of the *Carrera de Indias*, for this trade. The foreign merchants declined. They argued that an armed convoy would entail higher costs and that a fixed calendar would discourage the arrival of northern European shipmasters in Andalusia.⁶ They preferred, instead, to keep the route open, refusing the possibility of enjoying a commercial monopoly and of creating their own jurisdiction to administer it. This position implied, in short, that they would have to rely on Spanish institutions, namely, public notaries and the royal justice system, to protect their activity in long-distance trade.

Such reliance contradicts a common wisdom in the field of economic history that assumes that Spain became a backward market in the early modern period because of the inefficiency of its political and commercial institutions. The narrative of failure was particularly supported by scholars of the New Institutional Economics (NIE), who traditionally regarded the Spanish monarchy as an absolutist and centralist state, unable to adapt to the needs of long-distance trade.⁷ That conclusion was enthusiastically embraced by historians studying the rise of the Dutch Republic, as it was very tempting to present Spain and the Netherlands in an antagonistic way. While Spain supposedly declined, parliamentary models like the Dutch Republic and England flourished and dominated global trade in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁸

Recent historiography, nonetheless, calls attention to the necessity to rethink how we look at southern Europe when studying its progressive economic divergence with regards to the more successful northern Europe in the early modern period.⁹ Mostly written in English and for an English-speaking audience, NIE historians have frequently failed to accurately incorporate southern European case studies into their theoretical explanations. As Clemente and Zaugg argue, historians must

6 C. Gomez-Centurión Jiménez, *Felipe II, la empresa de Inglaterra y el comercio septentrional (1566-1609)* (Madrid 1988) 162.

7 D.C. North, 'Institutions, transaction costs, and the rise of merchant empires', in: James D. Tracy (ed.), *The political economy of merchant empires. State power and world trade, 1350-1750* (Cambridge 1991) 22-40.

8 For a critical overview on this, see J. Israel, 'The decline of Spain. A historical myth', *Past & Present* 91 (1981) 170-180 and, more recently: Regina Grafe, 'The strange tale of the decline of Spanish shipping', in: Richard W. Unger (ed.) *Shipping and economic growth, 1350-1850* (Leiden 2011).

9 A. Clemente and R. Zaugg, 'Hermes, the Leviathan and the grand narrative of new institutional economics. The quest for development in the eighteenth-century kingdom of Naples', *Journal of Modern European History* 15:1 (2017) 109-129. doi:10.17104/1611-8944-2017-1-108. For a discussion on this based on the Spanish case, see chapter 1 of R. Grafe, *Distant tyranny. Markets, power, and backwardness in Spain, 1650-1800* (Princeton 2012).

challenge the assumption that southern European states ‘were essentially predatory and unwilling to guarantee property rights’ and where ‘relations between the state and merchants were based on the vertical imposition of constraints impeding the development of external trade’.¹⁰ Most historians now reject the portrayal of the Spanish monarchy as an absolutist and a centralist organization. In a collective volume published in 2012, Cardim et al presented the Spanish monarchy as a polycentric organization that ‘allowed for the existence of many different interlinked centers that interacted not only with the king but also among themselves, thus actively participating in forging the polity’.¹¹ In her book *Distant Tyranny*, the German historian Regina Grafe proposed that it was a lack of regional integration, and not of institutional efficiency, that mainly hindered Spain’s economy.¹² Similarly Grafe concluded in another paper:

‘What emerges from the recent literature on political and commercial networks in the Spanish Atlantic is thus a polity that seems less rigid in its institutional set-up and a regulation of trade that was more responsive to commercial realities than often assumed’.¹³

The refusal of the Flemish and German residents in Seville to create a particularized commercial institution corroborates Grafe’s claims. Foreigners must have found the Spanish institutional framework suitable enough to enforce their commercial contracts and to protect their properties from confiscations, even in a context of war. Public notaries and royal justice constituted the basis of this institutional framework. The first were constituted by public officials (*escribanos*) with royal authority to attest that a document was true and in accordance with the wishes of the parties that signed it.¹⁴ The second was a conglomerate of

¹⁰ Clemente and Zaugg, ‘Hermes’, 114.

¹¹ Pedro Cardim et al (eds.), *Polycentric monarchies. How did early modern Spain and Portugal achieve and maintain a global hegemony?* (Brighton 2012).

¹² Grafe, *Distant tyranny*.

¹³ R. Grafe, ‘On the spatial nature of institutions and the institutional nature of personal networks in the Spanish Atlantic’, *Culture & History Digital Journal* 1:3 (2014) 1-11 doi.org/10.3989/chdj.2014.006.

¹⁴ Miguel Angel Extremera Extremera, ‘Los escribanos de Castilla en la Edad Moderna. Nuevas líneas de investigación’, *Chronica nova: Revista de historia moderna de la Universidad de Granada* 28 (2001) 159-184. I conducted a study on the use of notarial solutions by Flemish and German migrants in: Jiménez Montes, ‘Sepan quantos esta carta vieren. Poderes notariales y comercio transnacional en Sevilla, 1570-1600’, *Studia Historica, Historia Moderna* 42:1 (2020) 39-64 doi.org/10.14201/shmo20204213964.

regional (*Real Audiencia de Sevilla*) and higher courts (*chancillerías* and royal councils) that dealt with civil and criminal cases.¹⁵

Adopting Ogilvie's terminology, public notaries and royal justice could be defined as 'open-access' institutions, because they did not restrict participation on the basis of identity or guild membership.¹⁶ As such, they offered a variety of solutions in contract enforcement and conflict management to locals and foreigners alike, mediating impartially between individuals, facilitating the emergence of impersonal markets and long-distance trade.¹⁷ In his popular book *Cities of Commerce*, Gelderblom considered the development of open-access institutions in the Low Countries to be the result of inter-city competition.¹⁸ In the case of Andalusia, the origins and evolution of open-access institutions remains to be studied. Given the more homogenous jurisdictional context, it is clear that inter-city competition did not drive their development. However, as the case presented in this paper aims to show, it is also clear that the Spanish king did not have an absolute power to impose commercial policies, either. Philip II and his sons could not impose the creation of a merchant guild on the northern European nation, despite their several attempts. On the contrary, commercial policies were the result of negotiations between the monarchy, local elites, and different mercantile groups.¹⁹ The rise of open-access institutions in Andalusia must have responded to a similar process of negotiation.

The open-access institutional framework available in Andalusia and in northern Europe offered long-distance merchants an ample margin for manoeuvre in implementing their commercial strategies. This is in line with Grafe's idea about the existence of a 'market for institutions' in early modern Europe, which allowed individuals and groups to choose and combine different institutional solutions when participating in international trade. In this paper, Grafe even speculates that 'the success at a global scale of European commercial institutions (...) did not derive

¹⁵ J.L. De las Heras Santos, 'La organización de la justicia real ordinaria en la Corona de Castilla durante la Edad Moderna', *Estudis. Revista de Historia Moderna* 22 (1996) 105–140.

¹⁶ S.C. Ogilvie, *Institutions and European trade. Merchant guilds, 1000–1800* (Cambridge 2011) 387.

¹⁷ Jeroen Puttevils, *Merchants and trading in the sixteenth century. The golden age of Antwerp* (London 2015). For a particular case study on notarial solutions, see: F. Eloire, C. Lemercier and V.A. Santarosa, 'Beyond the personal – anonymous divide. Agency relations in powers of attorney in France in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries', *Economic History Review* 72:4 (2019) 1229–1250.

¹⁸ Oscar Gelderblom, *Cities of commerce. The institutional foundations of international trade in the Low Countries, 1250–1650* (Princeton 2013).

¹⁹ Bartolomé Yun Casalilla, *Marte contra Minerva. El precio del imperio español, c. 1450–1600* (Barcelona 2004).

from “better” European solutions but from institutional diversity.²⁰ The awareness of such diversity would explain why the *flamencos* and *alemanes* opted to rely on the existing solutions rather than creating a particularized institution.

What seems less evident is how first- and second-generation migrants successfully organized their mercantile community abroad without a particularized commercial institution. An important methodological problem that arises is how to delimit the boundaries of the nation.²¹ Especially for non-Spanish speakers, it is tempting to assume that early modern nations in Spain were homologous to foreign *naciones* in the medieval Low Countries, which enjoyed commercial monopolies and had their own jurisdiction to administer those privileges.²² Yet that was not the case in sixteenth-century Seville. Derived from the Latin word *natio*, a *nación* (pl. *naciones*) in Spanish can be broadly defined as a group of people born in the same place.²³ For the particular case of this work, early modern nations conveniently fit into Benedict Anderson’s definition of an imagined community; that is, a community of individuals with a similar language and shared values, who perceived themselves and were perceived by the receiving society as part of the same group.²⁴ Foreigners did develop alternative forms of self-organization, based on religious institutions, which substituted some of the main functions of a merchant guild, like the creation of social capital among compatriots and the delegation of the groups’ political action. As Ogilvie indicates, religious foundations could be complementary to

²⁰ R. Gafe, ‘Was there a market for institutions in early modern European trade?’, in: Georg Christ et al. (eds.), *Union in separation. Diasporic groups and identities in the eastern Mediterranean (1100-1800)* (Rome 2015) 595.

²¹ Frédéric Mauro, ‘Merchant communities, 1350-1750’, in: James D. Tracy (ed.), *The rise of merchant empires. Long distance trade in the early modern world 1350-1750* (Cambridge 1993) 255-286.

²² Gelderblom, *Cities of commerce*. For an interesting discussion on the less known Andalusian nation in the Low Countries, see R. Fagel, ‘La Nación de Andalucía en Flandres. Separatismo comercial en el siglo XVI’, in: Juan José Iglesias Rodríguez et al., *Comercio y cultura en la Edad Moderna. Actas de la XIII reunión científica de la Fundación Española de Historia Moderna* (Sevilla 2015) 29-41, 34 dx.doi.org/10.20350/digitalCSIC/12265.

²³ In this case, not necessarily a community of citizens of a state, either, since we are dealing with a period prior to the nation-state. For an interesting discussion on the concept of nation in the early modern period, see Bartolomé Yun Casalilla, “Localism”, global history and transnational history. A reflection from the historian of early modern Europe, *Historisk Tidskrift* 4:127 (2007) 659-678. See also the collective volume Bernardo J. García García and Óscar Recio Morales, *Las corporaciones de nación en la Monarquía Hispánica (1580-1750). Identidad, patronazgo y redes de sociabilidad* (Madrid 2014).

²⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities. Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (London 2006) 6-7.

merchant associations.²⁵ Moreover, in an early modern society like this one, where religion channelled a great deal of the local social life, religious congregations constituted an instrument to engage with the receiving society.²⁶ Because of this role, the development of such institutions, in the end, served to shape the way the nation was perceived by the receiving society.

The present paper explores how northern European migrants adapted their collective strategies to Seville's institutional framework in the last third of the sixteenth century, and how these strategies shaped the emergence of a distinctive Flemish and German nation. The period under scrutiny corresponds to the formative decades of the nation, approximately from the beginning of the Eighty Years' War to the construction of the Saint Andrew's chapel in 1604. As primary source, this research used two sets of notarial deeds. One is formed by twenty-two wills formulated by northern European migrants. With these personal documents, we can assess individual and group strategies of assimilation. The other set is formed by sixteen deeds signed on behalf of the so-called 'Flemish and German nation of Seville', where the community presented itself as a single political actor. These documents offer a first-hand perspective for approaching the collective objectives and strategies of the community, permitting a thorough reconstruction of how the group used the open-access institutions to engage with local and royal authorities. The paper is divided into three parts, corresponding to three main collective strategies developed by the community. The first one deals with the assimilation strategies. It contextualizes the growth of the Flemish and German community since the outbreak of the Dutch Revolt and studies the foundation of an almshouse, the first religious congregation of the nation. The second section explores the group's mechanisms of self-organization, such as the delegation of political action and the building of social capital. The last section studies the appointments of legal representatives in outer ports and in Madrid in the 1590s, so as to protect the activity of northern European shipmasters on the Andalusian coast.

²⁵ Ogilvie, *Institutions and European trade*, 9.

²⁶ Gamero Rojas and García Bernal, 'Las corporaciones de nación'.



Illustration 1 Juan de Roelas, Martirio de San Andrés, ca. 1610, oil on canvas, Museo de Bellas Artes de Sevilla.

Migration and assimilation

In the sixteenth century, Seville was the only Castilian port allowed to navigate and trade with the Americas. As a consequence, the city experienced an unprecedented growth, reaching a population of 100.000 inhabitants, many of whom were foreigners who sought to engage in the new American opportunities.²⁷ Yet Seville had attracted foreigners long before the beginning of the Spanish colonization of the Americas. Due to its privileged geographical location, the Andalusian region stood as a central node between maritime routes that connected the Mediterranean, the western European, and the African coasts. In the Middle Ages, many migrants from other Iberian kingdoms and elsewhere in Europe settled there. Several foreign nations flourished in Seville and established religious congregations to provide religious assistance and social support to vulnerable compatriots.²⁸

Until the middle of the sixteenth century, the Italians formed the largest non-Iberian nation. Genoese migrants had played a decisive role in the Christian conquest of Andalusia and later became essential for the Atlantic expeditions promoted by the Castilian monarchy. In recognition, the monarchy granted them tax and commercial privileges as well as the right to build a chapel in town, which came into disuse in the sixteenth century.²⁹ By then, the most influential Genoese families had successfully integrated into the oligarchy as locals, and Atlantic foreign communities had gained prominence.³⁰ The presence of English, French, Flemish, and German migrants grew steadily, as Otte noted in his seminal work on the economic history of sixteenth-century Seville.³¹ The English became the largest non-Iberian community by the middle of the century but disappeared in the 1580s, after Philip II decreed their expulsion from Castile in the context of the war against England.³² Although a similar policy of expulsion was attempted against Flemish and German migrants after the Dutch Revolt, they could remain thanks to the support they received from the local oligarchy. Their growing importance in the supply of Scandinavian timber for the ships of the *Carrera de Indias* and of the royal navy made them indispensa-

²⁷ A. Domínguez Ortiz, *Orto y ocaso de Sevilla* (Sevilla 1991) 71-72.

²⁸ Gamero Rojas and García Bernal, 'Las corporaciones de nación', 354.

²⁹ José Damián González Arce, 'El consulado genovés de Sevilla (siglos XIII-XV). Aspectos jurisdiccionales, comerciales y fiscales', *Studia historica. Historia medieval* 28 (2010) 179-206.

³⁰ Díaz Blanco and Fernández Chaves, 'Una élite en la sombra'.

³¹ E. Otte, *Sevilla, siglo XVI. Materiales para su historia económica* (Sevilla 2008).

³² Otte, *Sevilla, siglo XVI*, 276-277.

ble for the region's economy.³³ In 1597, a report showed that there were at least 352 male foreign residents in Seville. Almost half of them were Flemish (173). This number included Dutch and German individuals, who were not identified as such for different reasons. Those coming from the rebel provinces of the Low Countries were generally identified as Flemish in Spain. As for the case of German individuals, their number was negligible if compared to those from the Low Countries; hence, they were often accounted as Flemish, too.³⁴

To respond to the necessities of a growing community, Philip II allowed the Flemish nation to found an almshouse, known as the *Casa de pobres de la nación flamenca*. The exact date of its founding remains unknown, and we only know about it through secondary references. Hye Hoys, a Belgian intellectual who travelled across Spain between 1844 and 1845, said that the almshouse was founded after 1566, by a Benedictine who fled Flanders after the Iconoclastic Fury.³⁵ This seems a plausible date since notarial records document that the almshouse had been operating at least since the early 1570s.³⁶ The almshouse was located in a peripheral area of town, the Saint Martin parish, with the purpose of assisting poor compatriots, especially 'honest old men, widows, and other honest people of an exemplary life and good fame'. The institution also provided financial support to seamen captured by Muslim corsairs in the Strait of Gibraltar to 'return to their lands and not beg around the city', and gave spiritual support to those 'troubled in our sacred religion who want to reconcile with our church, together with those coming from Holland and other parts'.³⁷

³³ Jiménez Montes, *A dissimulated trade*.

³⁴ On the report, see Bethany Aram, 'La identificación y ocultación de extranjeros tras el ataque anglo-holandés de 1596', *Tiempos Modernos. Revista Electrónica de Historia Moderna* 8:31 (2015) 3–62. On the methodological problems about the identification of northern European migrants in Spain, see Stols, *De Spaanse Brabanders*, 58.

³⁵ M. Hye Hoys, *Fondations pieuses et charitables des marchands flamands en Espagne. Souvenirs de voyages dans la Péninsule Ibérique en 1844 et 1845* (Madrid 2000) 25. According to a memorial made by a group of Flemish merchants of Cádiz in 1727, we know that a Flemish almshouse was founded in Cádiz in 1563; Ana Crespo Solana, 'El concepto de ciudadanía y la idea de nación según la comunidad flamenca de la Monarquía hispánica', in: García García and Recio Morales (eds.), *Las corporaciones de nación*, 402. Unfortunately, it is not possible to know if the almshouse in Seville was founded that same year. It could be also the case that the almshouse of Cádiz was founded later, and the memorial is mistakenly referring to the one of Seville.

³⁶ We know, for instance, that the majordomos of the institution rented the houses of the almshouse in San Martín. Archivo Histórico Provincial de Sevilla (hereafter AHPSe), Sección de Protocolos (hereafter SP), 7772, 394v, AHPSe, SP, 7778, 238v, AHPSe, SP, 9236, 599r.

³⁷ AHPSe, Audiencia Real de Sevilla (hereafter ARS), 29.275, expedient n. 1. This document is a lawsuit between the Flemish fraternity and two members that did not want to belong to it anymore, Juan

Evidence about the almshouse is scarce, which suggests that the involvement of the *flamencos* was limited. In fact, some of the functions that constituted its *raison d'être* were conducted in a private way, outside the institution. We know, for instance, that Esteban Jansen and Francisco Bernal – probably the richest individuals of the community – took over the payment for the ransoming of two northern European crews, the one of the captain Dirique Fenesen and the other of the captain Juan Oldenburgue.³⁸ These crews had been attacked by Muslim corsairs and taken captive in Tétouan in 1576. Three years later, Bernal and Jansen signed a promise of payment to the Order of Mercy to ransom fourteen sailors of the crew for prices that went from 150 to 226 *ducados*, depending on the person, and totalling 2436 *ducados*.³⁹ This example shows that the institution was economically unable to cope with this kind of extraordinary expense, so the two rich compatriots covered it. The almshouse, most likely, lacked a stable source of income.

Wills corroborate the limited participation of *flamencos* and *alemanes* in the almshouse. The notarial registers of the notaries Francisco Díaz and Juan de Tordesillas contain at least twenty-two wills made by northern European individuals in the last third of the sixteenth century. Sixteen of them were drafted by well-established merchants who had lived in Seville for one or several decades.⁴⁰ One is formulated by an employee of a merchant and another one by a cooper; both represent a modest profile of individuals who resided in Seville for at least a decade.⁴¹ There are two wills notarized by women, Adriana Enríquez and Catalina Enríquez, who were daughters of a Flemish merchant.⁴² Finally, the sample includes the wills of two sojourners who died during their

Bautista Sirman and Miguel de Neve, in the seventeenth century. It was analyzed in Gamero Rojas, 'Flamencos en la Sevilla del siglo XVII. La capilla de San Andrés', in: Iglesias Rodríguez et al., *Comercio y cultura en la Edad Moderna*, 715-730.

³⁸ On Francisco Bernal and Esteban Jansen, see Jiménez Montes, *A dissimulated trade*.

³⁹ AHPSe, SP, 9222, 720r We know that Fensen was transporting timber from Amsterdam to Seville: AHPSe, 9214P, 947v.

⁴⁰ Cornieles Lamberto: AHPSe, SP, 9310, 578v. This is not the actual document but contains plenty of information about the last will of Lamberto. Cornieles Valdovinos: AHPSe, SP, 16712, 1288r; Enrique Aparte: 9227, 891r; Esteban Jansen: 9289, 714r; Felipe Sarens: 19976, 501r; Francisco Bernal: 9251, 73r; Guillermo Corinse: 9977, 739r; Jaques Enríquez: 9265, 526r; Jaques Sesbaut: 9310, 163r; Juan de Bestoven: 9303, 122r; Juan Sesbaut, 9277, 942r; Justo de Bil: 9301, 332r; Miguel Arbauts, 9276, 165r; Nicolás de Melemburque: 7771, 342r; Pedro Gisberto: 9272, 815r; Simón Enríquez: 9312, 517r.

⁴¹ AHPSe, SP, 9250, 395r; 9526, 479v-482v.

⁴² AHPSe, SP, 9246, 1106r; AHPSe, SP, 9266, 523r.

stay in Andalusia: Federico Cornieles a shipmaster from Tonsberg, Norway, and Juan Hoben, a woodcarver from Liège.⁴³

The bequests that these foreigners made to the Flemish almshouse and to other religious congregations are a good indicator not only of their religious practices but also of their strategies of integration. As shown in Table 1, the Flemish almshouse received the highest number of bequests. However, only eight out of twenty-two wills stipulated a bequest to it, and these contributions were rather modest. Juan de Sesbaut made the largest bequest, with 50 *ducados*, which were to be spent ‘in marrying orphan girls and aiding poor and needy people in my land in Flanders’.⁴⁴ Surprisingly, the contribution of Juan Hoben, a sojourner, was the second largest with 25 *ducados*. A clause in his will suggests that he had been assisted by the almshouse and was probably paying back the care he received.⁴⁵ By contrast, three influential merchants of the nation (Francisco Bernal, Miguel Arbauts, and Felipe Sarens), who had been majordomos of the almshouse, made no bequest to it.

All individuals made bequests to more than one place. One institution stands out, together with the Flemish almshouse: the fraternity of *Santísimo Sacramento del Sagrario*, with eight bequests, housed in *El Sagrario* chapel of the cathedral. The cathedral itself, or rather the works of the cathedral (*fábrica de la catedral*), received six contributions. The other bequests, mostly to monasteries, are rather spread across the city and the region. The flamencos bequeathed legacies to two religious orders, in particular, the orders of *La Merced* and of *La Trinidad*, which played an important role in the ransoming of captives in northern Africa. Beside the bequests, Flemish migrants ordered requiem masses in different churches and monasteries across the city. Most were to be held in chapels of the cathedral; that is, in the parish of Santa María, where most of them lived.⁴⁶ Interestingly enough, none of them ordered any requiem mass in Flanders.

In the absence of a Flemish fraternity that only came into existence in 1604, *flamencos* and *alemanes* performed their religiosity in local congregations. Many were affiliated with local fraternities, and some

⁴³ AHPSe, SP, 9291P, 488r and 9294, 558r-560v, and Juan Hoben AHPSe, SP, 9526, 607v.

⁴⁴ AHPSe, SP, 9277, 942r.

⁴⁵ He declared that, in Seville, he was staying in the house of María de Lovaina, a Flemish woman that had been widowed. AHPSe, SP, 9526, 607v.

⁴⁶ Fourteen requiem masses were ordered in the chapel of the *Obispo Descalas* and seven in the chapel of *El Sagrario*. Four *flamencos* – Jaques Sesbaut (AHPSe, SP, 9310, 163r-164r), Justo de Bil (9301, 332r), Nicolás de Melemburque (7771, 342r), and Simón Enríquez (9312, 517r) – did not show any preference in this regard.

Table 1 Bequests to religious institutions by flamencos in Seville

Religious institution	N. of bequests
Almshouse of the Flemish nation	8
Fraternity of <i>Santísimo Sacramento</i>	8
Works of the cathedral	6
Foundlings of Seville (expósitos de la cuna)	4
Hospital of <i>La Caridad</i>	4
Order of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mercy and the Redemption of the Captives	4
Order of the Most Holy Trinity	3
<i>Anything</i>	3
Almshouse of <i>San Lázaro</i>	2
Hermitage of <i>San Sebastián del Campo</i>	2
Monastery of <i>San Diego</i>	2
Monastery of <i>San José</i>	2
Monastery of <i>Nuestra Señora del Valle</i>	1
Monastery of <i>Nuestra Señora de la Paz</i>	1
Orphans in Flanders	1
Poor prisoners of the public jail	1
Monastery of <i>Nuestra Señora de la Consolación</i>	1

Source: See footnotes 23-26.

with more than one. Five of them were brothers of the *Santa Caridad* fraternity, which was devoted to Saint George and was hosted in the building of the *Atarazanas*, where many of these *flamencos* lived. Eleven of them declared themselves to be brothers of the *Santísimo Sacramento*, housed in *El Sagrario* chapel of the cathedral, where all the *flamencos* and *alemanes* of the study sample were buried, with the exception of Esteban Jansen. This German merchant instead built his own chapel in one of the most popular religious buildings in town, the convent of San Francisco, where he was buried with his first wife.⁴⁷ In his will, he also reserved part of his estate to found a chantry in his name and to finance the marriage of poor maids in Seville, preferably with family ties to his late first wife, Catalina Aparte, or his second wife, Isabel de Lorenzana.⁴⁸ With his expensive burial and the chantry, Jansen was showing the prestige and wealth achieved by a merchant who had

47 AHPSe, SP, 9289, 721r. On the chapel: AHPSe, SP, 9275, 657r.

48 AHPSe, SP, 9289, 679r.



Illustration 2 Alonso Sánchez Coello (attributed), *View of Seville*, ca. 1570, oil on canvas, Museo del Prado, Madrid.

become the richest northern European merchant of Seville in just two decades after his arrival.⁴⁹ If we accept Herzog's argument that local citizenship (*vecindad*) 'was constituted on its own, at the moment when people acted as if they felt attached to the community', then we can conclude that these migrants' active participation in the local religious life indicates their successful assimilation into the receiving society.⁵⁰

Moreover, an active religious life must have been paramount for a nation that sought to distance itself from the Calvinist rebels, so as not to provoke any xenophobic reaction from Spanish authorities. The scarce attention that the Inquisition paid to northern European migrants in Seville corroborates that they succeeded in that aim.⁵¹ Hence, their success was based on a twofold strategy: while they individually participated in local devotions seeking to integrate into the city's social life, the existence of the Flemish almshouse portrayed them as a charitable – and more importantly – Catholic community.

⁴⁹ Jiménez Montes, *A dissimulated trade*.

⁵⁰ Tamar Herzog, *Defining nations. Immigrants and citizens in early modern Spain and Spanish America* (New Haven 2003) 7.

⁵¹ Werner Thomas, 'The Inquisition, trade, and tolerance in early modern Spain' in: Brecht Dewilde and Johan Poukens (eds.), *Entrepreneurs, institutions & government intervention in Europe (13th – 20th centuries). Essays in honour of Erik Aerts* (Brussels 2018) 279–291.

Political delegation and social capital

Religion and trade were intimately linked in the collective strategies of the nation.⁵² This connection became particularly obvious in a meeting held by eighteen Flemish and German residents in Seville in 1586 to discuss the management of the almshouse.⁵³ In the meeting, we find the wealthiest and most influential members of the nation. They decided to appoint majordomos and treasurers for the almshouse on an annual basis, to establish an ordinary economic contribution from its members, and to name Fray Enrique Conde, a Dominican monk from Antwerp, as the religious administrator of the congregation.⁵⁴

The meeting had decisive consequences for the political organization of the nation: from then on, the group of migrants delegated their collective action to two representatives, who would rotate annually. According to Gelderblom and Grafe, the delegation of political control represents ‘a first step toward the formal association of alien merchants’, which in this case occurred under the umbrella of a religious institution.⁵⁵ The use of the nation’s religious sphere for coordinating the political and commercial aspirations became more evident in the early seventeenth century. When, in 1604, they sent a request to Philip III to build a chapel for the nation, the *flamencos* made it explicit that they wanted it to be located close to the cathedral, not like the almshouse, which was ‘too remote from the business and trade where we ordinarily deal’.⁵⁶ In response, Philip III granted them the privilege to found a fraternity devoted to Saint Andrew (*Hermandad de San Andrés de los Flamencos*) and to build a chapel to host its meetings and festive

⁵² Crespo Solana also noted the importance of religious institutions for the organization of the Dutch community in Cádiz in the eighteenth century in ‘Elementos de transnacionalidad en el comercio flamenco-holandés en Europa y la Monarquía Hispánica’, *Cuadernos de Historia Moderna. Anejos* 10 (2011) 75.

⁵³ AHPSe, ARS, 29275, exp. 1, 297. This document is partially transcribed in Gamero Rojas and García Bernal, ‘Las corporaciones de nación’. Later on, the rules of the institutions were notarized. AHPSe, SP, 12713, 435. This was analyzed in J.M. Díaz Blanco, ‘La construcción de una institución comercial. El consulado de las naciones flamenca y alemana en la Sevilla moderna’, *Revista de historia moderna. Anales de la Universidad de Alicante* 33 (2015) 123-145 <http://dx.doi.org/10.14198/RHM2015.33.06>.

⁵⁴ Gamero Rojas, ‘Flamencos en la Sevilla del siglo XVII’, 720. Interestingly, this coincides with the limitation of the number of hospitals in Seville. Juan Ignacio Carmona García, *El sistema de hospitalidad pública en la Sevilla del antiguo régimen* (Sevilla 1979).

⁵⁵ Oscar Gelderblom and Regina Grafe, ‘The rise and fall of the merchant guilds. Re-thinking the comparative study of commercial institutions in premodern Europe’, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 40: 4 (2010) 490-491.

⁵⁶ AHPSe, SP, 12638, 1008. See also Gamero Rojas ‘Flamencos en la Sevilla del siglo XVII’, 718.

activities. The chapel was to be built in the library of the College of Saint Thomas, just next to the cathedral and the recently finished *Casa Lonja de Mercaderes* (today's *Archivo de Indias* building, that is, the economic core of the city. Years later, in 1613, the nation requested from the king the appointment of consuls to defend compatriots against the protectionist pressure of the guild of American traders in Seville, the *Consulado de Cargadores a Indias*.⁵⁷ The nation proposed the two oldest living majordomos of the fraternity hold these positions; thus, the consul should have been a majordomo before.

Since the religious congregations were mostly formed by merchants, it is fair to argue that their political organization through the almshouse and fraternity mainly served to pursue the groups' commercial aspirations. By using the religious congregations, the nation managed to coordinate their collective action in the city to enhance the economic opportunities of compatriots who were residing permanently and those who were staying temporarily. The fact that the almshouse started enjoying a regular source of income after 1586 surely facilitated the development of a coordinated collective action.

Moreover, by requesting a regular economic contribution from their members, the nation was not only ensuring a stable source of income to finance their collective activity, but also delimiting who belonged to the nation and enjoyed the advantages of this membership. In other words, the almshouse became a resource for building social capital among the members of the nation; it helped to enhance reciprocal relationships among compatriots, making the group more cohesive and coordinated.⁵⁸ In short, the religious associations – first the almshouse and later the fraternity – became the main instrument to promote the self-organization of the nation.

⁵⁷ This was eventually granted in 1615. Díaz Blanco, 'La construcción de una institución comercial', 132-133. AHPSe, SP, 10029, 93r.

⁵⁸ I am using here Ogilvie's definition of social capital as the creation of 'mutual and reciprocal links within a group that aspires to become close and cohesive', Ogilvie, *Institutions and European trade*, 427. On a discussion of the concept of social capital applied to the study of merchant communities, see Xabier Lamikiz, '¿Qué tipo de capital social generaron los gremios de comerciantes? Reflexiones a partir del ejemplo del Consulado de Bilbao, 1511-1829', in: Alberto Angulo Morales and Álvaro Aragón Ruano (eds.), *Recuperando el Norte. Empresas, capitales y proyectos atlánticos en la economía imperial hispánica* (Bilbao 2016) 103-112.

Legal representation

The Flemish and German community did not only aim at creating social capital, nor did they concentrate their political action in Seville. They also strove to support their compatriots in the main Andalusian ports, like Sanlúcar de Barrameda or Málaga, by appointing legal representatives to protect their commercial activity there.

The first evidence we have for this practice dates from 1574, when Philip II decreed the first embargo against the Dutch rebels. As a result, royal officials conducted a series of confiscations against northern European shipmasters in the ports of Cádiz and Sanlúcar de Barrameda. In response, the majordomos of the almshouse, Francisco Bernal and Miguel Arbauts, granted a power of attorney to a Spanish attorney, Guillermo Pérez, to go to Madrid and represent the 'Flemish nation of this city' in 'any lawsuits and causes and businesses of the said [nation]' and to appear before 'the king, the gentlemen of his very high and royal council, presidents and judges of his royal courts'.⁵⁹ Those confiscations were not driven by xenophobia against northerners but by the need of the monarchy to obtain timber to supply the royal navy in their fight against the rebels in Zeeland.⁶⁰ Guillermo Pérez successfully represented the nation, and the affected shipmasters could claim a confiscation for their loses.⁶¹

The commercial activity between Andalusia and northern Europe resumed without further disturbance until the 1590s, when there were new confiscations carried out against northern European shipmasters coinciding with their increasing presence on the Andalusian coast. Once again, the confiscations were driven by a shortage of strategic provisions, grain in this case. In March 1592, several shipments of grain addressed to Flemish merchants in Seville were confiscated in Sanlúcar by Francisco de Coloma, who was *adelantado mayor* (major governor) of Castile and captain general of the *Flota de la Guardia de Indias* (the armed convoy protecting the American fleets).⁶² In the summer, Coloma repeated such confiscations in the Portuguese port of Lagos.⁶³

The community followed two complementary strategies. Individually, the merchants appointed attorneys in the ports of Lagos and San-

⁵⁹ AHPSe, SP, 7778, 1013v.

⁶⁰ López Martín, 'Embargo and protectionist policies'; Jiménez Montes, *A dissimulated trade*.

⁶¹ AHPSe, SP, 7781, 637r-991r.

⁶² AHPSe, SP, 9270, 413v.

⁶³ AHPSe, SP, 9276, 414r.

lúcar de Barrameda to claim immediate compensations from Coloma's commissaries there.⁶⁴ As a group, they commissioned a Flemish attorney, Valerio Vandala (probably van Dale), and a Spanish one, Pedro de los Céspedes, to represent them in Madrid. The Spanish proxy, De los Céspedes, was a member of the local council, a *caballero veinticuatro*, evincing the city's full support of the Flemish nation. In the power of attorney, the Flemish signatories explained that:

'According to a privilege, ordered in a royal decree, for the provision and remedy of these kingdoms, due to the great shortage that there was and is of wheat, many of us have been encouraged to receive and warn in the estates of Flanders and the lordships of Germany to send us and ship us wheat to be sold and traded in this town'.⁶⁵

The Flemish claim demonstrates that, despite the ongoing prohibition of trading with northern Europe, Flemish and German merchants in Seville could still trade. In fact, their commercial activity was encouraged in order to ensure the supply of grain and other strategic provisions, like timber.

Philip II's reaction corroborates that advocacy. On November 29, 1593, he issued a royal decree compelling Coloma to pay for the seized grain.⁶⁶ In the decree, the king stated that the *flamencos* and *alemanes* affected by Coloma's confiscations were 'loyal vassals' who, 'with their trades and dealings, imports and exports and *alcabalas*, paid me every year more than three hundred thousand *ducados*'.⁶⁷ Through their lobby in Madrid, then, the nation achieved a formal declaration from the king that recognized them as loyal vassals, whose activity was essential for Castile.

In the 1590s, the nation also began to appoint consuls in other Andalusian ports, especially on the Mediterranean coast, coinciding with the Dutch expansion across the Strait of Gibraltar.⁶⁸ We find several pe-

⁶⁴ For instance, Pedro Gisberto to Juan van Hooren (AHPSe, SP, 9270, 389v), Juan Enríquez, and Alberto Felipe to Juan y Enrique Bambel (AHPSe, 9270P, 413v). Pedro Gisberto appeared before Juan de Tordesilla to notarize a statement in which he claimed to be a reliable citizen, with an estate of more than 6000 *ducados*, capable of acting as guarantor of Van Horen. The document was supported with the declaration of witnesses: Elias Sirman, Miguel Arbauts, and Francisco Bernal. AHPSe, SP, 9270, 549r.

⁶⁵ AHPSe, SP, 9270, 510r.

⁶⁶ AHPSe, SP, 9278, 384r.

⁶⁷ AHPSe, SP, 9278, 384r.

⁶⁸ Maartje van Gelder, 'Supplying the serenissima: The role of Flemish merchants in the Venetian grain trade during the first phase of the Straatvaart', *International Journal of Maritime History* 16:2 (2004) 39-60. See also De Vries and Van der Woude, *The first modern economy*, 133-162.

titions sent by the Flemish and German nation of Seville to the king requesting the appointment of consuls in Mediterranean ports to provide legal defence to northern European shipmasters who faced an increasing hostility from royal officials.⁶⁹ The fact that the petitions were raised by the community residing in Seville indicates that the northern European presence was scarce on the coast and that an extra effort was required to protect the activity of their compatriots there. In April 1592, nineteen 'merchants from the German and Flemish nations' notarized a petition to Philip II requesting the confirmation of Juan Berbaque as consul of their nation in Gibraltar. They argued that

'[I]n the city of Gibraltar and its port there is not a consul for the people and ships from the said nations [Flemish and German] able to attend and favour their needs. And due to the necessity of the ships that arrive in the port, it is very advisable and important that there is the said consul in there'.⁷⁰

They considered Berbaque, a Flemish resident in Gibraltar, to be an adequate candidate because he had

'[G]reat practice in the matters related to the office of consul, as he has assisted and assists with great will and care for the proper dispatching and provision of the ships from the said nations'.⁷¹

In April 1594, eighteen merchants 'from the Flemish and German nation' notarised a similar petition to the king. This time they recommended Pablo Scot, another Flemish resident in Gibraltar. The merchants argued that he was the nephew of Crisóstomo van Enhede, who 'had been already consul of the nation and from whom he [Pablo Scot] had learnt the office'.⁷² In August, seventeen 'French and Breton merchants' appeared before Juan de Tordesillas to plead with similar arguments, that the king recognize the Flemish consul Pablo Scot as their own consul in Gibraltar, too.⁷³ It comes as no surprise that French mi-

⁶⁹ We know that already in the 1570s, in the context of the first embargo in 1574, there were consuls in Cádiz and Sanlúcar de Barrameda, the main outer ports of Seville, to defend the interest of the nation there. AHPSe, SP, 9222, 344r. Also, López Martín, 'Embargo and protectionist policies', 202.

⁷⁰ AHPSe, SP, 9270, 664r.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² AHPSe, SP, 9280, 540r.

⁷³ AHPSe, SP, 9281, 1007.

grants relied on a *flamenco* to represent them, given the rising position of the Flemish in the trade between Andalusia and western Europe.⁷⁴

Gibraltar was not the only port where northerners suffered the authorities' predatory practices, increasing commercial instability in the region. Days later, on August 23, thirty merchants – 'Flemish and from other nations' – notarized a petition to the king to recognize Nicolás Caret, a Flemish resident in Málaga, as consul in that port.⁷⁵ They stated that:

'...[F]rom the said nations, many of them arrived in these kingdoms of Spain, shipmasters as well as merchants and visitors and others, in the city of Málaga and other parts and ports, in which it is usual and customary to name an able and sufficient person who knows the languages, who is called consul, so that he can govern them and assist and aid them and favour them in their business, either in lawsuits or in the dispatching and provisioning of their ships. And because many have arrived in the city of Málaga and they neither speak nor understand the Spanish language'.⁷⁶

Months later, on May 11, 1595, nine merchants of the Flemish, German, and French nations certified a similar request to appoint a consul in Velez-Málaga, a port some kilometres away from Málaga. This time they did not suggest a Flemish individual but a Spaniard, Pablos Núñez. The naming of a Castilian as foreign consul is striking and may indicate that there were not many northern European merchants in Velez-Málaga to represent the sojourners before local and royal authorities. The case of Velez-Málaga was not an exception. We know of other Andalusian ports where Spaniards acted as consuls of the Flemish nation, as in Huelva.⁷⁷

Unfortunately, there is no evidence for the king's response to the petitions in the notarial records. Nonetheless, the fact that the nation continued sending similar petitions for replacing their representatives suggests that the king usually granted them, and that it is likely that there were more consuls in other Andalusian ports. In any case, the organiza-

⁷⁴ The close relation of French and Flemish commercial networks operating in Andalusia by the end of the sixteenth century is well documented in Eberhard Crailsheim, *The Spanish connection. French and Flemish merchant networks in Seville (1570-1650)* (Cologne 2016).

⁷⁵ AHPSe, SP, 9282, 473r.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ On June 3, 1595, an individual called Francisco de Mesa Correa requested from a Flemish merchant residing in Seville, Tobías Buc, the payment of 44 anascotes (a cloth from Hondschoote) AHPSe, SP, 9285, 438r.

tion of legal and political representation beyond Seville facilitated the activity of transient compatriots – mostly shipmasters – in southern Spain. Consequently, the collective strategies developed by the nation had a decisive impact in the expansion of Dutch trade in southern Europe at the end of the sixteenth century.

Conclusion

In 1624, Philip IV finally ordered the foundation of a merchant guild in Seville for the trade between Spain and northern Europe, as a mercantilist reaction to the end of the Twelve Years' Truce (1609–1621). Yet the guild, known as *Almirantazgo de los comercios de los Países obedientes de Flandes*, did not succeed in attracting the interest of Flemish and German merchants. It disappeared in 1630.⁷⁸ Despite the challenges derived from conducting trade in the context of a war, Flemish and German merchants refused the various plans proposed by the monarchy to establish a particularized institution to organize and protect their trade with northern Europe. As this investigation shows, they preferred instead to adapt their collective strategies to the existing institutional solutions. In the last third of the sixteenth century, they created particularized religious institutions to organize themselves and used public notaries to delegate their legal action before the Spanish authorities and the royal courts. These solutions facilitated the integration of newcomers and temporary migrants into the host society, enhanced the position of northern European merchants and shipmasters in the region's economy, and ultimately shaped a distinguishable identity for the community.

The community of northern European migrants founded its first particularized institution in the 1560s. In principle, the main aim of the almshouse was to assist poor compatriots, but its scope went beyond charity. The almshouse took over some of the political and economic functions of a merchant guild. In addition, because it was a religious congregation, it also shaped a particular identity for the group, based on Catholic zeal and loyalty to the Spanish king. The almshouse constituted a space of sociability that facilitated the construction of social capital among compatriots, hence prompting their cooperation. It also

⁷⁸ Díaz Blanco, 'La construcción de una institución comercial'. See also Ignacio de la Concha Martínez, 'El Almirantazgo de Sevilla. Notas para el estudio de las instituciones mercantiles en la Edad Moderna', *Anuario de Historia del Derecho Español* 19 (1948) 459–525.

became a tool to coordinate the political action of the nation especially after 1586, when its members decided to appoint representatives on an annual basis and to pay a regular financial contribution. Because the almshouse was mostly managed by influential merchants, we can conclude that it mostly aimed at enhancing the commercial position of the nation in southern Spain. The sphere of action of the Flemish and German nation of Seville was not limited to the city. The nation appointed legal representatives in the outer ports and Madrid to protect the activity of compatriots by notarizing powers of attorney. The variety of appointments show the flexibility of notarial solutions, which efficiently served merchants in dealing with the problems of exchange, individually as well as collectively.

These foreigners' high reliance on the solutions offered by Spanish institutions as well as the continuous negotiations between them and the monarchy in the last third of the sixteenth century contradict long-standing assumptions amongst Anglo-American academics, particularly held by NIE scholars, about the inefficiency of the Spanish market. This article demonstrates, rather, that the monarchy did not have absolute power to impose its commercial policies, and that the Spanish institutional framework offered migrants suitable solutions for the needs of long-distance trade. This inquiry calls attention to the necessity of investigating open-access institutions in a comparative way, paying more attention to how they emerged and functioned in southern Europe. Moreover, this case study evinces that there is no linear evolution in the development of open-access institutions. Even if there were efficient open-access institutions functioning, central rulers, cities, or mercantile groups could try to arrange particularized commercial institutions as an alternative or as a substitute. In this particular case, the Spanish monarchy saw the creation of a Flemish guild as a means of commercial war against the Dutch Republic.⁷⁹ However, Flemish and German migrants preferred to keep their trade open in a context of commercial expansion in the routes between Andalusia and northern Europe.

⁷⁹ In the context of eighteenth-century mercantilism, foreign nations established particularized commercial institutions. Ana Crespo Solana, 'El juez conservador ¿una alternativa al cónsul de la nación?', in: Marcella Aglietti, Manuel Herrero Sánchez and Francisco Zamora Rodríguez (eds.), *Los cónsules de extranjeros en la Edad Moderna y principios de la Edad Contemporánea* (Madrid 2013) 23-34. Also in the same collection, Marcella Aglietti, 'El debate sobre la jurisdicción consular en la Monarquía hispánica (1759-1769)', 105-118.

The Flemish and German nation of Seville succeeded in maintaining their commercial activity open, and the number of northern European merchants settled in Andalusia increased steadily. The appointments of Flemish consuls on the coast also show the growing activity of Dutch shipmasters in southern Spain, especially in the decade of 1590s. The fact that the increasing presence of Dutch shipmasters in Andalusia coincided with Amsterdam's commercial rise did not simply imply that northern markets *colonized* Spain, as some authors have suggested.⁸⁰ Instead, historians should regard regions in southern Europe as active players in the process of expanding Dutch trade. Seville, for instance, fostered trade with northern Europe thanks to an efficient institutional framework that attracted the arrival of newcomers and facilitated their integration into the city. That was certainly the case for Dutch, Flemish, and German merchants, who were successfully assimilated into the region's economic and social life despite the ongoing Dutch Revolt. The rapid and lasting assimilation of the Flemish and German merchants in Seville leaves us wondering to what extent they formed a Flemish and German nation – or perhaps a Sevillian one instead.

About the author

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⁸⁰ For instance, H. Kamen defined Spain as a 'dominated colonial market at whose expense other European nations progressed towards industrial growth'. H. Kamen, 'The decline of Spain. A historical myth?', *Past & Present* 81:1 (1978) 46. Wallerstein, in a similar way, claimed that after a first colonial impulse, 'Spain steadily lost its political imperium but its economic centrality as well (...) in favor of the successful rebels of Amsterdam'. I. Wallerstein, *The modern world-system I: Capitalist agriculture and the origins of the European world-economy in the sixteenth century* (New York 1974) 164.

