

Cosmopolitan Hanseats and Strange Sailors.

Was there a maritime culture in Bremen in the 19th century?

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In the year 1800 Johann Gottfried Hoche, a theologian and historian coming from the surroundings of Erfurt, visited Bremen. We can take his descriptions as a starting point for discussing our question. To Hoche, Bremen appeared to be *“well built all in all”*. He only criticised that streets and public places were *“too narrow for their traffic”* and that they were *“stuffed with people, selling and buying”*. This street-commerce, Hoche thought was the element in which the population of Bremen was living *“like fishes in the water”* (Hoche 1800, cited in Kasten 1946: 92). On the Weser, however, Hoche saw *“just a few ships,.. in fact, merely barges and boats”* (ibid.: 93). At that time the Weser had already silted up and ships with greater draughts were no longer able to reach the town. So it does not come as a surprise that Hoche did not find the colourful maritime life in the Bremen port which he might have expected. Nonetheless, trade in Bremen flourished and most of the goods, which were traded by local merchants were transported by sea. Riverboats transferred the cargo to and from Bremen to the big seagoing frigates and barques, anchoring in the *Unterweser*. At the time of Hoche’s stay in Bremen, the city state was still in its first important phase of transatlantic trade. This had started after the independence of the British colonies in North America to be halted only temporarily by the Napoleonic wars and its aftermaths. The second upswing of Bremen’s maritime economy followed after the opening of the dock of Bremerhaven in the 1830s. From then on the shipping industry and the overseas trade of Bremen was growing in unprecedented speed. Until the middle of the 19th century, shipping companies of Bremen owned more ships and more tonnage than their counterparts in Hamburg or in any other place of

Northern Germany.¹ The import of goods from overseas was growing and the export of emigrants came to be one of the mainstays of Bremen's economy.

Let us now take a quick look at some of the contemporary opinions about dominant *cultural* traits in Bremen at the time: During the 18th century the people of Bremen had had a rather dubious reputation: They were thought to be provincial, inflexible and not really influenced by the concepts of enlightenment. In the 1720s the secretary of the Royal British Consulate in Hamburg, Thomas Lediard (1764), described the town as being "*abhorrent*". And as late as 1842, an anonymous critic attested the burgers of Bremen that "*their horizon*" did "*not reach further than the few square miles which belonged to Bremen*" (Engelsing 1962: 391).

Were the cultural side-effects of the economic boom going to change these opinions and make people henceforth see Bremen as a centre of intercultural exchange? Even at the time, port towns were often considered to be not only centres of trade but also of intercultural communication and mediation. And today, maritime cultural history is often presented as being a story of encounters, an exchange of individuals, goods and cultural habits coming from different countries (for instance elaborated by maritime ethnologist Wolfgang Rudolph in 1980). In recent years maritime historians have debated about presumed special characteristics of *coastal societies* in much the same line. This analytical concept is based on the assumption, that people who live between the inland and the sea developed social and cultural practices, which distinguished them from the population of the inland: The social proximity to the inhabitants of other coasts, the voyages of sailors and merchants as well as commercial relations are taken to have produced cultural interconnectedness and mutual adaptation. This conception of maritime culture was stimulated by Fernand Braudel's thesis of a uniform culture of the Mediterranean (first 1949) and was applied to other coastal regions as well: Roding and van Voss, for example, elaborate the idea of a culture of the North Sea region [*The North Sea and Culture (1550-1800)*"], ed. by Roding/van Voss 1996].

¹ In 1840, the Bremen merchant fleet contained 212 ships. In 1859 it were 279 – a number, which, according to some elated local historians, even surpassed the size of the complete merchant fleet of France (Entholt 1928, Löbbe 1989, Peters 1899).

It was this discussion which first suggested to me the question if there was a “*maritime culture*” in 19th century Bremen. Before we take a somewhat closer look at dominant cultural traits of the time let me start out by stating that one of the results of my research has been the thesis that economic linkage does not necessarily produce cultural interweavement. This also holds true for Bremen.

During the 19th century public discourse in Bremen, however, contained many maritime images, *cultural representations* as cultural anthropologists would call them (e.g. Hall 1994). I will start out by citing some of them, will then go on to point out in what way the cultural practices of the burgers of Bremen changed in the course of the century, rounding up this part of my contribution with a short sketch of the very special ideal of a Hanseatic gentleman. This ideal of being a “Hanseat”, which, by the way, is being cherished in the old families of Bremen until this very day, came to be defined at the turn from the 18th to the 19th century. In conclusion I will draw your attention to the very special manner in which the economic and political elite of 19th century Bremen was dealing with sailors.

»*The trade... this true mother of our city*«²

Let us start out by, once more, going back to Hoche, who, as we have already heard, took trade to be the dominant element in the society of Bremen. The anonymous author of 1842 even stated that public life in Bremen was more or less reduced to its “*mercantile*” elements (Engelsing 1962: 391). This polemic, of course, contradicted the self-image of the economic and political elite in 19th century Bremen. Bremen merchants were convinced that it was precisely this “*mercantile*” life, which made them especially open-minded. Transatlantic sea trade was not only conceived of as being profitable but also as offering an introduction to the world at large. Already in 1800 one of the lectures in the literary society which had chosen the name “*Museum*” was entitled “*the influence of trade on the culture of those, who are concerned with it.*” The author, he is only cited in the abbreviation »*H.*«, claimed that merchants had an almost “*natural*” interest in foreign cultures (*H.* 1800: 186). And he went on to

² Quotation from an article, published in the *Bremer Abendblatt für Gemeinnütziges und Erheiterndes*, 1. Jg. Nr. 8, 18.2.1843.

explain that a certain familiarity with foreign conceptions of morality, with foreign customs and wonts was just as useful to any tradesman as some knowledge of historical and political developments, not to speak of the knowledge of foreign languages. In addition to this individual cost-benefit calculation he stated that these aspects of international trade were also furthering general welfare. In his opinion, regular intercourse with strangers and the intimate knowledge of foreign cultures must needs further tolerance in any state, thereby *“doing away with the narrow-minded and provincial way of thinking”* (ibid.: 188). Thus, according to this speaker, trade was not only to be conceived of as a means for economic gain. Instead, it promised to endow society and culture with a *“cosmopolitan outlook”* (ibid.).

The terms »*cosmopolitan*« and »*cosmopolitism*« were very much *en vogue* in the era of enlightenment. They had become something like slogans. (e.g. Thielking 2000:16) Their widespread use, however, had not prevented extreme variations in their semantic content. “Cosmopolitism” could mean something praiseworthy but also something that was to be severely rejected. Sometimes cosmopolitism was used as a synonym of virtuousness, urbanism, *“libertinage”* or even of the law of nature, but it could also be criticized as being implausible, ordinary or vulgar (*“Allerweltsbürgerschaft”*). In *Bremen* the concept of cosmopolitism came to be understood as being the opposite of provincialism. And it was trade, which was said to *bring* cosmopolitism to Bremen, albeit a very special brand of cosmopolitism. This is to be found in an article written by Senator A.G. Deneken in 1799. Describing some recent local developments he stated that they showed that the horizon of the citizens of Bremen had been extended and that cosmopolitism had come to the town. Much like Hoche he recognised the *“bustling crowd”* but also *“increasing riches”* and *“more luxury”* and he stated that the architectural construction of the town, furniture ecc. had begun to be inspired by something which he called the *“modern taste”*. He then went on to point out the *“social connections”* with *“other towns and with foreign people”* and he stated that *“old paternalistic customs were more and more replaced by foreign fashions and habits.”* If a certain stiffness used to be one of the distinguishing traits of the imperial free town, this had now given way to *“smooth and pleasant manners.”* He further notes the *“influx of strangers”* and the *“promotion of so many establishments which are meant*

to satisfy curiosity, as well as to refine pleasures of the mind and of the body." (Deneken 1799: 228p.)

There is no doubt that some of the new developments which Deneken described had been brought about by the growth of international trade in general and in its course that of the Bremen shipping industry. We will, however, have to ask who were the leading figures in bringing about these developments, what was their social position and what, indeed was the importance of these new practices for local society? There were, first of all merchants, who not only had commercial connections with partners in the United States or in Great Britain but were ship owners too. They soon became very "*rich*" and lived in "*luxury*". (Most of the names of these then famous families are still well-known in Bremen, for example the brothers Delius, the families of Kulenkampff, Meyer, Wätjen, Iken, Melchers, Oelrichs ecc.).

Gone were the times when the "German spy" Lediard (1764) had been able to make fun of Bremen's "*joyless mourning fashion*". If this fashion had more or less lasted until the 1790s, "*modern taste*" and "*foreign fashions*" had now made their arrival in Bremen. No longer were all incumbents wearing black clothes and overcoats with white bobbin-lace on the neck and large knitted wigs on their head (Hoche 1800: 101, Knigge 1793: 69), no longer were Bremen burgers trying to imitate elder Dutch models. If in the year 1800 Hoche had only seen one young senator in the Bremen town hall, "*who had taken off his venerable habit and appeared in the latest English fashion*" (Hoche 1800: 101) his example was soon being followed by many more. Indeed, the new upper-class generation in Bremen tended to see the Briton as representing the "*specimen of humanity, being in highest virility*" (Engelsing 1974: 130): English gardens, country houses, furniture, sports as well as literature, technical know how and club life found their way into Bremen culture (ibid.). At the same time, the "*social links*" with society abroad of which Senator Deneken had spoken, became closer than ever before. (Lührs 1958: 159pp.) Many a merchant-family sent its sons to England or the United States for education. Going along with this development was the growing estimation of foreign language skills amongst the upper classes of Bremen. Modern languages, geography and related topics came to be taught more and more often. These new goals of education, however, could at first only be pursued in private schools. This,

of course means, that “reformed education” was only available to those whose parents were able to pay high tuitions.³ That the possibility to acquire this new sort of »cultural capital« was socially limited (see also Schulz 2002: 207) only enhanced the importance of foreign language skills as a criteria for the social status of the well to do:

Friedrich Engels, who came to Bremen in 1838 in order to start an apprenticeship to become a merchant, commented the enthusiasm of Bremen merchants for the English language: “*The German merchant considers it an honour [...] to become a complete Yankee [...] speaking English with his compatriots as well. English is very often heard in the streets of Bremen, but you would be mistaken, if you considered everyone, who spoke English, to be a Briton or a Yankee. These individuals invariantly are Germans who have been to America.*” (Engels 1974: 143). There is more to indicate that there existed a real *anglomania* in 19th century Bremen.⁴

The relationship was, of course, a bit one-sided. The number of Englishmen who, at the time, were living in Bremen was much smaller than the number of Bremen nationals, staying in England.⁵ This leads us to the last observation of Deneken, regarding the *influx of strangers*. Archival sources invite the conclusion that immigration politics in Bremen did not differ

³ In 1817, when the whole Bremen system of education was reformed, the new aims were not extended to the middle- and free schools where children of the middle-class and citizens without means were instructed.

⁴ More examples: Hermann Henrich Meier, a famous Bremen ship owner and founder of the “*Northern German Lloyd*” who, of course, was educated in the USA, used to uniquely pronounce his initials »H.H.« in English. Such enthusiasm even survived with those, who left Bremen to run their business in other countries: Living in Moskau, Baron Knoop sent for English governess to care for his children. He hired a Miss Stephenson, an “*educated lady coming from an English merchant house*” (Wolde 1928/1998: 23). Arnold Duckwitz (1842/1877: 32pp.), another famous Bremen merchant and politician, worked as a young apprentice in Antwerpen for two and a half years: In his memoirs he reports about his peer group, which was consisting of German colleagues mostly, but committing pranks while bellowing English hymns (“*Rule Britannia...*”). The references to the “*englishness*” of Bremen citizens frequently were well explained by pointing at the “*essential likeness of the Northern German and the English national character*” until today. This affinity, like a family relationship, was guessed to protect Northern Germans from “*feeling like strangers*” while living in England (Lühns 1958: 162).

⁵ Lühns (1958: 167) reports about a minor “*English colony*” of ca. 100 persons being constantly in Bremen. According to Lühns most of them were language teachers, entrepreneurs, engineers, skilled workers and merchants. Berghoff and Möller (1991) compare Bremen and Bristol entrepreneurs in the years 1870-1914. They show that the quota of sojourns abroad of Bremen entrepreneurs (70,8%) was still much higher than the quota of those from Bristol (16,2 %) at that time. Thus we can follow that being abroad was not a general feature of all entrepreneurs, living in coastal societies. Travelling to and learning from the dominant partners, however, might be a necessity for those merchants, living in economically less potential cities and states like Bremen.

much from the strategies in German states, which were situated further inland: Everywhere town authorities endeavoured to prevent strangers of lower rank and without sufficient financial means from coming into town (e.g. Oberg 2002). [Exceptions were made for servants and workers who, like the majority of sailors on Bremen ships, were recruited from the villages and towns nearby, i.e. in the kingdom of Hanover and the duchy of Oldenburg. Occasionally, skilled workers were recruited in other European countries like England (c.f. Rössler 2000).]

Foreigners were welcome if they could prove – or at least demonstrate – that they had enough capital to become integrated into the local economy, maybe even furthering economic success. In this case they could – and sometimes even *had* to - officially immigrate into the town, sooner or later to become accepted in the network of influential families. If they succeeded in marrying into an exclusive circle and to become a member of a gentlemen’s club, they would soon be getting along in Bremen business life.⁶ Having attained these marks of integration and status, an immigrant could even become one of the leading burgers of Bremen.⁷

If we look at these findings against the background of the discourse about the cosmopolitanism and the openness amongst the Bremen elite we have to somewhat narrow down the content of this discourse. Elites of the day were, indeed, open and hospitable towards strangers, even allowing them to become integrated into their circles, but this attitude only related to certain foreigners. A similar qualification is called for when it comes to specify who, amongst the population of Bremen was participating in the practices of

⁶ An example for the important linkage of integration into the influential family networks and economic success in Bremen is given by Reeken (1996): He describes the dynasty of Lahusen integrating into Bremen society life. In 1846, M.C.L. Lahusen, through his marriage with Anna Gebecka Meier, succeeded to intrude into the wedding circle of the honourable families of Meier, Kulenkampff, Noltenius and Vietor. That way he was offered the widespread network of social connections of these families as well (for the families see Reeken 1996: 94pp.). The system of integration was criticised by those who were excluded, for instance the lawyer and Exil-Bremer Eduard Beurmann: He strongly complained about the power of families, “*tea societies*” and “*well reputed cliques*”, which rooted like a “*venomous plant*” in the “*lap of social life*” (e.g. Schulz 2002: 209, Beurmann 1836: 86pp.).

⁷ Some Bremen experts (Engelsing 1958, Reeken 1996) assess the influx of immigrating entrepreneurs and their influence in Bremen at being to such an extent, that these authors attribute the invention of the complete cultural innovations of 19th century Bremen to them. New data (Schulz 2002: 228pp.), however, substantiate that this interpretation is somehow overlaid and untenable. Nevertheless, we can conclude that Bremen upper classes were not generally closed outwardly – but downwards.

cultural exchange. Who was *included*, and who was and for what reason excluded from these practices?

Cosmopolitan Hanseats

Following some recent debates amongst European ethnologists (Bausinger 1987, Kaschuba 1988) and urban historians (Kocka 1988, Puhle 1991) the general answer to this question seems to be an easy one. Most of these academics have come to conceive of bourgeois culture as being an ensemble of values, norms, and forms of behaviour, defined to be desirable (order and diligence, living and communication standards as well as material and artistic standards ("high culture"); see Bausinger 1987). And they all more or less agree, that in the course of the 19th century this whole ensemble has come to be upheld by large parts of the urban population. This process of cultural canonising, as it is called, is taken to have transcended differences of class (Kocka 1988, Bausinger 1987). But Bausinger (*ibid.*: 129) has pointed out, that if bourgeois culture gave the impression of being produced by a community of equals and of furthering the common welfare this had not much to do with social realities. In fact, social differences increased and diversified continuously during the 19th century. These differences also came to be expressed by cultural practice. The end of a society of estates did not bring about a society of equals, but the practice of »*fine distinctions*« within bourgeois culture having been so aptly described by Pierre Bourdieu. According to these theories one of the main functions of the new bourgeois culture was to serve as an instrument for expressing one's own social status and to mark its difference to other members of society.

While this was a general development in 19th century civil society, there were also specific local forms. In Bremen, for example, the demonstration of a pragmatic cosmopolitanism, especially of intercultural competence was one of the marks which distinguished an individual as belonging to the local bourgeoisie. Putting in an appearance in the reading-room of the gentlemen's club where one was keeping one's own American business journal, chattering with an American or Spanish consul in his supposedly native language (even if both of them were born in Bremen), was a way of presenting the cultural *habitus* of a real "Hanseat". This concept of the perfect gentleman, representing the (maritime) culture of the three North-

German sea trade-cities Bremen, Hamburg and Lübeck, had indeed originated around the turn from the 18th to the 19th century. In using the term “*Hanse*” a myth was invented. In recalling or rather inventing the successful past of the old trade league it permitted the elite of these towns to develop a specific form of civil pride: ‘*Hanseatic*’ morals and customs, habits and forms of sociability were explained in writing in the ‘*Hanseatic Magazin*’. And even a „*Hanseatic character*“ was designed, the components of which were declared to be intercultural competence, independency, courage, prosperity and citizenship. (see *Briefe eines Hanseaten*, 1800: 252). In short, the *Hanseat* was designed to become the cosmopolitan of the sea trade city. While this ideal is related to the ideal of the cosmopolite, so dear to enlightenment, there are also some differences: The cosmopolitan “*aimed at the perfection of his morals, searching for truth, usefulness, beauty and nobility*” (Thielking 2000). The *Hanseatic* version of this ideal designed an early variant of a »global player«. He “*maybe was a bit reserved, but he is also urbane and experienced, down-to-earth and engaged in charity*” (Wegner 2001: 20).

Whoever wanted to demonstrate that he possessed these *Hanseatic* qualities, had to make use of *criteria* of social distinction. An individual who was short of cultural, social, and material capital, had no education, no connections and no fortune to show, had no chance to achieve the ideal. According to Schulz (2002: 162), in mid 19th century Bremen this was true of almost 70% of the population in Bremen. The majority of these had inherited or bought the privileges of citizenship, albeit of a reduced quality. A quarter of the population, however, was excluded from citizenship because their subordinate work condition made payment for citizenship impossible.

One of our results would thus be that the vast majority of the town’s population was excluded from the cultural practices which can be summed up in the ideal of the *Hanseat*, the local and maritime version of a cosmopolite.⁸ But what about seafarers?

⁸ In 1800 the total population of Bremen was around 60.000 (Köllmann 1990)

*A place »where the rabble from all sirs' countries is to be found«*⁹

Until the middle of the 19th century most of the sailors serving on ships which sailed under the flag of Bremen – for those who might not know - Bremen was a state until the founding of the German Reich in 1871 - originated from the very surroundings of the town.¹⁰ But Bremen was also the destination of many ships which sailed under foreign flags (for instance, 734 foreign ships in 1840). Since 1830, most of these ships docked at the newly build port in Bremerhaven and only a few of their sailors could make the sixty kilometres to Bremen during their stay in port. Even at that time ship owners tried to tighten loading schedules in order to shorten port stays. This means, that most foreign sailors coming to a Bremen port would have stayed in Bremerhaven and that it was in this town where the kind of port district would have been found which romantic travellers like Hoche had searched for in vain during their stay in Bremen. Bremerhaven, though belonging to Bremen, remained rather isolated from the city of Bremen, not only as far as social practice is concerned but also in respect to official regulations. The nature of these differences can be explained by looking at an ordinance which the Senate passed in 1832. According to the general strategy of preventing all foreigners without sufficient financial means to enter the towns this ordinance prohibited the entry of foreign sailors into the territory of Bremen even if they only intended to sign on for a Bremen ship. This, of course, would have seriously impaired the port economy and the shipping industry. Therefore, in BHV the ordinance was never “*carried into execution with all strictness and literally,*” the bailiff admitted in 1839. He could not want to reject foreign sailors. He therefore ordered that local in-keepers should be responsible for their public behaviour. This practice of safeguarding the public order was financed by an extra fee which sailors had to pay the in-keepers. Quite a few of these not only offered lodgings but also kept an inn serving beer and spirits as well as arranging contacts to their

⁹ Quotation of a boatman from Bremen. In 1852 he had been condemned for insulting a dragoon and asked that he as a citizen of Bremen should not be compelled to serve his prison term in Bremerhaven “*where the rabble from all sirs' countries is to be found.*” (StAB 2-Q.9-433.vol.2)

¹⁰ Sailors on Bremen ships mainly came from villages and towns which were only a few miles away in neighbouring states Oldenburg and Hanover (both about 30 %). According to my count other foreign sailors remained a minority in the Bremen merchant fleet in the first half of the 19th century (under 8 %) (Oberberg 2002).

barmaids. Though this all was officially prohibited they very often also functioned as employment agents.¹¹

There were many examples of practices just like these. If they were officially prohibited in the territory of Bremen, this did not mean that – in real life – this prohibition was thought to also pertain to Bremerhaven. In order to understand this somewhat messy concept of the rule of law in the State of Bremen we have to take a closer look at the strategies of modernizing the shipping industry, which, in Bremen, came to be pursued in full force since the beginning of the 19th century. There was a whole package of economic modernization strategies which aimed at maximising profits by reorganising the shipping industry. In order to adjust seafaring to economic conjunctures on the market for sea transport, many traditional practices of the ships' crews were forbidden (see Gerstenberger/Welke 1996).¹² The practice of seasonal shipping disappeared, hire contracts more and more often obliged sailors to engage themselves for uncertain and long periods, and the turnaround time in ports was shortened considerably. Consequently sailors, coming from the regional surroundings of port cities, no longer had the opportunity to regularly go and see their families.¹³ These seamen came to be excluded from social life in the »coastal« society ashore. Yet a social infrastructure was required for the managing and policing of this process of dislocating seafarers from their home communities. As can be derived from the example of Bremen *versus* Bremerhaven, the infrastructure which became necessary for this management could be built up much easier outside the boundaries of a traditional town. In the middle of the 19th century, there were as yet no firm social structures in the newly founded port colony Bremerhaven. It was therefore possible to establish a geographically, socially and economically separated port district, wherein to offer all those facilities, which could serve the needs of sailors and at the

¹¹ The office of so-called *Schlafbaase* (keeper of a sailor's hostel) was officially established in 1843, that of *Heuerbaase* (hire agents) only in 1856. The quotation from the bailiff of Bremerhaven is taken from a protocol of a session of the Senate of Bremen from 15.11.1839, p.521 (StAB 2-R.11.I.10).

¹² According to Gerstenberger and Welke (1996) these were the abolition of the traditional sailor's privilege to transport a certain amount of goods of their own free of charge. Furthermore captain's competence was extended and an official control-regime ashore was produced.

¹³ Moreover the access to the municipal areas was restricted by severe port orders, prohibiting the sailors to leave their ships at night (StAB 2-Q.9.-32, 2-Q.9.-245 & 2-P.13).

same time offer the chance of economic gains. Thus, the foundation of Bremerhaven had not only meant the creation of a new deep water port but also of a socially insulated space. It was strictly separated from the maritime urban culture, which the Hanseatic elite may have represented in *Bremen*.¹⁴ Life in port could be easily controlled in the small colony, held apart from urban life in Bremen and its much stricter regulations, - concerning, for example, the sale of alcoholic drinks, the quantity of pubs or the attitude towards brothels.

The steadily growing population of Bremerhaven in various ways endeavoured to benefit from the growth of traffic, be it the transit of people or of goods. Many seafarers literally were fleeced in Bremerhaven. These practices became so exorbitant that already in 1830/31 it became prohibited to take clothes and other objects of sailors in payment for beer and schnapps. In the course of time the harbour area became a geographical expression for the social disembedding of sailors from everyday life ashore. Archival sources suggest that this social separation was, indeed, intended. Seamen were to be kept in a space, the borders of which were sharp-edged and strictly enforced.¹⁵

¹⁴ There already were separate port districts in the antiquity. So the case of Bremen/Bremerhaven is very unequivocal, but not the only one. Rudolph (1980: 31) regards spatial and social distance to the residential areas of citizens as a central feature of port areas in general.

¹⁵ The construction of space has always been part and parcel of the constitution and consolidation of social relations (e.g. Harvey 1989: 267). In the case of modern port districts this social practice of "spacing" was directly linked to the effort of squeezing every possible profit out of sailors on shore leave. In the 19th century we find a spatial counterpart in the suburbs and villages around Bremen: There the manors and villas of merchants and ship owners were built, serving their growing need of representation. In these places, which were just as separated, the exclusiveness of Bremen elite was spatially depicted most of all. In summer, often a complete network (respectively an exclusive wedding circle) moved to a self-containing cluster of residences, which were demarcated spatially and socially and strictly controlled as well. Nevertheless there were some contrasts to the isolated port district: "Playground", "crocket place" and "mothers holy lawn" offered a "feast for the eyes" and "recovery", tells ship owner Karl Vietor (1969: 32p.) in his memoirs. Those locations, which in ports were erected for the recovery of the mariner (bars, brothels ecc.), have been already described above. *Leaving* this confined port area with its socially compensating infrastructure was persecuted strictly. However, *entering* the gardens and manors of ship owners was sanctioned as much. Vietor warns: In our gardens guarded "Bobby, the scotch (sic!) shepherd, who proved his loyalty and aggressiveness more than once against the shady mob" and „Roland“, the "German shepherd, the thrilling [...] bitings of whom against Karo, the lout's black tyke, put our minds to suspense again and again." (ibid.: 33)

Strange Sailors

Contrasting the positive image of foreign merchants and ship owners, the image of the foreign sailor, but also of seafarers in general, was noticeably deteriorating in Bremen. Seamen were considered to be dangerous alcoholics, particularly if they came from abroad. It therefore became common practice to argue that it was of utmost importance to keep them segregate. Archival sources even support the supposition that the foreign sailor *had* to be pictured as being potentially dangerous in order to *be able* to keep him separate and put him under control. I would, in fact, propose the hypothesis that the negative image of the *strange sailor* was part and parcel of the effort to establish and legitimise the economy of social isolation, which I have described.

In 1840, F.A. Delius, a Bremen ship owner and politician, wrote a memorandum in which he outlined the "*strange character of the sailor*":

"A sailor, who, if he is not in his element, is reckless and clumsy, often even helpless and at a loss like a child, is usually just as easily won by natural precautions of the authorities as to be guided by strict paternal justice. If one puts the sailor [...] under a certain general 'Curatel' (custody) he will feel quite well and easy and the ship owners might feel even better." It would be wise, however, "*to avoid the name and possibly even the impression of police*", because "*the mariner is used to take offence at that*" (StAB 2-R.11.I.10).

According to Delius, the sailor ashore was not really able to look after himself. He had to be supervised and protected against his own inability. And it was the foreign sailor plunging into the pleasures of the port district for a couple of days, who most clearly represented this stereotype of the day. It moreover catches the eye, that among the "*hundreds of strange sailors*", staying in Bremerhaven, the "*Englishmen and North Americans*" were reputed to be the "*rawest*" who "*regularly riot in their drunkenness.*" Somehow, this seems to be a reversal of the positive image of English and American merchants in Bremen.

But sailors had a low reputation not only in Bremen. Various explanations have been put forward to explain alcoholism, debaucheries and aggressiveness of mariners in harbours. Some experts draw attention to complicated familial backgrounds and dominant mothers, single-parent

families and female-dominated sibling groups (Fricke 1973: 133; Kindleberger 1992: 62). Others even ask, whether going to sea generally tends to lead to alcoholism (Kindleberger 1992: 59). Many of these arguments are put forward, as if there existed a certain milieu which formed the character of any one sailors in much the same manner. Not one of these interpretations, however, takes into account that this reputation of sailors can also be considered as being the result of a social as well as geographical construction. (Geographers of today would call that "spacing"). Though a great many examples for the excessive behaviour of sailors in Bremerhaven can be cited, the archival material also supports the hypothesis that there existed a well established discourse about their otherness and strangeness. The description of the sailors' culture and character pattern, which was contained in this discourse, supported their physical and social segregation from civil society through a practice of "*cultural othering*". And it is this "*othering*", which grew into a cornerstone of the everyday logic in the port towns of the 19th century: It formed part of an economic strategy which was developed in the context of the early industrialisation of navigation. The stereotyped figure of the strange sailor was a cultural representation, constructed to set up and legitimate the infrastructure, which had become necessary in order to intensify sea transport: an insulated social space for a segregated group.

Conclusions

In the 19th century the city state of Bremen was a centre of transatlantic sea trade. Starting out with the question if Bremen thereby became a centre of cultural exchange, we found that we had to differentiate our answer: The definitions of strangeness or alterity as well as the quality of dealing and exchanging with foreign people and cultures were quite variable. Both, obviously, were strongly affected by mechanisms of social and cultural differentiation, forms of domination and questions of economic profitability. It therefore seems to be much more appropriate to focus on the specific mixture between these mechanisms of socio-cultural in- and exclusion in Bremen than to speculate about any general nature of a maritime culture, existing in Bremen.

Following this proposal we found several binary oppositions in Bremen: We came across the image of a “*virginal*” (Deneken 1799) backward society, blamed for its provincialism by external critics. The Bremen elites opposed this with a cosmopolitan (self-)ideal, which contained mercantile and maritime features: The flourishing trade was interpreted as having been the reason for the arrival of cosmopolitanism in Bremen.

It was the very same context of sea trade which formed the background to the development of the two clearly shaped character stereotypes which were to emerge in Bremen in the course of the 19th century. On the one hand this was the positive ideal of the *Hanseat*. It combined economic power, urbanity, (inter-)cultural competence and charity (after English models). Those, who profited most from the boom of the transatlantic trade, were best able to live up to this ideal: Ship owners and well-to-do-merchants.

Almost at the same time, or at least only a few decades later, we can detect the emergence of a character stereotype which can be seen as the clear opposite of the »*Hanseat*«: the negative image of the strange sailor. He was seen as being poor and clumsy and as lacking social competence even in his own social milieu.

But it were the skills of this socially discriminated seaman which were essential for the economic upswing of the transatlantic trade in Bremen.

It was the profitability of sea trade which prepared the seedbed for both stereotypes: for the »*Hanseat*« just as well as for his counterpart: the »*strange sailor*«. While the Hanseatic merchants came to increasingly benefit from the transatlantic trade, sailors were denied old privileges and made into subordinate (sea)transport workers. Due to his capital and competence the *Hanseatic* merchant established himself in the heart of culture and society. He represented his position by performing a certain Hanseatic habitus and creating a certain physical, social and cultural milieu. The strange sailor, on the other hand, was »spaced« apart from this milieu. His alienation found its spatial expression in the construction of the isolated modern port district where seamen were offered entertainment. While they often enjoyed this it has also to be seen as a sort of compensation for their separation from urban social life.

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