

**LOOKING TWICE:
THE HOLLANDISH EXPANSION ON HANSEATIC GROUND REVISITED.**

Hollanders, Hansards and the Baltic: it is one of the grand themes of research on economic expansion in the Late Middle Ages and Early Modern period. From the fifteenth century on, Hollanders became increasingly active in the North Sea and Baltic trade. In their advance in the Baltic, they became partners and competitors to Hanseatic merchants. Eventually, Hollanders outweighed Hansards in the Baltic trade and took over the pivotal role in the grain trade. The academic discussions have revolved around the importance of Baltic grain for the economic development of the Low Countries,¹ the extent of Hollandish-Hanseatic rivalry and cooperation,² and the factors which enabled Hollandish expansion on Hanseatic commercial ground in the Baltic. In the latter issue, the focus has been predominantly on the Hollandish background and qualities specific to Hollandish trade and economic policy. There are several complementary models of explanation of the Hollandish supremacy in the Baltic: amongst the most frequently mentioned ones are the formation of a state which was superior to the Hanse in political and economic terms, more efficient organisation of trade, competitive prices and institutional innovations.³ The common denominator of these explanatory models is that the enumerated factors were bound to foster a change in the sixteenth century, a shift from Hanseatic to Hollandish dominance in the Baltic.

However, such a change did not occur in all the areas where Hansards and Hollanders vied for their share of the market in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. My doctoral research

¹ For instance Unger, 'Feeding Low Countries Towns: the Grain Trade in the Fifteenth Century'; Van Tielhof, *De Hollandse graanhandel, 1470-1570: koren op de Amsterdamse molen* and *The 'Mother of all Trades'. The Baltic Grain Trade in Amsterdam from the Late 16th to the Early 19th Century*; Kaptein, 'Poort van Holland. De economische ontwikkeling 1200-1578'; De Vries and Van der Woude, *The First modern economy. Success, failure and perseverance of the Dutch economy, 1500-1815*.

² Seifert, *Kompagnons und Konkurrenten. Holland und die Hanse im späten Mittelalter* and 'Alte Bindungen, neue Zwänge: Die Krise der niederländischen Hansepolitik'; Spading, *Holland und die Hanse im 15. Jahrhundert: zur Problematik des Übergangs vom Feudalismus zum Kapitalismus*; Blockmans, 'Der holländische Durchbruch in der Ostsee'; Postel, 'Der Niedergang der Hanse'; Samsonowicz, 'Rozluźnienie związku z Hanzą'; Stahr, *Die Hanse und Holland bis zum Utrechter Frieden*; Daenell, 'Holland und die Hanse im 15. Jahrhundert'; Vollbeh, F. *Die Holländer und die deutsche Hanse*.

³ The most recent overview in Van Voss and Van Nederveen Meerkerk, 'The Hanse and after. State formation, merchant elites and the efficiency of institutions in the Hanse and Holland c. 1400-1680'; see also Blockmans, 'Der holländische Durchbruch in der Ostsee'; Sprandel, 'Die Konkurrenzfähigkeit der Hanse im Spätmittelalter'; Christensen, *Dutch trade to the Baltic about 1600. Studies in the Sound toll registers and Dutch shipping records*; Bogucka, 'Zmiany w handlu bałtyckim na przełomie XVI i XVII wieku'; Małowist 'The Economic and Social Development of the Baltic Countries from the Fifteenth to the Seventeenth Centuries'.

dealt with a case where there was continuity, not change in the commercial balance.⁴ In Bergen, the mercantile capital of (Late) Medieval Norway, Hansards maintained the grip on the foreign trade until at least the end of the sixteenth century. This fact has until now been omitted in most of the analyses of the general Hollandish-Hanseatic relations. All the external factors which boosted the Hollandish position in the Baltic, seem to have played no role in Bergen. It must be pointed out here that even though Bergen at first sight appears to have been on the outskirts of commerce in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe, in reality it was both geographically and commercially a vital economic hub. The seat of one of the four major Hanseatic Kontore, Bergen was the staple market of stockfish coming from northern Norway.⁵ And stockfish (dried cod) was a commodity which became a hit product with medieval consumers in the age of urbanisation.⁶ The qualities of stockfish, especially its durability,⁷ made it also a product which attracted continuous interest of foreign traders, amongst them Hansards and Hollanders.⁸ Like Baltic grain, Norwegian stockfish became one of the major bulk commodities in Hanseatic and European commerce.⁹ If the same groups of traders were active in these two branches of trade, why was there no similar shift in dominance in Bergen like there was in the Baltic? *In the following, I will argue that local conditions played a crucial role in the definition of the commercial standing of foreign traders. Especially three factors were of importance: the framework of the commercial privileges granted by Norwegian rulers; the so-called credit system in Bergen; and the manner of organisation of Hansards and Hollanders in Bergen.*

⁴ Wubs-Mrozewicz, *Traders, Ties and Tensions*.

⁵ As well as Iceland until the beginning of the fifteenth century, and the tributary islands of Shetland, Orkney and the Føroyar (Faeroes). See Helle, *Bergen I*, pp. 64 and 346-353; Wubs-Mrozewicz, 'Fish, Stock and Barrel. Changes in the Stockfish Trade in Northern Europe c. 1360-1560'.

⁶ Lampen, 'Stadt und Fisch', pp. 281-307; P. van Dam and M. van Winter, 'Theorie en praktijk van eetregimes in de Middeleeuwen', p. 407. The popularity of stockfish was reflected in its occurrence in many cookbooks across Europe, see Wubs-Mrozewicz, 'Fish, Stock and Barrel. Changes in the Stockfish Trade in Northern Europe c.1360-1560', p. 187.

⁷ Stockfish consisted of up to 80 percent protein, see Kurlansky, *Cod*, p. 34, and could be preserved for up to three years retaining its quality, see Nedkvitne, *Utenrikshandelen*, p. 349; Ubbens, 'Noorse kabejauwvissers en Nederlandse kooplieden', p. 21; Perdikaris and McGovern, 'Viking age economics and the origins of commercial cod fisheries in the North Atlantic'.

⁸ Foreign stockfish merchants appeared in Bergen at the end of the twelfth century at the latest, and from the fourteenth century the export of fish was entirely in the hands of foreigners. It remained so until the 1540s, when Bergen burghers became active in the stockfish trade, see Nedkvitne, *Utenrikshandelen*, pp. 18, 159-169; Schreiner, *Hanseaten og Norge*, pp. 115-183; Fossen, *Bergen II*, pp. 15-22.

⁹ Dollinger, *Die Hanse*, p. 278; Boer, de 'Waarmede sal men den cogge laden?' - Enkele aspecten van de laat-middeleeuwse handel in de Nederlanden, tot ca. 1470'; Hoffmann, 'Frontier Foods for Late Medieval Consumers: Culture, Economy, Ecology'.

I. THE PRIVILEGES

Hansards had a long history of privileges in Bergen. Commercial rights were first granted to traders from specific towns, and later also to all the members of the most important mercantile organisation of northern Europe, the Hanse. Lübeckers, who would become the uncrowned leaders in the Hanse, received their first trade rights in Norway before the middle of the thirteenth century.¹⁰ From 1343 on, privileges in Bergen were granted to Hanseatic traders and Hanseatic towns,¹¹ which concurred with the development of the Hanse as an organisation of traders and towns.¹² The term Hanseatic traders encompassed in the Bergen context especially Wendish merchants,¹³ as well as Overijsslers from at latest the 1440s.¹⁴ The 1343 privilege, as well as the ensuing privileges from the mid-fourteenth century for the ‘traders of the Hanse’,¹⁵ reflected also the growing organisation of Hansards within Bergen, which resulted in the establishment of the Hanseatic Kontor in the 1360s.¹⁶ The Kontor in Bergen would become one of the four main foreign outposts of the Hanse, a permanent settlement of traders which was geared at ensuring efficiency in the fish-grain exchange and safeguarding Hanseatic privileges in Norway.

The position of Hansards in Bergen was conditioned both by commercial rights and restrictions imposed by the Norwegian rulers, and Hansards turned some of the restrictions to their own advantage. This legal framework consisted of the privilege of winter residence, the

¹⁰ DN 5 nr. 4, 13 and 15; Schreiner, *Hanseatene og Norges nedgang*, pp. 9-10, 22; Helle, *Bergen I*, p. 164; Nedkvitne, *Utenrikshandelen*, p. 18.

¹¹ DN 8 nr. 151 (HUB 3 nr. 13).

¹² From around the middle of the fourteenth century, the towns began to present themselves—and were referred to—as an organisation of towns. This has been seen in research as a sign of the transition from the ‘Hanse of merchants’ to the ‘Hanse of towns’, though it has been stressed that the two continued to be intertwined, see Henn, ‘Was war die Hanse’; Puhle, ‘Organisationsmerkmale der Hanse’; E. Pitz, ‘Steigende und fallende Tendenzen in Politik und Wirtschaftsleben der Hanse im 16. Jahrhundert’, p. 45; Stoob, *Die Hanse*, pp. 145-150.

¹³ In the wording of the 1343 privilege, rights were accorded to traders from Lübeck, Hamburg, Wismar, Rostock, Stralsund and Greifswald ‘as well as other Hanseatic towns’, DN 8 nr. 151 (HUB 3 nr. 13).

¹⁴ The term ‘Overijsslers’ was employed in my dissertation for traders from Deventer, Kampen and Zwolle, following the term they used for self-description in the Bergen context. Deventer traders made use of Hanseatic rights from the 1360s, see Wubs-Mrozewicz, *Traders, Ties and Tensions*, p. 46; Kampen traders from the 1440s, *ibidem* p. 49, and Zwolle traders probably made use of their Hanseatic rights in Bergen from the 1460s on, *ibidem* p. 52. The question on when Overijssel towns, especially Kampen, became Hanseatic, is a complex one. See Meilink, *De Nederlandsche Hanzesteden*, pp. 22-33, particularly 103-110; Petri, ‘Die Stellung der Südersee- und Ijsselstädte’, pp. 46-47; Henn, ‘Wachsende Spannungen in den hansich-niederländischen Beziehungen’, pp. 103-104; Henn, ‘...de alle tyd wedderwartigen Suederseeeschen stedere’, pp. 42-48; Weststrate, ‘Abgrenzung durch Aufnahme’, Wubs-Mrozewicz, *Traders, Ties and Tensions*, pp. 43-50.

¹⁵ ‘Mercatores de hansa Theotunorum, in ciuitate nostra Bergensi existentes’, DN 3 nr. 272 (7.06. 1350); NGL I/3 nr. 92 (1361); DN 21 nr. 106 (1361); Helle, *Bergen I*, p. 730; Schreiner, *Hanseatene og Norges nedgang*, pp. 74-75.

¹⁶ NGL II/1 nr. 339 (1360), NGL II/1 nr. 341-342 (1365, 1366).

restriction to wholesale trade, and the prohibition on trading north of the city, including the tributary islands and Iceland. Winter residence allowed access to fish brought to Bergen brought not only during, but also prior to the market season, and was therefore crucial for efficient and large-scale stockfish export.¹⁷ The right of winter residence was first accorded to foreigners in 1276, in the Norwegian Urban Code.¹⁸ In 1282, this right was restricted and would only be granted for those foreigners who imported grain products to Bergen.¹⁹ It was a measure to secure the steady supply of a deficient and much-desired product.²⁰ This restriction was repeated in 1316²¹ and 1331.²² Since Hansards profited from an increasingly more efficient and integrated mercantile network in the Baltic and North Sea region, and could both offer markets for the Norwegian stockfish and provide grain products, their position in Bergen became only stronger through the royal restrictions for foreigners. After the Black Death in the mid-fourteenth century, grain imports became of even greater importance to Norway. Demographic conditions and climatic change in Scandinavia prompted a concentration on fishery and animal husbandry in Norway, which again strengthened the position of the Hansards as efficient importers of grain products.²³ The restriction to wholesale trade was first imposed on foreign traders in Bergen in 1317,²⁴ and was repeated for Hansards thereafter.²⁵ Retail trade was to remain first of all in the hands of Bergen burghers.²⁶ Even though Hansards once applied for the right of retail trade,²⁷ and at

¹⁷ Nedkvitne, *Utenrikshandelen*, pp. 268-278; Helle, *Bergen I*, pp. 734-338; Schreiner, *Hanseatene og Norge*, pp. 18-21. More on the stockfish export in Wubs-Mrozewicz, *Traders, Ties and Tensions*, pp. 170-188 and Wubs-Mrozewicz 'Fish, stock and barrel'.

¹⁸ NGL I/2, pp. 185-290; Helle, 'Die Rechtsstellung', p. 316; Bruns, *Bergenfahrer*, p. IV.

¹⁹ The winter stay was defined as the time between the two Cross Masses (from 14 September until 3 May) when other foreigners were to leave Bergen, NGL I/3 nr. 2; Schreiner, *Hanseatene og Norges nedgang*, p. 27.

²⁰ Schreiner interpreted some of the restrictions in the 1282 decisions as a measure to protect the local traders, see Schreiner, *Hanseatene og Norges nedgang*, pp. 26-28; Nedkvitne, on the other hand, argued convincingly that it was a means to secure the interests of the Norwegian consumers, see Nedkvitne, *Utenrikshandelen*, pp. 202-203.

²¹ NGL I/3 nr. 47 (HUB 2 nr. 284); Helle, 'Die Rechtsstellung der Deutschen in Bergen während des Mittelalters', pp. 317-318; Kirchberg, 'Bemerkungen', pp. 202-203

²² In 1331 winter residence was forbidden to all foreign traders coming from German lands unless they were married to Norwegian women or were refugees who had to flee their home country. The latter were allowed to stay with their families. See NGL I/3 nr. 70 (HUB 2 nr. 502); Bruns, *Bergenfahrer*, pp. VI-VII; Schreiner, *Hanseatene og Norges nedgang*, pp. 62-63. However, later it was added that those merchants who provided grain, were exempt from this ban. See NGL I/3 nr. 115 (undated).

²³ DN 3 nr. 272 (7.06. 1350); Helle, *Bergen I*, p. 730. On the impact of the Black Death in Bergen and Scandinavia, see O.J. Benedictow, *Plague in the late medieval Nordic countries: epidemiological studies* (Oslo 1992); J. Vahtola, 'Population and settlement', in: Helle (ed.) *The Cambridge History of Scandinavia I*, pp. 559, 568-572.

²⁴ HUB 2 nr. 311 (NGL I/3 nr. 49).

²⁵ 1377, NGL I/3 nr. 111; Schreiner, *Hanseatene og Norge* 1941, pp. 23-24.

²⁶ 1302, NGL I/3 nr. 53; Nedkvitne, *Utenrikshandelen*, p. 214; Bruns, *Bergenfahrer*, p. VI; Schreiner, *Hanseatene og Norges nedgang*, pp. 50, 56.

²⁷ 1372, NGL II/1 nr. 349 tillegg; Schreiner, *Hanseatene og Norge*, p. 23.

times broke the rules,²⁸ it does not seem that their standing in Bergen was in any substantial way affected by this restriction. They concentrated on the Norwegian foreign trade, which meant that wholesale, and not retail trade, was of primary importance to them. Finally, the ban on trade north of Bergen, including Iceland and the Norwegian tributary lands,²⁹ imposed for the first time in 1294 and repeated many times since,³⁰ proved to be in line with the own economic policy of the Hanse. By establishing the Kontor in Bergen, the Hanseatic traders and towns wished to concentrate and control the stockfish trade in one place. Therefore they repeated this prohibition in their own edicts and letters far more frequently than the Norwegian rulers did.³¹ The concentration of stockfish trade in Bergen and the Bergen Kontor, the Hanseatic focus on wholesale trade and the in practice exclusive right of winter residence for Hansards gave them a basis for a rock-solid monopoly position in the Bergen foreign trade by the time Hollanders appeared in Bergen.

When Hollanders, especially Amsterdammers, entered the Bergen scene in the 1430s,³² they had thus to fit into an existing framework or seek ways to change it. Repeatedly, the view has been advanced that rulers started to favour the Hollanders, which prompted an anti-Hanseatic policy and stimulated the demise of the Kontor.³³ The claim that the Hollanders served as a counterbalance to Hansards in Scandinavia dates back to the nineteenth century.³⁴ However, as I have demonstrated in my dissertation, there are few indications that Norwegian rulers used privileges for Hollanders as policy to decrease

²⁸ Helle, *Bergen I*, pp. 734, 772 and 'Die Rechtsstellung der Deutschen in Bergen während des Mittelalters'.

²⁹ The islands of Shetland, Orkney and the Føroyar (Faeroes).

³⁰ 1294, DN 5 nr. 23; 1302, NGL I/3 nr. 53; 1348, NGL I/3 nr. 83; 1361, NGL I/3 nr. 93; 1425, NGL II/1 nr. 63. On royal policy concerning Iceland in the fifteenth century and later, see J.E. Olesen, 'Dänemark, Norwegen und Island', in: M. Asche and A. Schindling (eds.) *Dänemark, Norwegen und Schweden im Zeitalter der Reformation und Konfessionalisierung. Nordische Königreiche und Konfession 1500 bis 1660* (Münster 2003).

³¹ 1412, NGL II/1 nr. 375 § 11 (HR I/6 nr. 70 §15); 1416, NGL II/1 nr. 377 §§ 89-90 and pp. 662-663 (HR I/6 nr. 262 §§ 89-90); 1416, HR I/6 nr. 275 and 276; 1458, HR II/4 nr. 586 § 6; 1487, HUB 11 nr. 133 § 53; 1518, HR III/7 nr. 108 § 265; 1519, HR III/7 nr. 246 § 94; 1532, DN 7 nr. 700 (HR IV/1 nr. 147); 1533, HR IV/1 nr. 173 § 126-128 and HR IV/1 nr. 176; 1534, HR IV/1 nr. 344 §§ 89, 103-106; 1535, HR IV/2 nr. 86 § 588; 16.09.1550, AHL, Bergenfahrer nr. 877; Bruns, *Bergenfahrer*, p. LXV; Nedkvitne, *Utenrikshandelen*, pp. 198-205.

³² Smit, *Bronnen tot de geschiedenis van den handel met Engeland, Schotland en Ierland I*, nr. 1075 (between 1432-1436), an Amsterdam trader in Bergen is mentioned; c. 1434, HUB 7 nr. 20, compare 1434, nr. 8; 1437, HR II/7 nr. 464; NGL II/1 p. 246 § 3 (translation in HUB 7 nr. 543) about events in 1440, when Hollanders were attacked in their stores by Kontor merchants. They must have established themselves *before* 1440. 1438, HR II/2 nr. 264. Bruns, *Bergenfahrer*, p. XIII; Helle, *Bergen I*, p. 801; Ketner, *Handel en scheepvaart van Amsterdam*, p. 128; Nedkvitne, *Utenrikshandelen*, pp. 144-145.

³³ Riis, 'Der Einfluß des hansischen Handels', pp. 39-40; Hoffmann, 'Die skandinavischen Reiche und der Zusammenbruch der lübisch-hansischen Ostseepolitik', p. 130 and Stoob, *Die Hanse*, pp. 258-259.

³⁴ Especially to the once influential work of the Danish historian C.F. Allen, *De tre nordiske Rigers historie*, 7 vol. (Copenhagen 1864-1872) vol. 1, p. 503. Allen supported the view that there was an intrinsic national opposition, even hatred, between Lübeckers and Hollanders, as one of the headings in his work explicitly shows ('Nationalhad mellem Lybekkerne og Hollænderne'). On such antagonistic views in general, see the discussion in Seifert, *Kompagnons und Konkurrenten*.

Hanseatic influence on Norwegian economy and politics. In fact, due to recurrent turmoil in the Scandinavian succession politics, the rulers of Norway needed Hanseatic support not only in economic, but also political terms.

Hollanders had been nominally accorded rights already in 1376, yet it had happened in the general context of the Cologne Confederation and had no actual bearing for their position in Bergen.³⁵ As privileges can solely have an impact if those who can profit from them are present and active in a place, only the privileges granted from the 1440s on can be examined in the light of the Hansards-Hollanders-Bergen relations. In 1443, Amsterdammers were given the right to trade freely in Bergen and Norway, with the exception of Iceland and other tributary lands.³⁶ This privilege has been seen as a measure against Hansards,³⁷ yet in fact no rights were granted – at least explicitly – which would be of direct harm to Hansards or infringe on their special rights. The same concerned the ensuing confirmations.³⁸ At that time the king of Denmark and Norway, King Christian I, needed both the financial and political support of the Hanseatic towns in his conflicts with Sweden. A breach of relations with Lübeck could have cost him dearly.³⁹ In 1469, in a similar political context, the king even explicitly limited the number of Hollandish ships which were allowed to enter Bergen to one or two ships.⁴⁰ The king stressed the vital role of the Hanseatic merchants in the Norwegian economy, namely that Hansards brought meal, malt and beer in accordance of several privileges, which strengthened the country. Moreover, Hansards had proved their friendship and faithfulness.⁴¹ In 1471, the Hollandish trade was further limited in spatial terms to two

³⁵ DN 8 nr. 199 (HR I/2 nr. 124; HUB 4 nr. 549). The 1376 privilege came in one package and was granted simultaneously to all the towns that formed the Cologne Confederation, among them Lübeck, Kampen, Deventer and Amsterdam, which defeated the Norwegian and Danish kings in 1370, see DN 8 nr. 185, 186, 187 (1369), nr. 190, 191 (1370); Schreiner, *Hanseatene og Norges nedgang*, pp. 78-82; Hoffmann, 'Konflikte und Ausgleich', pp. 71-74; Olesen, 'Inter-Scandinavian relations', pp. 718-719; Stoob, *Die Hanse*, pp. 181-186.

³⁶ NGL II/1 nr. 124 (DN 5 nr. 720); Ketner, *Handel en scheepvaart van Amsterdam*, p. 116.

³⁷ Hoffmann, 'Die skandinavischen Reiche und der Zusammenbruch der lübisch-hansischen Ostseepolitik', p. 130 and Stoob, *Die Hanse*, pp. 258-259.

³⁸ 1447, NGL II/1 nr. 144, compare nr. 145; 1452, NGL II/2 nr. 38, compare nr. 37 (*Handvesten*, vol. 1 p. 53; DN 5 nr. 778, compare DN 5 nr. 777); 1453 *Handvesten*, vol. 1 p. 53, NGL II/2 nr. 37; 1454 *Handvesten*, vol. 1 p. 53, NGL II/2 nr. 56; regest in HUB 8 nr. 377 (1454); DN 5 nr. 788; 1458 *Handvesten*, vol. 1 p. 54, NGL II/2 nr. 87.

³⁹ Schreiner, *Hanseatene og Norge*, pp. 34-35. See also Olesen, 'Inter-Scandinavian relations', pp. 747-749. Stoob, *Die Hanse*, p. 266.

⁴⁰ Probably at a time, NGL II/2 nr. 121 (DN 7 nr. 468; HR II/6 nr. 275); Bruns, *Bergenfahrer*, p. XIII; Schreiner, *Hanseatene og Norge*, p. 34. In 1470, it was specified that they could come with one ship as often as they pleased, see NGL II/2 nr. 123 (DN 5 nr. 869; HUB 9 nr. 729).

⁴¹ NGL II/2 nr. 121 p. 194. In theory, the situation changed diametrically for Hollanders in 1470. Initially, Amsterdam merchants had received generous rights, including the explicit right of retail trade, which was generally forbidden for Hansards. A restriction to the Hansards had thus been changed into a right for the Hollanders, see NGL II/2 nr. 123 (DN 5 nr. 869; *Handvesten*, vol. 1 p. 55; HUB 9 nr. 729; BGO nr. 2413). Yet a year later, following the intervention of the Hanseatic merchants, Hollanders were deprived of the retail right and their trade became even more restricted than it had been before 1470,

tenements (blocks of houses). The aim of the king, as he himself expressed it, was to ensure that the (Hanseatic) settlement and organisation, as well as the interests of all inhabitants of Bergen, not be weakened.⁴² In the Bergen context, Hansards seem to have thus been of much greater importance than Hollanders.

The only period when Hollanders stood a chance to surpass Hansards in Bergen in terms of rights, were the 1490s. A prelude was the privilege of 1490, Hollanders were allowed to trade outside of Bergen, also in Iceland.⁴³ They continued to enjoy this right throughout the period analysed here.⁴⁴ Still, in Bergen the extent of their trade was to remain limited.⁴⁵ A real change seemed to have been on the way after the Danish and Norwegian king defeated his Swedish opposition, and the need of Hanseatic support was less pressing.⁴⁶ In 1498, Amsterdammers received the most general rights ever, equal to the rights of Bergen burghers.⁴⁷ However, Hansards received a confirmation of their rights at the same time. The king may have aimed at maintaining good relations both with the Hanse and with Holland.⁴⁸ In the sixteenth century, Hollandish rights in Bergen were curtailed,⁴⁹ despite their diplomatic successes elsewhere.⁵⁰ It must be noted that from the 1540s on, the royal policy was to further the rights of the burghers of Bergen, and only in the second place to confirm the Hanseatic rights. Other foreigners, amongst them Hollanders, were to remain far less privileged than Bergen burghers and Hansards.⁵¹ A 1560 confirmation of rights in Odense again showed the differences between the positions of these three groups, and especially between Hansards and Hollanders.⁵² Despite the intervention of the regent of Holland, Margaret of Parma,

⁴² NGL II/2 nr. 127 (DN 7 nr. 471; regest in HR II/6 nr. 432); Bruns, *Bergenfahrer*, p. XIII; Olesen, 'Inter-Scandinavian relations', p. 755.

⁴³ NGL II/3 nr. 51 (DN 6 nr. 609); *Handvesten*, vol. 1 pp. 55-56; Hamre, *Norsk historie 1450-1513*, pp. 103-104.

⁴⁴ 1535, G. Wentz and K. Friedland (eds.) *Hanserezesse. Viertes Abtheilung. 1531-1537*, 2 vol. (Leipzig 1937-1970) (henceforth HR IV) vol. 2 nr. 86 § 588; 1540s-1560, DNT 1 nr. 83, pp. 627-664; 1549, Höhlbaum (ed.) *Kölner Inventar*, p. 339; 1552, TAL Deventer, Schepenen en Raad 690, nr. 432.

⁴⁵ Hollanders were once again restricted to trade in only three tenements in Bergen, NGL II/3 nr. 57 (DN 6 nr. 610; HR III/2 nr. 369; BGO nr. 2880).

⁴⁶ Olesen, 'Inter-Scandinavian relations', p. 762.

⁴⁷ Note that this privilege was given to Amsterdam, not to Holland in general, NGL II/3 nr. 126 (DN 6 nr. 626; *Handvesten*, vol. 1 p. 56).

⁴⁸ Schreiner, *Hanseaten og Norge*, p. 39.

⁴⁹ In 1507, their winter residence was limited to three-four merchants, NGL II/3 nr. 191 (DN 6 nr. 647; *Handvesten*, vol. 1 p. 57); Hamre, *Norsk historie 1450-1513*, pp. 213-215. Later it was interpreted as the right to guard their goods, not to trade in the winter, Fossen, *Bergen II*, p. 27. NRR 1, p. 287 (29.03.1560) and p. 297 (23.07.1560). This restricted right was confirmed in general terms in 1524, *Handvesten*, vol. 1 pp. 57-58 (not published in Norwegian source editions); compare Schreiner, *Hanseaten og Norge*, pp. 81 and 385, note 133. The 1545 confirmation was also very limited, despite the promises at Speyer in 1544, where Hollanders received very generous general rights, see *Handvesten*, vol. 1 p. 58 (DN 6 nr. 761) and Fossen, *Bergen II* p. 26.

⁵⁰ Tracy, *Holland Under Habsburg Rule, 1506-1566: The Formation of a Body Politic*, pp. 106-114; Håpke, *Die Regierung Karls V. und der europäische Norden*, pp. 211-233.

⁵¹ Wubs-Mrozewicz, *Traders, Ties and Tensions*, pp. 57-59, 77-80.

⁵² *Handvesten*, vol. 1 p. 57; DNT 1, p. 663.

Hollanders were in practice denied the right to trade in winter.⁵³ And as stated before, winter residence was crucial for conducting efficient trade in Bergen. In the 1560 edict, which defined the Amsterdam trade until the end of the sixteenth century,⁵⁴ the king was openly choosing sides between the Amsterdammers and the Hanseatic merchants in Bergen. Like his predecessor in 1469, he offered an explanation of his choice, pointing out the crucial role which Hansards continued to play in the town. He stated that, as the importers of all kinds of needed goods, Hansards simply could not be missed in the Bergen economy, and therefore only they were permitted winter residence and winter trade.⁵⁵ It appears that the rulers of Norway made a clear choice between the two groups of foreigners, and were far more prone to curtail the rights of Hollanders than Hansards.⁵⁶ One of the conclusions of my dissertation is that the case of Bergen privileges illustrates well how the Hanse-Holland balance depended on local conditions.⁵⁷

II. THE CREDIT SYSTEM

The so-called credit system was one of the cornerstones of the Bergen foreign trade, and was closely connected to the privileges of foreign merchants there. Specifically, to the aforementioned rights of winter residence and the prohibition of trade outside of Bergen. The credit system shaped the conditions of stockfish-grain exchange in Bergen, and those who could not or would not participate in it, had to resign to a inferior place on the mercantile ladder. Eventually, some of the foreigners – amongst them Hollanders – started to seek their fortune elsewhere.

While the employment of credit was widespread both in mercantile Europe in general and in the Hanse,⁵⁸ the credit system in the Hanseatic Kontor in Bergen was a unique

⁵³ NRR 1 pp. 287 and 297. Like in the 1507 privilege, only three to four Hollanders were allowed to stay the winter in order to safeguard their goods. Yet under the new interpretation of the 1507 privilege, they were no longer permitted to trade during that season.

⁵⁴ Schreiner, *Hanseatene og Norge*, pp. 349-350; S. Sogner, 'Hollendertid og skottetid', in: Kjeldstadli e.a. (eds.) *Norsk innvandringshistorie*, pp. 297-303.

⁵⁵ *Handvesten*, vol. 1 pp. 59-60; DNT 1 p. 663.

⁵⁶ Schreiner, *Hanseatene og Norge*, pp. 288-295; Nedkvitne, *Utenrikshandelen*, p. 334; Blom, 'Norge', p. 53. Yet it must be pointed out that the real winners in the trade politics game in Bergen from the 1540s on were not Hansards or Hollanders, but Bergen burghers, see Wubs-Mrozewicz, *Traders, Ties and Tensions*, pp. 57-59, 77-80.

⁵⁷ Wubs-Mrozewicz, *Traders, Ties and Tensions*, p. 81.

⁵⁸ Spufford, *Power and Profit. The Merchant in Medieval Europe*; Hunt and Murray, *A History of Business in Medieval Europe, 1200-1550*, pp. 65-66, 160. See the analyses dismissing the older view that Hansards were in general against using credit: M. North, 'Kreditinstrumente in Westeuropa und im Hanseraum', in: Jörn e.a. (eds.) *'kopet uns werk by tyden'*; S. Jenks, 'War die Hanse kreditfeindlich?', *Vierteljahresschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 69, 1982.

phenomenon.⁵⁹ Its main principle was that a trader advanced credit to a Norwegian fisherman in the form of imported goods, such as grain products, textiles, and fishing tools, and the fisherman was obliged to supply fish to his creditor until the debt was repaid. Only fishermen who had not incurred a debt, were free to trade with whomever they wished.⁶⁰ Credit was common in Bergen already prior the establishment of the Kontor in the 1360s, but its use was probably expanded along with the institutionalisation of Hanseatic trade in Bergen.⁶¹ In the historical literature, discussions of the credit system have mostly revolved around the issue of whether, and to what extent, this system was advantageous or disadvantageous for Norwegians, and whether Norwegians were indeed dependent on the grain products provided by the Hansards.⁶² The latest consensus is that it was profitable for both sides. It provided stability in the Norwegian foreign trade, and the fishermen prospered from the exchange.⁶³ Stockfish prices soared in the period 1350-1500,⁶⁴ which was a stimulus to the inhabitants of the northern coast of Norway to concentrate on fishery rather than only farming.⁶⁵ Also, the credit system was a guarantee that they would obtain needed goods even in lean years.⁶⁶ Hansards provided goods to the fishermen for one year, and did not expect (even partial) repayment until the following year; at times they did not receive any payment at all.⁶⁷ It must also be stressed that there are no indications that Hansards charged interest for this credit. The aim was to establish an enduring trade relationship, rather than provide short-term loans. The credit system continued to exist in Bergen well into the eighteenth century.

A precondition for the efficient functioning of the credit system was the winter residence, the support of the rulers, and adherence to the rule that the trade was to take place in Bergen. Winter residence was crucial since only merchants who resided all year long (often for many years) in Bergen could establish long-lasting trade relations with Norwegian

⁵⁹ Jörn, 'Die Herausbildung der Kontorordnungen', pp. 225-232.

⁶⁰ NGL II/1 p. 257; Helle, *Bergen I*, pp. 734-738.

⁶¹ Helle, *Bergen I*, p. 735.

⁶² Nedkvitne, *Utenrikshandelen*, pp. 249-252, 268-278; Helle, *Bergen I*, pp. 734-338; Schreiner, *Hanseatene og Norge*, pp. 18-21.

⁶³ Their income must have been higher than that of peasants who were not involved in fishery, as fishermen also had to pay higher taxes. Another indicator is the remnant expensive church art in northern Norway, which shows that fishermen were not exactly made poor by the credit system; Nedkvitne, 'How important was Hansa Trade for the Norwegian Economy'; J. Sandnes, *Ødegårdstid i Norge. Det nordiske ødegårdsprosjekts norske undersøkelser* (Oslo 1978) pp. 150-151; Nedkvitne, *Utenrikshandelen*, pp. 372-376; P.A. Nordhagen, 'Das Hanse-Problem in der norwegischen Kunstgeschichte. Der Zusammenbruch der Kunstproduktion in Norwegen im Spätmittelalter', in: Henn and Nedkvitne (eds.) *Norwegen und die Hanse*, pp. 43-45.

⁶⁴ Nedkvitne, *Utenrikshandelen*, pp. 343-344 and table VI.2. Until c. the 1470s, one kilo of stockfish was worth 6-7 kilos of grain (rye).

⁶⁵ Nedkvitne, *Utenrikshandelen*, p. 336; Lindbekk, 'Norsk tørrfiskhandel', p. 380.

⁶⁶ Dyrvik e.a. (eds.) *Norsk økonomisk historie*, p. 71; Nedkvitne, *Utenrikshandelen*, p. 336; Lindbekk, 'Norsk tørrfiskhandel', pp. 445-446.

⁶⁷ 1560, NAU 2 nr. 103 p. 44.

fishermen.⁶⁸ The fact that Hansards could provide the desired grain (along with other products), ensured them not only the right of winter residence, but also the grip on the stockfish which was to be exported via Bergen. It was also the explanation Hanseatic traders gave for their stronghold in Bergen. With their ships filled with Baltic grain, they considered themselves indispensable to Norway.⁶⁹ Already in the 1240s the Norwegian king requested that Lübeckers send goods which the country needed, namely grain and malt.⁷⁰ Later the Norwegian rulers twice explicitly stressed the benefits Hanseatic import of grain provided.⁷¹ Moreover, they gave their support to the credit system and admonished their subjects to fulfil the duties they had accepted by taking the Hanseatic credit, namely providing the fish to specific merchants.⁷² Hansards themselves were keen to keep total control on the channelling of fish from northern Norway, the tributary islands and Iceland through Bergen and their Kontor. They established own rules on how the exchange of grain against stockfish was to take place, amongst others allowing only winter residents (and not summer guests) direct trade with the fishermen. Trespasses were punished severely.⁷³ Guests, who were thus not permanent residents of the Kontor, were to buy the stockfish from residents. In no case were they allowed to fetch the fish themselves from northern Norway. The credit system was put under serious strain when Hanseatic non-residents of the Kontor started trading directly with Iceland in the first half of the fifteenth century,⁷⁴ and with northern Norway and the tributary islands in the sixteenth century. The latter happened often after Hansards left the Kontor and became Bergen burghers.⁷⁵

What kind of impact did the credit system of the Hanseatic Kontor have on Hollanders in Bergen? In a number of ways, it made them outsiders in the Bergen fish trade. First of all,

⁶⁸ Nedkvitne, *Utenrikshandelen*, pp. 268-278; Helle, *Bergen I*, pp. 734-338; Schreiner, *Hanseatene og Norge*, pp. 18-21.

⁶⁹ 1476, NGL II/2 pp. 737-738 (HR II/7 nr. 342) § 24: 'wente dat lant unde de Normans sunder sware gudere uth den Osterschen steden sick nenerleye mogen untholden' (because this country and Norwegians cannot in any way do without grain products from the Baltic towns); Bruns, *Bergenfahrer*, p. LI.

⁷⁰ DN 5 nr. 1 (1247-1248).

⁷¹ 1469, NGL II/2 nr. 121; 1560, NRR 1 p. 297; Schreiner, *Hanseatene og Norge*, p. 295.

⁷² For the royal regulations supporting the Hanseatic credit system, see for instance 1350, DN 3 nr. 272; 1398, NGL II/1 pp. 40-41; 1447 NGL II/1 nr. 140 (HR II/3 nr. 311) §§ 11, 21 pp. 290, 292; 1513, NGL II/4 nr. 4 (HR III/6 nr. 508) §§ 4, 9.

⁷³ NGL II/2 pp. 727-728 (DN 6 nr. 566; HR II/6 nr. 186) § 2; NGL II/2 pp. 732-733 (DN 6 nr. 568; HR II/6 nr. 188) note 2 and §§ 1-5; NGL II/2 pp. 732-734 (DN 6 nr. 568; HR II/6 nr. 188) § 1; NGL II/2 pp. 739-742 (HR II/7 nr. 343) § 2;

⁷⁴ Especially traders from Hamburg and Bremen, for instance HR III/1 nr. 351 and 510; HR III/6 nr. 515; HR III/7 nr. 246 §§ 94-96; HR III/9 nr. 131 § 161; NGL II/1 nr. 377; NGL II/1 nr. 385; DN 20 nr. 789. See also E. Baasch, *Forschungen zur hamburgischen Handelsgeschichte. I. Die Islandfahrt der Deutschen, namentlich der Hamburger, vom 15. bis 17. Jahrhundert* (Hamburg 1889) and B.E. Gelsing, *Icelandic enterprise. Commerce and economy in the Middle Ages* (Columbia S.C. 1981).

⁷⁵ NGL II/3 p. 107 (HR III/2 nr. 160) § 165; AHL, *Bergenfahrer* nr. 1427 and 452; NRR 1 p. 101; Fossen, *Bergen II*, pp. 43-45.

by the time Hollanders started to come to Bergen, that is from the 1430s, the Kontor and the credit system were already well-established. At that time the king explicitly supported the claims of Hansards to the fish received from their debtors as well.⁷⁶ Accordingly, Hollanders had to fit their trade into an existing framework. As it will be shown in part III, the Kontor merchants by far outnumbered the Hollanders, and thereby the Hansards had a large number of debtors whom they forbade to trade with anyone else. This limited Hollanders to conducting business either with fishermen who were not indebted, or with the Hanseatic Kontor itself.⁷⁷ Also, they bought fish from the Norwegian authorities, which had for instance come in as taxes.⁷⁸ On the other hand, the fact that Hollanders were less numerous than Hansards meant that their capacity for buying fish was smaller than that of the Kontor merchants. The Hollanders coming to Bergen could not possibly export all of the fish that the fishermen had on offer. In this respect, they could hardly become rivals of the Hansards as large-scale purchasers of Norwegian stockfish. And just as the winter residence was a precondition for Hanseatic success in the credit system, so was the ban on Hollandish winter residence, discussed earlier, a serious hinder in expanding the stockfish trade and establishing lasting trade relations with Norwegian fishermen in Bergen. Its impact was even more profound when combined with a 1560 regulation by the king, which forbade Hollanders advancing credit to Norwegian fishermen.⁷⁹ Thereby the credit system limited the Hollandish possibilities in stockfish export.

Moreover, the credit system of the Hanseatic Kontor affected the scope of Hollandish imports, and thus their relations with the Norwegian fishermen. Fish was exchanged first and foremost for grain products, and sources from the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries indicate that Hansards remained the leaders in grain import to Bergen at that time.⁸⁰ Hollanders imported very little grain to Bergen in the sixteenth century, a period when Amsterdam was becoming the centre of import and redistribution of Baltic grain.⁸¹ The fact that the majority of fishermen trading in Bergen were tied by debt to Hanseatic merchants, suggests that Hollanders would have had difficulties not only buying fish directly, but also selling grain products.⁸² A fisherman indebted to a Hanseatic merchant was supposed to

⁷⁶ 1447, NGL II/1 p. 290 (HR II/3 nr. 311) § 11; repeated in 1513, see NGL II/4 nr. 4 §§ 4, 9.

⁷⁷ HR III/7 nr. 154 § 8.

⁷⁸ Nedkvitne, *Utenrikshandelen*, pp. 142-143, table II. 32.

⁷⁹ DNT 1 pp. 663-644; *Handvesten*, vol. 1 p. 57; Schreiner, *Hanseatene og Norge*, p. 293; Fossen, *Bergen II*, pp. 27-28.

⁸⁰ Schreiner, *Hanseatene og Norge*, pp. 301-304; Nedkvitne, *Utenrikshandelen*, pp. 170-171, table III.1.

⁸¹ Schreiner, *Hanseatene og Norge*, pp. 292-293; Nedkvitne, *Utenrikshandelen*, pp. 142-143; Van Tielhof, *De Hollandse graanhandel, 1470-1570*, pp. 149-168.

⁸² Schreiner, *Hanseatene og Norge*, pp. 107-108.

exchange his fish for grain and other products provided by the merchant. In other words, he was not free to buy desired products from, for instance, traders from Amsterdam.

However, Hollanders themselves took advantage of the limitations which the credit system imposed for Hansards, namely their restriction to Bergen. Hollanders looked for other keys to success by pursuing their own stockfish trade and conducting business under more favourable trading conditions. This entailed venturing off the beaten track of Bergen and even Norway, while at the same time regularly throwing a spanner in the works of the Hansards. First of all, they focused on Iceland. Sailing from Amsterdam to Iceland is already recorded for 1439,⁸³ and unlike Hansards, after the 1490s they were no longer hindered by royal bans from trading there. It must be noted that from the beginning of the fifteenth century, Bergen ceased to be the sole destination of Icelandic fish: it was now being shipped to England, and from the second half of the fifteenth century also to several German towns and Amsterdam.⁸⁴ For the years 1514-1516 there are two sources in which Kontor merchants vociferously denounced, among other things, Hollandish sailing to Iceland, just as they denounced similar practices by merchants from Bremen and Hamburg.⁸⁵ According to the Kontor traders, this malpractice had been going on for years, and had a pernicious influence on their own fish trade. If not stopped, it would cause the demise of the Kontor and the fish trade in Bergen—as Icelandic fish was being shipped in great quantities to northern Germany and Amsterdam, the demand for fish from Bergen was dwindling.⁸⁶ Fish from Iceland was cheaper, and therefore offered stiff competition to fish from Bergen. The difference in price probably sprang from the fact that there was no Kontor to monopolise prices.⁸⁷ Moreover, fish from Iceland was harder than fish from Norway due to different drying conditions, which made it of an inferior quality but most likely also reduced its price.⁸⁸ The quality problem was solved by customers in Westphalia and the Rhine area in the beginning of the sixteenth century, who devised a stockfish mill to batter the commodity and make it softer. As a result, the difference in quality

⁸³ DN 20 nr. 823.

⁸⁴ NGL II/1 nr. 377; NGL II/1 nr 385; DN 20 nr. 789; Schreiner, *Hanseaten og Norge*, p. 43; Baasch, *Forschungen*, pp. 6-16; B.E. Gelsing, *Icelandic enterprise. Commerce and economy in the Middle Ages* (Columbia S.C. 1981) p. 193; M. Simon Thomas, *Onze IJslandsvaarders in de 17de en 18de eeuw: bijdrage tot de geschiedenis van de Nederlandsche handel en visscherij* (Amsterdam 1935) pp. 6-13.

⁸⁵ AHL, Bergenfahrer nr. 1348 c.1515/1516 and 1514, 'Gebreke des copmans to Bergen in Norwegen vorkerende' in Bruns, *Bergenfahrer*, pp. 211-214 and NGL II/4 nr. 17.

⁸⁶ 'Gebreke', in: Bruns, *Bergenfahrer*, pp. 212-213 and NGL II/4 nr. 17; AHL, Bergenfahrer nr. 1348 c.1515/1516, where they stated that as a result of this trade, fish from Bergen was disregarded ('de Bargerfisch nicht groth geacht is'); compare 1487, HR III/2 nr. 160 § 149.

⁸⁷ 'Gebreke', in: Bruns, *Bergenfahrer*, p. 213 and NGL II/4 nr. 17.

⁸⁸ Christian Keller (University of Oslo), personal remark; J. Wubs-Mrozewicz, 'Fish, stock and barrel. Changes in the stockfish trade in northern Europe c. 1360-1560'. There was also a difference in the quality of fish from the tributary islands and Bergen, and therefore it was forbidden to mix the two; see NGL II/3 nr. 389 § 153 (1494).

between the two types of stockfish apparently diminished, and the demand for Icelandic fish rose.⁸⁹ In any case, it appears that by the beginning of the sixteenth century, Icelandic stockfish became serious competition to the fish from Bergen, and that Hollanders were participating in the distribution of this competitive commodity.

In addition, from the 1530s on there is evidence that Hollanders began to purchase fish in Trondheim—not just any fish, but fish which according to Kontor aldermen had already been paid for by Kontor merchants and therefore belonged to the Kontor. This meant that fish which indebted fishermen were supposed to sell to the Kontor, according to the rules of the credit system, was illegally going to Hollandish ships instead.⁹⁰ Because the credit system was based on the principle that indebted fishermen were not free to trade with whomever they wished, Hollanders purchasing such fish in Trondheim seriously disrupted the mechanism of the system in Bergen. Around 1550, fears were even voiced that Hollanders might establish their own settlement in Trondheim—where they could purchase directly from Norwegian fishermen—as a parallel and competing trade centre to the Bergen Kontor. In the end, these fears proved unsubstantiated.⁹¹ Despite the competition from Iceland and direct trade with northern Norway, the Hanseatic Kontor continued to exist until the mid-eighteenth century, well past the prime of the Hanse itself.⁹²

The issue of the credit system shows well that the local conditions in Bergen were much more favourable for Hansards, and Hollanders had consequently very little room for expansion both in the export and import of goods. The logical step was to seek other grounds for stockfish trade.

III. The organisation of traders

The Hanseatic organisation of traders in Bergen was far more defined than the way Hollanders organised their activities there. This was especially visible in the administration, settlement and the rules governing the groups of traders. As a distinct entity, the Hanseatic Kontor proved to be a powerful element in the town of Bergen, and to a large extent immune to other foreign competition.

⁸⁹ ‘Gebreke’, in: Bruns, *Bergenfahrer*, pp. 212-213 and NGL II/4 nr. 17. Such late medieval or early modern mills have, to my knowledge, not been discussed in the literature on mills, probably due to the paucity of sources; more extensively in Wubs-Mrozewicz, ‘Fish, stock and barrel’.

⁹⁰ 1533, the charge was also against traders from Hamburg and Bremen; see HR IV/1 nr. 176; Schreiner, *Hanseatene og Norge*, pp. 220-221.

⁹¹ Schreiner, *Hanseatene og Norge*, pp. 220-221; in the AHL, *Bergenfahrer* nr. 877; Wubs-Mrozewicz, ‘Bergenfahrer and Bergenvaarders’, p. 228.

⁹² Fossen, *Bergen II*, pp. 679-690.

The organisation of Hansards in Bergen was consolidated in the 1360s, and became one of the four major Hanseatic Kontore.⁹³ It was a structure with marked vertical and horizontal lines: on the one hand, the ensemble of the traders coming to Bergen (*menheyt*) had a saying on many matters and the principle of equality of all the members was very present; on the other hand there was a central administration which connected the Kontor directly to the decisions of Hanseatic Diets.⁹⁴ The administration consisted of two to six aldermen,⁹⁵ flanked by eighteen assistants (*achteinen*). They formed the council of the Kontor, the *kopmans rad*.⁹⁶ From the mid-fifteenth century, a secretary also joined the central administration. The aldermen who stood at the head of the Bergen Kontor had a dual function. They acted internally as the judiciary authority, which had the power to establish regulations, and they also saw to the observation of Hanseatic and Kontor rules.⁹⁷ Externally, they represented the Kontor at the Hanseatic Diets and in negotiations with rulers.⁹⁸ The *achteinen* had specific tasks in the administration of Kontor matters, such as fire prevention, freight, or church matters.⁹⁹ The secretary's main tasks were not only attending Kontor meetings and keeping correspondence, books and registers, but also representing the Kontor as an envoy to the Hanseatic Diets or meetings with royal officials.¹⁰⁰ In general lines, the administration of the Bergen Kontor was similar to the way the Kontore in London, Bruges and Novgorod were organised.¹⁰¹ The difference in Bergen, however, was that the administration was overwhelmingly dominated by Lübeckers.¹⁰² Their well-established and extensive trade in Bergen and elsewhere allowed them to take the helm at the Kontor. Moreover, the existence

⁹³ 1366, NGL II/1 nr. 342 (HR I/1 nr. 384); 1369, NGL II/1 nr. 346 (HR I/1 nr. 511). On the Kontore, see P. Dollinger, *Die Hanse* (Stuttgart 1998, 5th edition) pp. 132-142; R. Hammel-Kiesow, *Die Hanse* (München 2002, 2nd edition) pp. 61-64, 115-116; K. Friedland, *Die Hanse* (Stuttgart 1991) pp. 147-151; E. Schubert, 'Novgorod, Brügge, Bergen und London: Die Kontore der Hanse', *Concilium medii aevi* 5, 2002.

⁹⁴ Bruns, *Bergenfahrer*, pp. XXII-XXIX; Brattegard, *Organisation*, pp. 255-270; Schubert, 'Novgorod, Brügge, Bergen und London', pp. 4, 6-7, 27-37; Helle, *Bergen I*, pp. 744-746.

⁹⁵ Most sources suggest that this number was reduced to two in the first half of the fifteenth century, Bruns, *Bergenfahrer*, p. XXIII. However, there is also an indication that in 1466 there might still have been six aldermen: in 1466, a letter was signed 'Olderman unde de veer unde twintich manne, vor hovetlude des kopmans van Berghen in Norwegenne gheordinert', 24 meaning thus 18 assistants and six aldermen, see NGL II/2 p. 695 (HR II/5 nr. 788; LUB 11 nr. 94).

⁹⁶ Brattegard, *Organisation*, p. 257; Helle, *Bergen I*, p. 746.

⁹⁷ Bruns, *Bergenfahrer*, p. XXII; Brattegard, *Organisation*, pp. 256-257; Helle, *Bergen I*, p. 744.

⁹⁸ Compare the list of aldermen in Bruns, *Bergenfahrer*, pp. XXIII-XXV, with his list of representatives, pp. XXV-XXIX, where in the years of overlap several aldermen can be discerned as representatives.

⁹⁹ Helle, *Bergen I*, pp. 744-746.

¹⁰⁰ Bruns, *Sekretäre*, pp. 11-19; Brattegard, *Organisation*, pp. 258-259.

¹⁰¹ Stein, *Die Genossenschaft*, pp. 29-80; Henn, 'Das Brügger Kontor', p. 217-219; Jörn, 'With money and bloode', pp. 307-309 and 321; Angermann, 'Nowgorod – das Kontor im Osten', pp. 237-238; Jörn, 'Die Herausbildung der Kontorordnungen in Novgorod, Bergen, London und Brügge im Vergleich - 12.-17. Jahrhundert'.

¹⁰² Bruns, *Bergenfahrer*, pp. XIII-XV; more discussion on the issue, especially in relation to Overijssel traders, in Wubs-Mrozewicz, *Traders, Ties and Tensions*, pp. 91-100.

of an organised *Bergenfahrer* guild in Lübeck, which dated back to 1393, must have played a significant role.¹⁰³ Indeed, Lübeck was the only Wendish town with such a guild.¹⁰⁴ Frequently, guild members interfered in Bergen affairs, either directly or through the Lübeck council.¹⁰⁵ The personal relations with the influential Lübeck council must have also strengthened the position of Lübeckers in Bergen. Lübeckish traders who were engaged in the Bergen trade, often represented the Hanse as a whole in negotiations with Scandinavian rulers.¹⁰⁶ It also meant that the Kontor in Bergen had direct support of the most powerful town in the Hanse. There is ample evidence that the Kontor in Bergen, either directly or via the Hanse, exerted pressure on the Norwegian rulers and reached its aims, for instance reducing the Hollandish privileges in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.¹⁰⁷

Hollanders lacked a similar efficient administrative tool in their trade in Bergen. The organisation of Hollanders in Bergen was inherently connected to the *Bergenvaarders* guild in Amsterdam, which was the only *Bergenvaarders* guild in all of Holland,¹⁰⁸ and which was presided over by aldermen (*overluyden*).¹⁰⁹ According to an eighteenth century history and description of Amsterdam there were four such aldermen, two who stayed in Amsterdam and two who sailed with the other merchants to Bergen.¹¹⁰ However, I have not found direct evidence in the sources that the latter was indeed the case. Instead, one common way of dealing with representative and administrative problems in their contacts with Norwegians and Hansards, which has been documented in a source, was apparently to choose three or four of the most able merchants from the ranks of the Amsterdam *Bergenvaarders* to deal with the

¹⁰³ Earliest evidence of 1393, LUB 4 nr. 596, Bruns, *Bergenfahrer*, pp. XX, CXI-CXII.

¹⁰⁴ Brück, 'Korporationen', pp. 136-137; Helle, *Bergen I*, p. 749; in Deventer, there was the only *Bergenvaarders* guild in Overijssel, see BGO nr. 2478 (HUB 10 p. 113 note 1) and Wubs-Mrozewicz, *Traders, Ties and Tensions*, p. 96.

¹⁰⁵ For instance on freight regulations in the second half of the fifteenth century: 1455, NGL II/2 nr. 406 (HR II/4 nr. 337); 1463, NGL II/2 pp. 668-669 (HR II/5 nr. 340); 1485, NGL II/3 pp. 495-496 (HUB 10 nr. 1232; DN 16 nr. 287); 1494, NGL II/3 nr. 388 (HR III/3 nr. 251). Compare Wubs-Mrozewicz, *Traders, Ties and Tensions*, pp. 88-89 note 42.

¹⁰⁶ It has recently been demonstrated that the Lübeck *Bergenfahrer* belonged to the medium strata of the Lübeck society, and were actively engaged in the Hanseatic politics, see Asmussen, 'Prosopographischer Vergleich', pp. 176-178, 183-184.

¹⁰⁷ For instance in 1469, NGL II/2 nr. 121 (DN 7 nr. 468; HR II/6 nr. 275); Bruns, *Bergenfahrer*, p. XIII; Schreiner, *Hanseaten og Norge*, p. 34; 1471, NGL II/2 nr. 127 (DN 7 nr. 471; regest in HR II/6 nr. 432); Bruns, *Bergenfahrer*, p. XIII; Olesen, 'Inter-Scandinavian relations', p. 755; several instances in the 1540s-1550s, see Wubs-Mrozewicz, *Traders, Ties and Tensions*, pp. 77-80.

¹⁰⁸ 'Bergervarer van Amsterdamme'. Merchants trading between Amsterdam and Bergen appear for the first time in the sources in 1438; see HR II/2 nr. 264. However, it is uncertain whether there was already a guild at that time. The Amsterdam *Bergenvaarders* are mentioned as a guild in 1486 in Amsterdam sources; see Breen (ed.) *Rechtsbronnen*, p. 217, and in the sixteenth century they emerge explicitly as such also in the Norwegian sources; DN 12 nr. 429 and DN 16 nr. 604.

¹⁰⁹ *Handvesten*, vol. 3 pp. 1187-1188 § XIX. See also Van Dillen, *Bronnen*, nr. 470 (1561).

¹¹⁰ Wagenaar, *Amsterdam II*, p. 458.

problem.¹¹¹ This concerned Amsterdammers, but it could have referred to all Hollanders in Bergen. Possibly, only urgent or minor issues were addressed this way in person; more serious problems were probably dealt with by the Amsterdam aldermen, whether they travelled to Bergen or not. This appears from the fact that in writing, the Amsterdam traders in Bergen did not address the king or the Kontor directly on behalf of their group; instead their letters are signed by the aldermen or guild in Amsterdam or the council of Amsterdam. Apparently, the Amsterdam traders had difficulties in countering Hanseatic and Norwegian opposition. In 1561, the aldermen of the guild in Amsterdam decided that only experienced merchants were allowed to trade in Bergen, in order to put an end to inefficient negotiations and business conducted there.¹¹² It indicates that in administrative terms, Hollanders were far less successful than Hansards in Bergen.

Also in terms of settlement and numbers of traders, Hansards were clearly more prominent in Bergen. It has been assumed that the first winter residents from the northern German towns stayed in Bergen in the 1260s.¹¹³ They concentrated their business and living quarters in the tenements (blocks of houses) at Bryggen, a part of Bergen which eventually became synonymous with the Hanseatic Kontor.¹¹⁴ Still, the Kontor was not a topographically closed entity and some Hanseatic traders also occupied houses and tenements elsewhere in Bergen.¹¹⁵ In this respect, the Kontor in Bergen was less segregated from the rest of the town than the Kontor in Novgorod or London, but less integrated than the Kontor in Bruges.¹¹⁶ The Hanseatic merchants (as well as craftsmen and sailors' constituted a very visible group in Bergen. Hansards occupied c. 19-31 tenements, which in turn consisted of up to twenty houses.¹¹⁷ It has been calculated that in the winter the number of residents reached 1000-1500,

¹¹¹ *Handvesten*, vol. 3 pp.1187-1188 § VII.

¹¹² MA Amsterdam, nr. 5025, Vroedschap 1536-1795, fol. 225-226; Van Dillen, *Bronnen*, nr. 470.

¹¹³ Schreiner, *Hanseatene og Norges nedgang*, p. 23; Helle, *Bergen I*, p. 380; DN 1 nr. 122 (1309, winter residence fifty years earlier mentioned).

¹¹⁴ Helle, *Bergen I*, pp. 726-728. There are many sources where Hansards are identified as residents of Bryggen, for instance 1442, NGL II/1 nr. 393; 1444, NGL II/1 nr. 130 § 28 (DN 8 nr. 324); 1556, DN 22 nr. 483.

¹¹⁵ Ersland, 'Was the Kontor', pp. 51-57; Wubs-Mrozewicz, *Traders, Ties and Tensions*, pp. 109-111.

¹¹⁶ Wubs-Mrozewicz, *Traders, Ties and Tensions*, pp. 111-113; Rybina, 'Die hansischen Kaufleute in Novgorod', p. 242; Jörn, 'With money and bloode', pp. 417-432; Henn, 'Das Brügger Kontor', pp. 219-223.

¹¹⁷ In Bryggen, the number of tenements fluctuated over time. Helle estimated the number of certain or probable Bryggen tenements in the first half of the fourteenth century at thirty-one, and after the fire of 1527 at between nineteen and twenty. Helle, *Bergen I*, pp. 231, 246, 710; compare Ersland, 'Was the Kontor', p. 50. However, this did not necessarily mean a proportional reduction of living and working space: even though some of the burnt tenements were not rebuilt, others were expanded in size; see Helle, *Bergen I*, p. 710.

and doubled in the summer.¹¹⁸ This was a substantial group in Bergen, counting between 5000 and 10.000 people in the period 1300-1600.¹¹⁹

Hollanders, were a far less numerous group. Arnved Nedkvitne estimated on the basis of taxes paid, that for instance in 1518-21 there must have been c. 56-66 merchants in Bergen each year.¹²⁰ This would have been a fraction of the Hanseatic population. In the fifteenth century, they were also restricted to residence in three tenements in Bergen, thus much less than what the Hansards occupied.¹²¹ The earlier discussed generous privilege of 1498, which made the rights of Hollanders equal to the rights of burghers, lifted the tenement restriction.¹²² This meant that merchants from Holland could now live freely and expand their settlement anywhere they wished, apart from the Kontor quarters. The Hollandish settlement seems to have expanded in the sixteenth century, though nothing in the sources indicates that its size came in any way close to that of the Hanseatic settlement. Moreover, due to the restriction on winter residence, most of the Hollanders who came to town must have been summer guests, many of them possibly as skippers.¹²³ Even in the cases when they broke the rules or circumvented them by taking local burghership,¹²⁴ they remained a significantly smaller group of foreigners in Bergen, even in the Early Modern period.¹²⁵

Finally, the organisation of Hanseatic traders in Bergen was since its onset in the 1360s governed by an elaborate set of regulations, which was expanded and adapted if specific needs arose, for instance on freighting of goods or on details of the credit system. The rules took the form of statutes (*wilkore*) from the second half of the fifteenth century at the latest.¹²⁶ The Kontor statutes broadly concerned issues of trade, taxes, everyday life, obedience to authority, dealing with discord within the Kontore, and conduct towards the

¹¹⁸ Nedkvitne, *Utenrikshandelen*, pp. 252-258.

¹¹⁹ Helle, *Bergen I*, pp. 487-493, 692. Helle stressed that in the European context, Bergen was a town of medium size, but in the Scandinavian context it was a large city. Throughout the Middle Ages, it maintained its position as the largest town in Norway.

¹²⁰ Nedkvitne, *Utenrikshandelen*, p. 326, on the basis of NRJ 1 p. 102, 566, 567, NRJ 2 p. 668 and the 1539 Amsterdam regulation from Bull, 'Bergensfarerne i Amsterdam', p. 98. The text is also published in *Handvesten*, vol. 3 pp. 1187-1188.

¹²¹ 1471, NGL II/2 nr. 127 (DN 7 nr. 471; HR II/6 nr. 462); 1490, NGL II/3 nr. 57 B (DN 6 nr. 610; HR III/2 nr. 369; BGO nr. 2880).

¹²² Nedkvitne, *Utenrikshandelen*, p. 327, on the basis of NGL II/3 nr. 126 (DN 6 nr. 626).

¹²³ 1470, NGL II/2 nr. 121 (DN 7 nr. 468; HR II/6 nr. 275).

¹²⁴ NRJ 2, p. 576.

¹²⁵ Sogner, 'Hollendertid og skottetid', pp. 297, 300.

¹²⁶ NGL II/2 nr. 416. The statutes can be dated in several layers: the '100-points' manuscript edited in NGL II/2 is from 1494, yet it appears from other sources that the statutes must have existed in a largely similar form prior to 1464. Most of the points were obviously much older than 1464, others were enacted later (§ 94 in 1488, § 67 in 1489, § 53 in 1494, § 64 in 1522); see NGL II/2 p. 674 note 1.

local population and other non-Hansards.¹²⁷ In addition, there were tenement regulations which regulated more specific questions of everyday life.¹²⁸ The statutes and the tenement regulations defined the group of Hansards in Bergen, both at a given moment and in general: they ensured the continuity of the Kontor.

In my dissertation, I have shown that some of these rules were specifically formulated with two goals in mind: to demarcate the Kontor against non-Hansards, and to further coherence within the Kontor. The main principle, upheld and repeated throughout the existence of the organisation, was that only Hansards were to be admitted.¹²⁹ Also, there were rules against trading in non-Hanseatic goods,¹³⁰ entering into business partnerships with anyone 'being outside of the Hanse' ('buten der henze wesende'),¹³¹ and freighting non-Hanseatic ships.¹³² In order to clearly define the group of Kontor merchants, newcomers were obliged to swear an oath when becoming members of the Kontor,¹³³ obey the administrators and abide the rules,¹³⁴ undergo a harsh rite of passage (the so-called *Spelen*),¹³⁵ and keep the Kontor matters secret.¹³⁶ Leaving the Kontor in order to become burghers of Bergen was one of the most serious trespasses Hanseatic traders could commit. It was punished by mercantile ostracism in Bergen and all the Hanseatic towns.¹³⁷ The fact that Hansards acted as a distinct group, and were able both to adapt their rules to changing circumstances and exert that all

¹²⁷ The *process* of the formation of these Kontore rules in a comparative perspective, has been recently broached in the articles of Jörn, 'Die Herausbildung der Kontorordnungen' and Burkhardt, 'Die Ordnungen der vier Hansekontore', the former taking the London Kontor as the point of departure, and the latter focusing on the development in the Bergen Kontor.

¹²⁸ *Dat Gartenrecht*.

¹²⁹ NGL II/1 p. 604 (HR I/1 nr. 376) § 11; compare Daenell, *Die Blütezeit II*, p. 404. The rule that only Hansards were to enjoy Hanseatic rights, and thereby be members of the Kontor was repeated many times, for instance in 1418, NGL II/1 nr. 379 (HR I/6 nr. 557) § 6; 1434, NGL II/1 nr. 384 (HR II/1 nr. 321) § 12; 1447, NGL II/1 nr. 396 (HR II/3 nr. 288) § 47; 1494, NGL II/3 nr. 389 (HR III/3 nr. 353) § 151; 1540, MA Kampen, Oud Archief nr. 2130 and Höhlbaum (ed.) *Kölner Inventar*, p. 328; 1540-1550, AHL, Bergenfahrer nr. 1427.

¹³⁰ 1405, NGL II/1 nr. 366 (HR I/5 nr. 225) § 8; 1497, NGL II/1 nr. 368 (HR I/5 nr. 392); 1412, NGL II/1 nr. 375 (HR I/6 nr. 70): '§ 14. The bans on handling goods referred to the complaints of the Kontor administration, issued a year earlier, on illicit trade of Hansards with amongst others 'Undudeschen'; see NGL II/1 p. 656 § 1 (HR I/6 nr. 38).

¹³¹ 1411, NGL II/1 p. 656 (HR I/6 nr. 38) § 1; 1422, NGL II/1 nr. 381 (HR I/7 nr. 487) § 17; compare 1434, NGL II/1 nr. 384 (HR II/1 nr. 321) § 14.

¹³² 1447, HR II/3 nr. 288 § 79. Compare 1423, HR I/7 nr. 577; Daenell, *Die Blütezeit II*, pp. 385-386. Two years later Deventer merchants sought exemption from this rule; see HR II/3 nr. 546 § 8. See also HR II/3 nr. 549 § 3 and 552 §§ 1, 5.

¹³³ 1476, NGL II/2 p. 735 (HR II/7 nr. 342) § 2.

¹³⁴ Jörn, 'Die Herausbildung der Kontorordnungen', p. 225. 1369, NGL II/1 nr. 346 § 9 (HR I/1 nr. 511); 1469, NGL II/2 p. 732 (HR II/6 nr. 188) § 2. Tenement rules: *Dat Gartenrecht*, p. 30 § 64.

¹³⁵ BEE pp. 401-412; BF pp. 56-57; J. Hartung, 'Die Spiele der Deutschen in Bergen', HGBil 3, 1877; pp. 89-111. *Dat Gartenrecht*, p. 16 § 3 'Van spelen'.

¹³⁶ NGL II/2 nr. 416 § 82.

¹³⁷ 1434, NGL II/1 nr. 384 (HR II/1 nr. 321) § 18; 1441, NGL II/1 nr. 392 (HR II/2 nr. 439) § 28; NGL II/2 nr. 416 §§ 20, 22, 26, 44, 54, 57, 75, 81, 87; NGL II/3 p. 107 (HR III/2 nr. 160) § 165.

Kontor members were to abide by these rules, made them a very strong agent on the Bergen market.

Hollanders formed by no means a counterpart of the Hanseatic Kontor in terms of rules or self-definition as a group. No rules of Hollanders *in* Bergen have been preserved,¹³⁸ and there are no indications that any group rules existed. It is for instance apparent that they could become burghers of Bergen.¹³⁹ This could turn to an advantage in trade: especially Early Modern sources show that Hollanders who settled permanently in Bergen sustained their ties with their hometown, and used such ties in their trade.¹⁴⁰ However, as Hollanders did not come to Bergen in any significant numbers, this easy transition between their hometowns and Bergen did not have any impact on their commercial standing as a group of traders.¹⁴¹ Instead, the nonexistence of defined rules and demarcation against the local society (and other foreigners) probably made them weaker as a group. The lack of rules meant a lack of continuity in commercial policy. When confronted with an opponent who had been elaborating his own organisation in Bergen for decades if not centuries, Hollanders had to play second fiddle.

In conclusion, it has been demonstrated that the local conditions in Bergen were far less favourable for Hollanders than they were for Hansards. The royal privileges almost continuously provided more support for Hanseatic trade, and from the 1540s also for denizen trade; the credit system proved to be a framework where there was very little room for flexibility and expansion of Hollandish trade; and also in terms of administration, representation and self-definition through rules, Hollanders were hardly on a par with the Hanseatic Kontor. Given this discrepancy, it is no wonder that there was no success story on this bit of Hanseatic ground in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

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ASA Externa Danica

¹³⁸ For the rules in Amsterdam, see *Handvesten*, vol. 3 pp. 1187-1188 § XIX. See also Van Dillen, *Bronnen*, nr. 470 (1561).

¹³⁹ Helle, *Bergen I*, p. 804; for instance, NRJ 2, p. 576, payment from a 'Hollender borgere i Bergenn'. Compare footnote nr. 91 in chapter two on Hollanders being part of the town administration in Bergen and Oslo.

¹⁴⁰ Sogner, 'Hollendertid og skottetid', p. 300; the unpublished M.A. thesis L. Foldnes, *Hollender og Bergensborger. En studie av hollandsk innflytelse i Bergen næringsliv på 1600-tallet* (2001) pp. 79-81.

¹⁴¹ Sogner, 'Hollendertid og skottetid', pp. 297, 300.

Niederstadtbücher
Urkunden Norwagica
ASA Externa Hanseatica

TAL Deventer: Town Archives and Athenaeum Library Deventer (Stadsarchief en Athenaeumbibliotheek Deventer)

690 Schepenen en Raad
Rechterlijk Archief

MA Kampen: Municipal Archives Kampen (Gemeentearchief Kampen)

Oud Archief
Rechterlijk Archief

MA Amsterdam: Municipal Archives Amsterdam (Gemeentearchief Amsterdam)

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