

From Unification to Integration:
The German North Sea Ports' absorption into Imperial
Germany, 1866–1914

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Summary

This thesis concentrates on the economic integration of three principal German North Sea ports – Emden, Bremen and Hamburg – into the Bismarckian nation-state. Prior to the outbreak of the First World War, Emden, Hamburg and Bremen handled a major share of the German Empire's total overseas trade. However, at the time of the foundation of the *Kaiserreich*, the cities' roles within the Empire and the new German nation-state were not yet fully defined. Initially, Hamburg and Bremen insisted upon their traditional role as independent city-states and remained outside the Empire's customs union. Emden, meanwhile, had welcomed outright annexation by Prussia in 1866. After centuries of economic stagnation, the city had great difficulties competing with Hamburg and Bremen and was hoping for Prussian support.

This thesis examines how it was possible to integrate these port cities on an economic and on an underlying level of civic mentalities and local identities. Existing studies have often overlooked the importance that Bismarck attributed to the cultural or indeed the ideological re-alignment of Hamburg and Bremen. Therefore, this study will look at the way the people of Hamburg and Bremen traditionally defined their (liberal) identity and the way this changed during the 1870s and 1880s. It will also investigate the role of the acquisition of colonies during the process of Hamburg and Bremen's accession. In Hamburg in particular, the agreement to join the customs union had a significant impact on the merchants' stance on colonialism. With regard to Emden, focus will be laid on its economic integration, which largely revolved around Prussia proper rather than the (Prussian-led) German Empire. While Emden got off to a slow start after 1866 and was never really able to compete successfully with Hamburg or Bremen, it did achieve genuine progress under Prussian rule.

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I. Introduction

a. Topic of Research

This thesis will examine the economic and cultural developments in Germany's four principal North Sea ports, from the foundation of the German Empire in 1871 until the outbreak of the First World War. The four port cities investigated are the *Freie und Hansestädte* of Bremen and Hamburg, ancient self-governing entities with a centuries-old tradition of trading and seafaring, and the towns of Wilhelmshaven and Emden, which during the period examined here constituted the main Prussian access to the North Sea. Taken together, the four cities present a wide variety of demographic, historical and economic structures. At the same time, they are all port cities, which means that they were part of a transnational system of trade. Such a transnational system of trade, and the resulting network of people, encourages an international, potentially even global, perspective and cosmopolitan tastes among citizenry.¹ In the German context, such an outlook had to come to terms with a changing domestic scene, as a result of the foundation of the Prussian-led German nation-state. Therefore, after 1871, there were two potentially conflicting identities in these port cities. One of them was a pre-existing local identity, shaped over time by cosmopolitan thought and long-standing international relations. The other was a sense of allegiance to Germany, which no doubt pre-dated the Franco-Prussian War and the *Reichsgründung* a year later, but could hardly fail to be affected by these events. After all, Germany had turned from a largely abstract term to a political reality, and from a loose confederation substantially influenced by non-German powers to the pre-eminent power in Continental Europe. Comparing the four different German North Sea port cities should thus lead to a clearer sense of local factors and comparable developments of each city's particularities and of the overall similarities. The chosen time frame

¹ See particularly Gavin Kendall, Ian Woodward and Zlatko Skrbis, *The Sociology of Cosmopolitanism: Globalization, Identity, Culture and Government* (Basingstoke, 2009), p. 154; see also Zlatko Skrbis, Ian Woodward, *Cosmopolitanism: Uses of the Idea* (London, 2013), p. 57

will allow an examination of how all that played out, from the foundation of Imperial Germany to the sharp curtailment of international trade brought about by the First World War and Britain's blockade of the German coasts. Since international trade is directly linked to domestic and international politics, the thesis will explore how the mercantile community of each of the cities was able to exploit the new political situation after 1871, or, on occasion, found themselves hindered by it.

This thesis does not simply wish to be an exercise in maritime history, or an account of evolving trading patterns between 1871 and 1914. Rather, the centre of attention will focus on the interplay between the new German Empire with its Berlin-based institutions (the Kaiser, the Reich Chancellor, the Reichstag, the Bundesrat – the Upper House of the imperial parliament – the imperial civil service etc.) on the one hand and the four trading cities and their existing civic, state and commercial institutions on the other. In other words, this study seeks to analyse how the new imperial reality affected the respective trading traditions of Hamburg, Bremen and Emden. The self-image of these port cities and the way the rest of the German Empire perceived them will be investigated. Wilhelmshaven, which had a less well established commercial role, is included here to act as a counterweight to the traditional trading posts, two of which – Bremen and Hamburg – are, it should be noted, still self-governing city states, as *Länder* of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Central to this thesis will be the question of how, and to what extent, overseas-orientated trading cities were integrated into the rapidly industrialising German nation-state. The coastal region from Emden to Hamburg has essentially held a geographical monopoly over Germany's overseas trade and shipping. Even though the opening of the *Kaiser-Wilhelm-Kanal*, now known as the *Nord-Ostsee-Kanal*, in 1895, shortened shipping routes between the North Sea and the Baltic, the climatic conditions and the frequent freezing up of the ports on Germany's Baltic coast in wintertime did not allow the emergence of major overseas ports anywhere east of Hamburg.² Lübeck, the only serious potential competitor on the eastern shores, found itself rapidly outdistanced after 1871, and the decline, which Thomas Mann evoked in his celebrated Lübeck novel *Buddenbrooks*, was not

² Alwin Oppel, *Die deutschen Seestädte* (Frankfurt, 1912), p. 15

limited to one fictional trading dynasty. It is no coincidence either that Lübeck lost its status as a self-governing Hanseatic entity in the twentieth century and is now a district of the state of Schleswig-Holstein. The other port cities on the Baltic Coast, from Flensburg in the North to Memel in the East, were always primarily engaged in trade across the Baltic (i.e. with Scandinavia, the Baltic States and Russia). The four port cities investigated in this thesis can therefore rightly be called Germany's principal gateway to the wider world.

b. Historiography

If we loosely define maritime history as the history of the relationship between humans and the sea, it is an age-long tradition. However, maritime history as an academic field only became recognised and respected with the expansion of the social sciences and economic history after the Second World War. As David M. Williams and Lars U. Scholl point out, mercantile maritime history only lost its romantic, nationalistic and imperial touch once trade and shipping were taken for what they really are, which is business.³ Consequently, mercantile maritime history was analysed 'in a more scientific and quantitative fashion, for economic history is above all concerned with the measuring of trends and change.'⁴

This is not to say that present-day maritime historians can simply ignore pre-Second World War publications. At the beginning of the twentieth century, academics in Germany began to take an extensive interest in the German Empire's role in overseas trade and shipping. This is mirrored in Alwin Oppel's analyses of Bremen and Hamburg and in a more comprehensive study named *Die deutschen Seestädte*.⁵ The latter offers a broad overview of all of Germany's remotely relevant port cities and is therefore a valuable source for the prevailing conditions before the First World War. Beside Oppel's studies, it is also worth mentioning Bernard Harms's *Deutschlands Anteil an Welthandel und Weltschiffahrt*, Heinrich Flügel's *Die deutschen Welthäfen Hamburg und Bremen* and *Die nordwesteuropäischen*

³ David M. Williams, Lars U. Scholl 'Lewis R. Fischer and the Progress of Maritime Economic History', Gelina Harlaftis, Stig Tenold, Jesús M. Valdaliso (eds), *The World's Key Industry: History and Economics of International Shipping* (Basingstoke, 2012), pp. 11–28

⁴ Ibid., p. 11

⁵ Alwin Oppel, 'Hamburgs und Bremens Stellung im internationalen Warenhandel', in: *Weltwirtschaftliches Archiv* 1 (1913), pp. 361–376; Oppel, *Seestädte*

Welthäfen: London – Liverpool – Hamburg – Bremen – Amsterdam- Rotterdam – Antwerpen – Havre in ihrer Verkehrs- und Handelsbedeutung by Kurt Wiedenfeld.⁶ Such contemporary interest in Germany's role as a shipping and trading nation was in part the result of a growing enthusiasm for maritime and naval matters in Germany around the turn of the century. The *Flottengesetze*, the great ship launchings and naval parades and the building of the impressive passenger liners *Imperator*, *Vaterland* and *Bismarck* by the Hamburg-Amerikanische Paketfahrt-Actien-Gesellschaft (*Hapag*) exemplify the rising passion with which many Germans looked at the sea.⁷ However, these publications also express the realisation by contemporaries that 'ohne eine eingehende Würdigung unserer Seewirtschaft kann [der Aufschwung, den unser Land in den letzten vier Jahrzehnten genommen hat,] nicht richtig verstanden werden.'⁸

However, even after the 'professionalisation' of maritime history after the Second World War, it has often not been regarded as an independent academic field. Much of the time it is still simply equated with naval history. Gelina Harlaftis is absolutely right in arguing that 'naval history can only be accepted and flourish academically when it regards itself as a sub-field of maritime history and uses the interdisciplinary and comparative historical methods of this field.'⁹ In the cases of Hamburg, Bremen, Emden and Wilhelmshaven, the proximity of the sea and the cities' respective trading traditions has led to an enormous output of historical studies, for which the target audience is extremely narrow. These studies include histories of different shipping companies, such as the *Norddeutscher Lloyd* and the *Hapag*, and also technical studies by various nautical enthusiasts. These studies offer a vast amount of information yet invariably they only ever touch upon parts of the overall developments.¹⁰ One of the most comprehensive books on passenger

⁶ Bernard Harms, *Deutschlands Anteil an Welthandel und Weltschiffahrt* (Stuttgart, 1916); Heinrich Flügel, *Die deutschen Welthäfen Hamburg und Bremen* (Jena, 1914); Kurt Wiedenfeld, *Die deutschen Welthäfen Hamburg und Bremen* and *Die nordwesteuropäischen Welthäfen: London – Liverpool – Hamburg – Bremen – Amsterdam- Rotterdam – Antwerpen – Havre in ihrer Verkehrs- und Handelsbedeutung* (Berlin, 1903)

⁷ Jan Rüger, *The Great Naval Game: Britain and Germany in the Age of Empire* (Cambridge, 2009)

⁸ Oppel, *Die deutschen Seestädte*, p. 1

⁹ Gelina Harlaftis, 'Maritime History or the History of Thalassa', Gelina Harlaftis *et al.*, *The New Ways of History: Developments in Historiography* (London, 2010), pp. 211–237, particularly p. 214

¹⁰ See for example the range on the history of different shipping companies in Bremen by Reinhold Thiel: Reinhold Thiel, *Die Geschichte des Norddeutschen Lloyd, Band 1–5* (Bremen,

shipping by Arnold Kludas, *Die Geschichte der deutschen Passagierschiffahrt, 1850–1990*, has been sharply criticised for Kludas' characteristic 'Verinnerlichung und Emphase von Volksgemeinschaft und nationaler Seegeltung'.¹¹ According to Hartmut Rübner, this aims at a '(Teil-)Exkulpation der Diktatur'.¹² Still, apart from this ideological defect, it offers, in more than a thousand pages, an unmatched overview of 140 years of German passenger shipping.

Maritime history saw a growth in popularity from the 1950s to the 1990s. In this half century, it was the research of the *Annales* School that first focused on maritime history, in particular on European maritime history in the early modern age, which therefore dominated the field of maritime history at the time. From the 1970s, Anglo-American historians took over the field of maritime history and principally engaged with the eighteenth century to the present day.¹³ In the 1990s, however, the cultural turn led to a decrease in interest in maritime history due to its close links with social and economic history.

In contrast, if we then look at the historiography on Imperial Germany, it becomes obvious that there is a time lag in popularity between the two subject areas. History writing on the *Kaiserreich* was for a long time dominated by the application of modernisation theory to modern German history, more precisely, Hans-Ulrich Wehler's assumption of the German *Sonderweg*.¹⁴ The *Sonderweg* has been used to try and explain why a fascist party could come to power in Germany, one of the most industrialised countries in the world at the time. Indeed, there is no obvious reason why in Germany fascism could flourish when the rest of the industrialised world was similarly faced with the crisis of liberal democracy in the

2001–2006); Reinhold Thiel, *Norddeutscher Lloyd: Roland-Linie, 1905–1992* (Bremen, 1999); Reinhold Thiel, *Die Geschichte der D.D.G. „Hansa“, Band 1–2* (Bremen, 2010–2011). See also Arnold Kludas' series on the Hapag: Arnold Kludas, *Die Geschichte der Hapag-Schiffe, Band 1–5* (Bremen, 2007–2010). Several other publications include: Dirk J. Peter (ed.), *Der Norddeutsche Lloyd: Von Bremen in die Welt, „Global Player“ der Schifffahrtsgeschichte* (Bremen, 2007); Susanne Wiborg, Klaus Wiborg, *1847–1997: Unser Feld ist die Welt, 150 Jahre Hapag-Lloyd* (Hamburg, 1997)

¹¹ Hartmut Rübner, *Konzentration und Krise der deutschen Schifffahrt: Maritime Wirtschaft und Politik im Kaiserreich, in der Weimarer Republik und im Nationalsozialismus* (Bremen, 2005), p. 15

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 15

¹³ Harlaftis, 'Maritime History or the History of Thalassa', pp. 214–216

¹⁴ Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Das Deutsche Kaiserreich 1871–1918* (Göttingen, 1994)

post-First World War era and the Great Depression.¹⁵ For that reason, defenders of the *Sonderweg* described Germany's development as a special path, in opposition to the "usual" Western path to modernity. Once this idea of a *Sonderweg* is accepted, German history of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century is only analysed with regard to its outcome, namely the Nazi regime. The *Sonderweg* dominated modern German history writing far into the 1980s. In this field, it was not until the cultural turn that the *Kaiserreich* was analysed in its own right. Thus, at the time when maritime history experienced a decline in popularity, research on Imperial Germany was intensified. Consequently, in the period between the 1950s and the 1990s there was a distinct lack of studies, and this is significant to this study. One of only a few exceptions to this is Lars U. Scholl, one of the founding members of the *International Maritime Economic History Association* (IMEHA). Since the 1980s, Scholl has consistently produced works on the German maritime history of the nineteenth and twentieth century.¹⁶

As can be gathered from this, the historiography on German overseas trade and shipping still lacks a comprehensive study that goes beyond one single period and one location of trade. An early attempt was made by Hans Konrad Röthel, who published a study on *Die Hansestädte: Hamburg, Lübeck, Bremen* in 1955.¹⁷ It was not his aim to comparatively analyse the economic development of the three cities, but rather to show cultural similarities between them. Röthel therefore wished to arrive at a definition for "Hanseatic" and its meaning to the three cities. However, being a Hamburger, he himself admitted that his love for his hometown overwhelmed his pursuit of objectivity.¹⁸ Besides Röthel, there is also an early study by Otto Becker on the integration of the Hanseatic cities into the customs

¹⁵ However, it is significant to point out that there was already opposition against Wehler's theory of a *Sonderweg* at the time. See for example: Thomas Nipperdey, '1933 und die Kontinuität der deutschen Geschichte', in: *Historische Zeitschrift* 227 (1978), pp. 86–111; Helga Grebing, *Der "deutsche Sonderweg" in Europa 1806-1945: Eine Kritik* (Stuttgart, 1986) and also David Blackbourn, Geoff Eley, *Mythen deutscher Geschichtsschreibung: Die gescheiterte bürgerliche Revolution von 1848* (Frankfurt, 1980)

¹⁶ See for example: Lars U. Scholl, 'Shipping Business in Germany in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century', in: Tsunehiko Yui, Keiichiro Nakagawa (eds), *Business History of Shipping: Strategy and Structure* (Tokyo, 1985), pp. 185–213; Lars U. Scholl, 'Struktur und Wandel in der deutschen Handelsschifffahrt 1815–1918', in: *Scripta Mercaturae. Zeitschrift für Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte* 18 (1984), pp. 30–60; Lars U. Scholl, 'The German Merchant Marine in the Inter-War Period, 1920–1932', in: Lewis R. Fischer, Helge W. Nordvik (eds), *Shipping and Trade, 1750-1950* (Pontefract, 1990), pp. 191–212

¹⁷ Hans Konrad Röthel, *Die Hansestädte: Hamburg, Lübeck, Bremen* (München, 1955)

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 8

union.¹⁹ However, while Becker gives plenty of detailed information on the events leading up to Hamburg and Bremen's accession to the customs union, his analysis still falls short of expectations. Overall, Becker's study reads like a justification for Bismarck's measures during the accession process. According to Becker, the positive outcome, i.e. the accession of both Hanseatic cities, justified all means taken by the Reich Chancellor, who is argued to have always acted in the name of the German nation. Hamburg and Bremen's role as free port cities is regarded as a disruptive factor to the unity of the German nation. Becker does not further examine internal processes in Hamburg and Bremen and the arguments against an accession in these cities. Therefore, Becker is only able to give a one-sided view on the events leading up to Hamburg and Bremen's *Zollanschluss* in 1888. In contrast to Becker, Ernst Hieke's examination also focuses on internal processes in Hamburg leading up to the decision to join the customs union.²⁰ In any case, Hieke's study also has major shortcomings. For example, Hieke concentrates solely on the economic aspects of Hamburg's accession. As a result, the study is limited to the period between 1879 and 1882. Furthermore, Hieke regards the *Zollanschluss* as a problem between the German Empire and the City of Hamburg. Like this, he is not able to incorporate the reaction of Hamburg's mercantile community into his investigation.

So far, there is only one study comparable in scope to this thesis, which is Hartmut Rübner's *Konzentration und Krise der Deutschen Schifffahrt*.²¹ Rübner's work covers the maritime economy and politics from the German Empire through to the Third Reich. However, in contrast to this thesis, Rübner understates the importance of the German Empire in the development of Germany's overseas trade and shipping. He devotes a negligible part of his 500-page-long investigation to the period from 1871 to 1914. Furthermore, Rübner's book fails to consider the local differentiation of trade. Instead of examining the varying effects of politics and economics on port cities, particularly smaller cities like Emden and

¹⁹ Otto Becker, 'Bismarcks Kampf um die Eingliederung der Hansestädte in die Zolleinheit', in: Ahasver von Brandt, Wilhelm Koppe (eds), *Städtewesen und Bürgertum als geschichtliche Kräfte: Gedächtnisschrift für Fritz Rösig* (Lübeck, 1953), pp. 227–242

²⁰ Ernst Hieke, *Hamburgs Stellung zum Deutschen Zollverein 1879-1882. Ein Beitrag zur Wirtschaftspolitik Bismarcks* (Hamburg, 1935)

²¹ Rübner, *Konzentration und Krise der deutschen Schifffahrt*

Wilhelmshaven, Rübner primarily deals with the *overall* trend of overseas trade and shipping.

More recently, Michael B. Miller has published an extraordinary transnational analysis of the fate of European overseas ports in the twentieth century, named *Europe and the Maritime World*. Miller states that one essential objective of the book is to 'restore the sea to the center of how we think and write about modern history.'²² He argues that realising the way in which people and goods were transported from Europe around the world in the twentieth century is absolutely central to understanding the twentieth century in Europe as a whole, since the European market was always reliant on overseas trade.²³ Miller's study presents a prime example of the way maritime history has to define itself in order to be recognised as a significant sub-field within the field of history. He does this by not simply limiting his research to certain shipping companies, trade routes or passenger/goods traffic. Instead, Miller gives an overall examination of European trade, including the infrastructure of ports, the structure of trade, and the people and companies that conducted this trade. Most important of all, he reminds us of the two most essential parts of trade, ports and merchants. Still, Miller's main focus is on the largest ports of Europe in the twentieth century, which for Miller are Hamburg, Rotterdam, Antwerp, London and Liverpool. Bremen, for example, is only examined as a port of secondary importance. In a European context, this of course makes sense. However, Miller fails to present the dynamics between the most significant port cities within Germany. Furthermore, due to his concentration on the twentieth century, Miller is not able to demonstrate Hamburg and Bremen's transition from independent to German port cities in the nineteenth century.

The high standard of Miller's research has not been equalled by all maritime historical publications. *Maritime Wirtschaft in Deutschland*, which was published in 2012, the same year as Miller's study, certainly does not match Miller's standard. The book, consisting of papers that were given at a maritime history conference in Hamburg in 2010, covers four main topics. These are shipping, the shipbuilding industry, trade and naval power in Germany during the nineteenth and twentieth

²² Michael B. Miller, *Europe and the Maritime World: A Twentieth-Century History* (Cambridge, 2012), p. 3

²³ Ibid., pp. 3–5

centuries.²⁴ One reason for this might be that its addressed target group is comprised of historians, interested maritime historical readers and shipping affiliates. Consequently, the publication certainly does not enter uncharted waters but offers, in the words of one reviewer, 'zu den im Titel genannten vier Schwerpunktthemen je zwei bis vier knappe Beiträge unterschiedlicher Qualität.'²⁵

There have of course also been less comprehensive studies of the individual port cities. As Germany's major overseas port, Hamburg has naturally aroused some academic interest. There are a number of local historical but also professional historical studies, which shed light on different aspects of Hamburg's trading and shipping history. For example, the role of Hamburg's merchants in Germany's colonial policy from 1880 to 1890 is investigated in Washausen's *Hamburg und die Kolonialpolitik des Deutschen Reiches*.²⁶ An analysis by Ekkehard Böhm examines the part that was played by the mercantile community in building up the German Navy.²⁷ In addition to these studies, there is also a publication commemorating the 75th anniversary of Hamburg's *Hafen- und Lagerhaus-Aktiengesellschaft* in 1960, consisting of two books entitled *Der Freihafen* and *Hamburgs Weg zum Welthafen* or Hamburg's *Speicherstadt*.²⁸ These publications all deal with different aspects of Hamburg's role within the German Empire.²⁹ Overall, studies like these are certainly crucial in understanding the dynamics and consequences of narrowly defined developments. Nevertheless, they are too obsessed with the minutiae of their respective topics to be able to integrate their

²⁴ Jürgen Elvert, Sigurd Hess, Heinrich Walle (eds), *Maritime Wirtschaft in Deutschland: Schifffahrt – Werften – Handel – Seemacht im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart, 2012)

²⁵ Hans Pohl, 'Rezension: Jürgen Elvert, Sigurd Hess, Heinrich Walle (eds), *Maritime Wirtschaft in Deutschland: Schifffahrt – Werften – Handel – Seemacht im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart, 2012), in: *Vierteljahresschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 100 (2013), Heft 2, pp. 249–250

²⁶ Helmut Washausen, *Hamburg und die Kolonialpolitik des Deutschen Reiches, 1880 bis 1890* (Hamburg, 1968)

²⁷ Ekkehard Böhm, *Überseehandel und Flottenbau: Hanseatische Kaufmannschaft und deutsche Seerüstung 1879–1902* (Düsseldorf, 1972). See also Ekkehard Böhm, 'Wirtschaft und Politik in Hamburg zur Zeit der Reichsgründung', in: *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Hamburgische Geschichte (ZHG)* 64 (1978), pp. 31–53

²⁸ Walter Emmerich, Bernhard Meyer-Marwitz, *Der Freihafen. Hamburgs Weg zum Welthafen* (Hamburg, 1960); Richard Fischer, Angelica Griem, *Kaufmannsträume: Die Hamburger Speicherstadt* (Heidelberg, 1988)

²⁹ See also: Renate Hauschild-Thiessen, *Bürgerstolz & Kaisertreue: Hamburg und das Deutsche Reich von 1871* (Hamburg, 1979) and Tobias von Elsner, *Kaisertage: Die Hamburger und das Wilhelminische Deutschland im Spiegel öffentlicher Festkultur* (Frankfurt, 1991)

findings into the overall processes in trade and shipping in Hamburg that took place from the time of the Empire to the Third Reich.

A study by Niall Ferguson accounts for a notable exception to this. In *Paper & Iron*, he is able to provide a comprehensive and dynamic examination of Hamburg business and German politics between 1897 and 1927, thus covering the *Kaiserreich* and the Weimar Republic.³⁰ The combined analysis of German politics and Hamburg business allows him to present the interdependency between economics and politics and the exercise of influence of Hamburg businessmen and merchants on German politics. Taking economic but also social and cultural aspects into consideration, Ferguson comes to the conclusion that 'it was inflation which led to Wilhelmine grandeur to Weimar collapse.'³¹ Kurt Doß has undertaken a similar attempt of investigating two periods in *Das deutsche Auswärtige Amt im Übergang vom Kaiserreich zur Weimarer Republik*. Yet, it is only in one section that he adequately analyses in detail the exertion of influence of Hamburg merchants and ship owners on Germany's economic policy.³² It becomes obvious from this overview of historiography on Hamburg's trade and shipping that there is currently no analysis in which the overall transformation of an independent city-state into Germany's foremost port city is shown.

Another distinguished example of an analysis that is able to make accessible to the reader trends and changes taking place over a long period, is Gabriele Hoffmann's *Das Haus an der Elbchaussee*.³³ In this book, Hoffmann tracks the family history of the Godeffroys, one of Hamburg's most influential merchants families in the nineteenth century. Yet, apart from solely focusing on the family's fate, Hoffmann also describes the whole of Hamburg's mercantile community and their connections to each other. By these means, the reader understands not only the economic but also the social and political environment in Hamburg during the period. Within four generations the role of Hamburg's merchants changed 'vom außerhalb der Hansestädte verachteten Zwischenhändler im 18. Jahrhundert über

³⁰ Niall Ferguson, *Paper & Iron: Hamburg business and German politics in the era of inflation, 1897–1927* (Cambridge, 2002)

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 408

³² Kurt Doß, *Das deutsche Auswärtige Amt im Übergang vom Kaiserreich zur Weimarer Republik. Die Schülersche Reform* (Düsseldorf, 1977)

³³ Gabriele Hoffmann, *Das Haus an der Elbchaussee: Die Godeffroys – Aufstieg und Niedergang einer Dynastie* (Hamburg, 1999)

den merchant banker bis zum vielbewunderten Kapitalisten'.³⁴ Although Hoffmann admits that this publication is not a consistently documented family biography, it is still extremely useful, as it helps to understand the Hanseatic self-conception prevalent in Hamburg in the nineteenth century.

With regard to Bremen, the situation is, if anything, worse. There are a few studies, which examine Bremen's relationship with different former colonies, such as Hartmut Müller's publications on Bremen and West Africa and a second one on the colonial movement in Bremen.³⁵ Müller's work remains a rare example of an economic discussion about Bremen's historic role as a port city (otherwise, studies on Bremen and the former colonies mainly focus on social and cultural issues.³⁶) Beyond the colonial angle, historians have also researched Bremen's relationship with its most significant trading partners; primarily the United States but also Australia.³⁷ In particular, Ludwig Beutin's analysis of Bremen and the US from the eighteenth century until the Third Reich deserves mentioning in this context.³⁸ Published in 1953, Beutin does not simply illustrate the economic links between the United States and Bremen but he also takes into account the global economic environment and politics, since these factors have always had an influence on trade links. Thus, this is a comparable approach to the one undertaken in this thesis – but it is, rather obviously, sixty years old.

There has recently also been an English-language study on Bremen's mercantile community and its transatlantic links with the United States in the

³⁴ Ibid., p. 455

³⁵ Hartmut Müller, 'Bremen und Westafrika. Wirtschafts- und Handelsbeziehungen im Zeitalter des Früh- und Hochkolonialismus 1841–1914 (I. Teil)', in: *Jahrbuch der Wittheit zu Bremen* XV (1971), pp. 42–92 and Hartmut Müller, 'Bremen und Westafrika. Wirtschafts- und Handelsbeziehungen im Zeitalter des Früh- und Hochkolonialismus 1841–1914 (II. Teil)', in: *Jahrbuch der Wittheit zu Bremen* XVII (1973), pp. 75–148; Hartmut Müller, 'Lüderitz und der koloniale Mythos. Kolonialbewegungen in Bremen', in: *Diskurs. Bremer Beiträge zu Wissenschaft und Gesellschaft* 6 (1982), pp. 125–149

³⁶ See for example Heinz Gustafsson, *Namibia, Bremen und Deutschland: Ein steiniger Weg zur Freundschaft* (Delmenhorst, 2003); Manfred Hitz et al. (eds), *Diskurs. Bremer Beiträge zu Wissenschaft und Gesellschaft* 6 (1982) complete issue on 'Namibia: Die Aktualität des kolonialen Verhältnisses'

³⁷ For example, Fritz Hartmut Tessmer, *Bremische Handelsbeziehungen mit Australien: Von den Anfängen bis zum Beginn des 1. Weltkrieges* (Bremen, 1979); Franz Josef Pitsch, *Die wirtschaftlichen Beziehungen Bremens zu den Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika bis zur Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Bremen, 1974); Lars U. Scholl (ed.), *Bremen und Amerika: Die Verbindungen der Hansestadt mit den Vereinigten Staaten, Jahrbuch 2008/2009* (Bremen, 2010)

³⁸ Ludwig Beutin, *Bremen und Amerika* (Bremen, 1953)

nineteenth century.³⁹ In *German Merchants in the Nineteenth-Century Atlantic*, Lars Maischak examines the economic, political and cultural exchange that took place between Bremen and the US, which not only benefitted the small city-state of Bremen, but also its much larger trading partner across the Atlantic. While that study is guided by a sound interpretation of the role of maritime history, parts of Maischak's argument are flawed. For example, in Part III of the book on the "Decline of a Cosmopolitan Community", Maischak describes Bremen's loss of independence in 1867 as a result of the foundation of the North German Union. He seems to simply equate Bremen joining the North German Union with a completed integration process, which was not the case. There are also internal contradictions. For instance, Maischak rightly argues that before 1867 'only a minority [...] was willing to give up Bremish independence for the promise of a bright new future in a unitary German state.'⁴⁰ However, in a last chapter on "Patriarchs into Patriots: Hanseats in a World of Nation-States, 1867–1945", the reader is given the impression that Bremen's mercantile community readily came to terms with their city's integration. If such was indeed the case, Maischak conspicuously fails to explain the apparent change in attitudes. With regard to Anglophone literature on Bremen, Robert Lee definitely deserves mentioning. Lee has published on a wide range of topics on Bremen in the nineteenth and twentieth century.⁴¹

Similarly, Malte Ritter, examining the political culture of Bremen's middle classes from 1859 to 1913, has come to the conclusion that already prior to the *Reichsgründung* 'städtische[...] und nationale[...] Identitätsmuster feste Anknüpfungspunkte fanden, daß sie sich ineinander verwoben und sich wechselseitig stärkten.'⁴² Although he recognises 'eine Trübung [...] durch die zoll- und handelspolitischen Vorstöße der Reichsregierung Ende der 1870er und Anfang der 1880er', but, in Ritter's eyes, this did not do any large damage to

³⁹ Lars Maischak, *German Merchants in the Nineteenth-Century Atlantic* (Cambridge, 2013)

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 245

⁴¹ See for example: W. Robert Lee, 'The Growth of Maritime Trade and the Determinants of Port-Hinterland Relations in Nineteenth-Century Germany: the case of Bremen', in: Margrit Schulte Beerbühl and Jörg Vögele (eds), *Spinning the Commercial Web: International Trade, Merchants and Commercial Cities, c. 1640–1939* (Frankfurt, 2004), pp. 291–306 and W. Robert Lee, 'Configuring the region: maritime trade and port-hinterland relations in Bremen, 1815–1914', in: *Urban History* 32, Issue 02 (August 2005), pp. 247–287

⁴² Malte Ritter, *Die Bremer und ihr Vaterland: Deutscher Nationalismus in der Freien Hansestadt (1859–1913)* (Berlin, 2004), p. 300

Bremen's pro-German disposition.⁴³ Ritter's argumentation is problematic insofar as it is too narrowly focused on political culture. An economic analysis of the 1870s and 1880s might have led him to a significantly different viewpoint. It is not sufficient to only analyse the relationship of Bremen with the German Empire from a cultural perspective. With Bremen's reliance on trade and shipping, historians have to adopt both cultural and economic analyses if they are to get a more comprehensive picture of the development that the city took following the foundation of the German Empire.

Historical analyses of the cities of Emden and Wilhelmshaven, and their respective roles in the wider German economy, are practically non-existent. This is actually a remarkable lacuna, since Emden had developed into one of Germany's busiest port cities by the eve of the First World War.⁴⁴ Dietmar von Reeken's study on *Ostfriesland zwischen Weimar und Bonn* is a rare exception.⁴⁵ Von Reeken's book offers an analysis of economic, political and social continuities and changes in Emden and Aurich from 1928 until 1953. Yet, as a result of its wide-ranging aims, it offers little sustained analysis of Emden's economic development.

Recently, interest in Emden's development from the nineteenth century has seen an upsurge. For example, Hans-Dieter Clasmeier has published a study with the title *100 Jahre Große Seeschleuse in Emden: Geschichte eines Meisterwerks der Ingenieurkunst*.⁴⁶ Although it is largely concentrated on the planning and building history of the lock, it nevertheless gives an excellent insight into the infrastructural and economic conditions in Emden before and after the building of the lock. In addition to this, Gunter Hummerich's work on Emden's shipping companies from

⁴³ Ibid., p. 300

⁴⁴ Altogether, the available literature on Emden is limited to a few general overviews of the city's history. For example, Ernst Siebert, Walter Deeters, Bernard Schröer, *Geschichte der Stadt Emden: 1750 bis zur Gegenwart* (Leer, 1980); Wolfgang Schönigh, *Überblick über die Geschichte der Stadt Emden* (Hannover, 1960); and also Eckart Krömer, *Kleine Wirtschaftsgeschichte Ostfrieslands und Papenburgs* (Norden, 1991); Eberhard Kliem, *Die Stadt Emden und die Marine, 16. Bis 21. Jahrhundert, Vom Großen Kurfürsten bis zur Bundesmarine* (Hamburg, 2008)

⁴⁵ Dietmar von Reeken, *Ostfriesland zwischen Weimar und Bonn: Eine Fallstudie zum Problem der historischen Konitnuität am Beispiel der Städte Aurich und Emden* (Hildesheim, 1991)

⁴⁶ Hans-Dieter Clasmeier, *100 Jahre Große Seeschleuse in Emden: Geschichte eines Meisterwerks der Ingenieurkunst* (Aurich, 2013)

1837 until today is certainly a step in the right direction.⁴⁷ While Hummerich also examines the development of Emden's port, his main interest remains in the fate of different shipping companies. Hummerich thus gives a broad overview of Emden's shipping companies over a large period of time. However, due to Hummerich's clear focus on the successes of Emden's companies, the city's troubles with its economic and cultural integration into the German Empire are being pushed aside. Since colonial history will play a part in this thesis, it is also worth mentioning Ulrich van der Heyden's study on the *Brandenburgisch-Afrikanische Kompagnie*, an overseas enterprise founded by the Great Elector, Friedrich Wilhelm von Brandenburg, in 1682.⁴⁸ As Emden had become the headquarters of the company in 1684, this study, although not exclusively focused on Emden's role, also reveals intriguing information about Emden's connections to the company.

The recent increase in research is certainly to do with the fact that the *Stadtarchiv Emden* only became an independent institution in 1990s. Before then, it was part of and located in the *Ostfriesisches Landesmuseum Emden*. Today, the members of staff are still involved with making documents of the interwar period accessible for the public.⁴⁹ Thus, it is not surprising that the economic history of Emden is still largely uncharted territory.

Scholarly neglect of Wilhelmshaven has been near total. Only a handful of studies exist.⁵⁰ One of these is an examination by Martin Wein of the administrative problems existing in Wilhelmshaven until 1937. These problems resulted from the circumstance that the port of Wilhelmshaven was owned by Prussia, while the worker housing areas, which later formed the city of Rüstringen,

⁴⁷ Gunther Hummerich, *Kaufmannsgut ist Ebbe und Flut: Emder Schifffahrtsfirmen, von 1837 bis heute* (Emden, 2014)

⁴⁸ Ulrich van der Heyden, *Rote Adler an Afrikas Küste: Die brandenburgisch-preußische Kolonie Großfriedrichsburg in Westafrika* (Berlin, 2001)

⁴⁹ Note that the bibliography of von Reeken's study (published in 1991) is only able to mention 'zahlreiche Akten aus der V. Registratur' from the *Stadtarchiv Emden* and does not give any more detail.

⁵⁰ See for example: Arthur Grunewald (ed.), *Wilhelmshaven: Tidekurven einer Seestadt* (Wilhelmshaven, 1969); Rolf Uphoff, „Hier laßt uns einen Hafen bau'n!": *Entstehungsgeschichte der Stadt Wilhelmshaven 1848–1890* (Oldenburg, 1995); The memoirs of Louise von Krohn also offer an interesting insight into the founding years of Wilhelmshaven, see Louise von Krohn, *Vierzig Jahre in einem deutschen Kriegshafen* (Wilhelmshaven, 2001)

were part of the Grand Duchy of Oldenburg.⁵¹ Nonetheless, the definitive work on Wilhelmshaven is still offered by Edgar Grundig's *Chronik der Stadt Wilhelmshaven*, which was published in 1957.⁵² The archivist Edgar Grundig began working on this study before the Second World War and was, therefore, able to use documents that went missing during the war. Consequently, Grundig's chronicle offers information that would otherwise not be accessible anymore. This makes it a uniquely important work for research on Wilhelmshaven's past. However, even though Grundig was able to use valuable sources, parts of his conclusions are out-dated. In his preface, Grundig himself admitted that 'meine Arbeit Fehler und Irrtümer enthält [...]'.⁵³ In the face of the sheer extent of Grundig's study, this is forgivable. However, when it comes to a detailed analysis of certain developments in Wilhelmshaven, there is need for further academic examination. Additionally, Grundig's work is marked by a high level of local patriotism, which calls for a more neutral examination of developments in Wilhelmshaven.⁵⁴

There are, in conclusion, two shortcomings to the existing literature on maritime history. On the one hand, there is an overall shortage of comprehensive studies that investigate those periods during which Germany became one of the leading trading nations. On the other hand, there is also a lack of individual studies, which are concerned with the economic development of Germany's major North Sea ports.

⁵¹ Martin Wein, *Stadt wider Willen: Kommunale Entwicklung in Wilhelmshaven/ Rüstringen, 1853-1937* (Marburg, 2006)

⁵² Edgar Grundig, *Chronik der Stadt Wilhelmshaven* (Wilhelmshaven, 1957)

⁵³ Edgar Grundig, *Chronik der Stadt Wilhelmshaven, Band 1: Vorgeschichte bis 1853 und die Erwerbung des Jadegebiets durch Preußen* (Wilhelmshaven, 1957), p. 2

⁵⁴ For a critique of Grundig's study see also: Wein, *Stadt wider Willen*, p. 29

c. The Cities examined

*Als noch das Reich zerrissen lag,
Turnierplatz fremder Fehde,
Und jeder gute deutsche Stamm
Ging seine eignen Wege,
Trug deine Flagge schon hinaus,
Hinaus auf alle Meere
Der Hanseaten Wagemut
Und warb für deutsche Ehre.⁵⁵*

This verse, which points to the key themes of this analysis, was written about Hamburg. However, it is not only applicable to the city on the Elbe and its mercantile community, but also to Bremen and Emden, which have a long tradition of overseas trade. It is said in this verse – and in the following verses of this poem – that while the German nation was still divided into small states, merchants already carried German virtues into the world. Thus, this verse implies that the mercantile community of Hamburg took on a pioneering role in embodying German patriotism. By using their trading links, these merchants were the first ones to stand for the German nation in the rest of the world. Trade is therefore seen as a catalyser of German patriotism. With this verse in mind, it is necessary to take a closer look at the actual relationship between the port cities and their mercantile communities and the German nation-state founded in 1871. However, prior to this, it is absolutely vital to have a background of the histories of the cities under investigation. Only by understanding the identities of these cities, which had been formed over centuries, are we able to understand the situation they found themselves in when the German Empire was founded. For this, it is important to realise that these also had a history with each other, which had an effect on their actions. For example, due to their shared history in the Hanseatic League, Hamburg and Bremen were in close contact over important issues and, together with Lübeck, the cities also finalised contracts.⁵⁶ Between 1825 and 1865, more than 20

⁵⁵ Taken from a poem by Georg Raven, named *Hammaburg und Hansestadt*, as cited in Thede-Ottowell, *Hamburg: Vom Alsterhafen zur Welthafenstadt* (Hamburg, 1996), p. 16

⁵⁶ For more information on this see for example: Jürgen Prüser, *Die Handelsverträge der Hansestädte Lübeck, Bremen und Hamburg mit überseeischen Staaten im 19. Jahrhundert*

treaties with foreign countries were signed and the cities also kept joint embassies.⁵⁷

Hamburg

Hamburg's name originates from a fortification named *Hammaburg*, *ham* being the Old Saxon word for marshland. The first fortification in this marshland was probably built in the early ninth century. During the eleventh and twelfth centuries, Hamburg grew to the size of a city and it became an important market place. Significantly, Hamburg received a charter from Emperor Frederick I granting several benefits to the city and its new port, such as customs-free transport of goods on the lower reaches of the river Elbe. The date of issue for this Imperial charter, 7 May 1189, has since then been regarded as the birth of the port of Hamburg.⁵⁸

Hamburg was soon able to outmanoeuvre its local rivals, such as the town of Stade, downriver on the Elbe estuary, which acted as the extended arm of the Archbishop of Bremen, and in the thirteenth century, the city joined the *Hanse*, the famous Northern European league of trading cities. Another imperial decree, issued on 14 July 1482, proved vital to Hamburg's fortunes.⁵⁹ In that document, the Emperor Frederick III stipulated that all imported grain, beer and wine should be unloaded and put up for sale at Hamburg, before onward transport upriver or on horseback – the so-called Staple Right.⁶⁰ Hamburg's early importance as a trading

(Bremen, 1962); Ernst Baasch, *Die Hansestädte Hamburg, Bremen und Lübeck und ihre Beziehungen zu Algier und Marokko* (Bremen, 2013); Antjekathrin Graßmann, 'Das Ende souveräner Außenpolitik der Hansestädte seit 1867 – nur ein Verzicht?'; in: Holger Berwinkel, Martin Kröger (eds), *Die Außenpolitik der deutschen Länder im Kaiserreich: Geschichte, Akteure und archivische Überlieferung (1871-1918)* (München, 2012), pp. 79–102

⁵⁷ Graßmann, 'Das Ende souveräner Außenpolitik der Hansestädte seit 1867 – nur ein Verzicht?', p. 81

⁵⁸ There is some debate about the authenticity of that document. Heinrich Reincke has argued that the charter must have been forged in Hamburg's city hall. See Tratschkas Lexikon für Besserwisser, 10. September 1982, Zeit Online: <http://www.zeit.de/1982/37/tratschkas-lexikon-fuer-besserwisser/komplettansicht>. Accessed 12/08/2015

⁵⁹ Uwe Rada, *Die Elbe: Europas Geschichte im Fluss* (München, 2013), p. 210

⁶⁰ Friedrich III., 1482 Juli 14, Wien, Regesta Imperii: http://www.regesta-imperii.de/regesten/13-20-0-friedrich-iii/nr/1482-07-14_1_0_13_20_0_281_281.html?tx_hisodat_sources%5B%40widget_0%5D%5BcurrentPage%5D=6&cHash=d9c5c976343c765f81b6a04567aab838. Accessed 27/10/2015

post is underlined by the fact that the city had already grown to roughly the same size that it would still be in the second half of the nineteenth century.⁶¹ Armed with the Staple Right, Hamburg extended and successfully defended its control of the Elbe estuary in the following centuries against challenges by the Dukes of Brunswick and Lüneburg from the South and Denmark to the North.

The Danes, in particular, proved a serious threat through the Danish possession of Altona on Hamburg's outskirts. That threat persisted until the second half of the eighteenth century and the *Gottorper Vergleich* – the Gottorp Agreement – of 1768. It is relevant to this study for two reasons. For one thing, Danish Altona was the first Northern European free port. Thus two different economic policies operated on the River Elbe: Hamburg protectionism versus Altona's free trade policy, and that argument of free trade versus protective tariffs would of course become a defining feature of the political discourses in the decades after the Franco-Prussian War, and a crucial factor in Hamburg's eventual integration into the German Empire. The second aspect of the earlier rivalry with Altona that is relevant to this study is the Danish, or more generally, the international angle. Before the unification, German territories were potentially always at the mercy of foreign powers with territorial ambitions. In the case of Denmark, the ambition was to have Hamburg's status of self-government (confirmed by the Holy Roman Empire's supreme court, the *Reichskammergericht*, in 1618) revoked, and to see the city incorporated into the chain of Danish Crown lands north of the river Elbe. It was of course a similar Danish attempt to ride roughshod over established constitutional privileges in the region – this time of the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein – that led to the German-Danish war of 1864 and the beginning of Bismarckian unification. That process would ultimately lead Hamburg to re-consider its position and re-define its identity.

A large part of that identity had long been commercial. As early as 1558, Hamburg acquired a stock exchange – the *Hamburger Börse* – founded by the representative body of the city's merchants, the *Gemeiner Kaufmann*, the predecessor of the *Commerzdeputation* from which, in turn, arose Hamburg's Chamber of Commerce in 1867. The *Commerzdeputation* was founded in 1665 and acted both as the merchants' political voice in the city and as a self-regulatory

⁶¹ Martin Krieger, *Geschichte Hamburgs* (München, 2012), p. 32

body.⁶² The *Commerzbibliothek*, the library founded by the *Commerzdeputation* in 1735, houses some of the sources upon which this thesis is based. Hamburg history is to some extent the history of merchant dynasties, such as the Godeffroys, a Huguenot family originally from La Rochelle, whose firm *Joh. Ces. Godeffroy & Co.*, established in 1766, was responsible for establishing German trade with the South Sea in the middle of the nineteenth century and would later be instrumental in launching German colonialism. The Godeffroys were only one of several Hamburg trading firms. As Mary Lindemann has argued, the city's 'seemingly boundless prosperity rested almost entirely on the strength of its position in the world market.'⁶³ Hamburg had managed to become a trading city through and through: 'while production for domestic consumption declined steadily, manufacturing for export expanded greatly, so that by the 1790s Hamburg had lost most characteristics of an artisanal centre.'⁶⁴ It is this fact that makes the city especially interesting to this thesis.

One of the secrets of Hamburg's economic success was its policy of neutrality in wartime.⁶⁵ This position proved unsustainable during the Napoleonic Wars. With the end of the Holy Roman Empire in 1806, following a French ultimatum, Hamburg's status as a *Freie Reichsstadt* ceased. The French entered the city on 19 November 1806 and thereafter occupied it (except for brief intervals) until 1814. The French occupation was a period of considerable economic hardship for Hamburg. Since Hamburg had a key role in the trade with Great Britain, which Napoleon wanted to bring to its knees with the Continental Blockade, it suffered a great deal in the resulting collapse of overseas trading patterns. Many long-established Hamburg firms actually fled the city in order to survive. Worse was to come. In 1810, Hamburg, alongside Bremen and large parts of Northern Germany, was actually annexed by France. Hamburg, it should be noted, lies about 500 kilometers beyond France's present-day borders.

French expansionism is significant not just because of its breath-taking scale but because it ended a centuries-old tradition of self-government. What is

⁶² Kurt Grobecker, *"Dem heilsamen Commercio diensahmb": 325 Jahre Handelskammer Hamburg* (Hamburg, 1990), pp. 29-32

⁶³ Mary Lindemann, *Patriots and Paupers: Hamburg, 1712-1830* (Oxford, 1990), p. 3

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 3

⁶⁵ One rumour has it that Hamburg's Navy deliberately came late for seabattles in order to avoid combat but not the victory celebrations. See Grobecker, *325 Jahre Handelskammer Hamburg*, p. 45

more, all this was within living memory at the time of the Franco-Prussian war of 1870. In other words, the relative ease with which Hamburg drifted into the Prussian orbit when war loomed with Napoleon III was not unconnected with the shock of French imperialism under the first Napoleon. Indeed, the local impact of the *Franzosenzeit* – the French years – is perfectly illustrated by the fact that Pierre Godeffroy, brother of business founder Jean César Godeffroy, who, witness their Christian names, had been raised in a francophone family, vowed never to speak French again.⁶⁶

It has been well noted that nothing in Continental Europe was ever quite the same again after the upheaval of the Napoleonic era. That was certainly true of Hamburg. Outwardly, the city's self-rule was re-established at the Congress of Vienna, within the new framework of the German Confederation. Yet psychologically, the realisation that the city was vulnerable to political forces beyond its borders cannot have failed to have consequences. All the more so, since Hamburg quickly lost its historical staple right within the new *Deutsche Bund*. The Confederation moved to free all German river traffic from duties. The *Elbschiffahrtsakte* – the Elbe Navigation Act – of 1821 duly established free trade on the River Elbe.⁶⁷ Still, even though there was support for the idea of an integrated German domestic market, via the *Zollverein* – the Prussian-led Customs Union – Hamburg was not at first prepared to give up its status as a free port city, which seemed vital to trade with the wider world.⁶⁸

Indeed the 1820s saw a final flourish of Hanseatic self-confidence on the world stage. The French occupation of Spain had set in train the process of Latin American independence. As these erstwhile colonies began to open up to world trade, Germany's Hanseatic cities were quick to spot the opportunity. Delegates from Hamburg and Bremen, Syndic Sieveking and Senator Gildemeister were sent to Brazil in order to negotiate a trade agreement between the Hanseatic Cities of Hamburg, Bremen and Lübeck and the Brazilian Emperor, which was signed in 1827. The *Präses* of the *Commerzdeputation* enthused, 'Alle die seit Jahrhunderten uns verschlossenen, fast verborgen gewesen Länder und Welttheile sind uns offen geworden...', and he was even moved to add, 'Hamburg hat Colonien

⁶⁶ Hoffmann, *Haus an der Elbchaussee*, p. 15

⁶⁷ Rada, *Die Elbe*, pp. 230–231

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 231

erhalten.⁶⁹ Germany, it should be noted, featured nowhere in this ecstatic account. It was all about the city state of Hamburg.

The moment was indeed propitious. As Astrid Petersson has shown, Hamburg's merchants were able to get their foot in the door of the lucrative sugar trade.⁷⁰ With the colonial powers caught up in the Latin American Wars of Independence, Hamburg's merchants seized the chance of being able to participate in direct trade with the West Indies, especially with Cuba. By the middle of the nineteenth century, Hamburg had outdistanced Bremen in acquiring a West Indian and Latin American trading empire, alongside existing trade with the East Indies and a rapidly expanding engagement in Africa.⁷¹ The figures speak for themselves: from 1815 to 1819, the total value of dutiable imports amounted to 72,341,752 Mark Banco, which was Hamburg's coin of account. By 1847, dutiable imports had risen to 114,129,520 Mark Banco. The figures for dutiable exports are even more impressive: they increased from 39,673,062 Mark Banco in the years from 1815 to 1819 to 199,868,080 Mark Banco in 1847.⁷²

The potential dangers for a relatively small political entity, like Hamburg, engaging in activities of global scale became apparent a decade later during the so-called Panic of 1857. That crisis, which originated in the United States of America, hit Hamburg hard, because the city was a major centre for finance (the Bank of Hamburg, established in 1619, was one of the oldest in Northern Europe). Hamburg suffered more than other port city on the European Continent. Merchant bankers, combining trade and finance, were the predominant type of merchants in Hamburg. By issuing ever-larger numbers of trade bills, these merchant bankers attempted to benefit from the rising commodity prices after 1848. In the process they exposed themselves to a liquidity risk. While the average rate of circulating three-month bills was at 162 million Mark Banco in 1855, this figure rose to 241 million Mark Banco in the first half of 1857 and reached 273 million Mark Banco in

⁶⁹ In Hamburg and Bremen, chairmen of the Chamber of Commerce (or in this case the Commerzdeputation) carry the title of „Präses“. For the quote see: Grobecker, *325 Jahre Handelskammer Hamburg*, p. 57

⁷⁰ Astrid Petersson, *Zuckersiedergewerbe und Zuckerhandel in Hamburg im Zeitraum von 1814 bis 1834: Entwicklung und Struktur zweier wichtiger Hamburger Wirtschaftszweige des vorindustriellen Zeitalters* (Stuttgart, 1998)

⁷¹ Oppel, 'Hamburgs und Bremens Stellung im internationalen Warenhandel', p. 362

⁷² Eckart Klessmann, *Geschichte der Stadt Hamburg* (Hamburg, 1988), p. 412

the third quarter of 1857.⁷³ A minor bank failure in the American Midwest, which spread to the whole of North America and London, produced a tidal wave of bankruptcies in Hamburg. The journalist Gottfried Cohen concluded that the city had not merely lost imaginary riches but ‘... früher mühsam erworbenes Capital dazu und vielleicht gar die Ehre, dieses kostbare, unersetzliche Kleinod!’⁷⁴

For the second time within a generation, Hamburg had been forced to accept that its resources were insufficient to withstand an international crisis. The proud city state was reduced to seeking outside help, in this case in the shape of a loan amounting to 10 million Mark Banco in silver from the Austrian Empire, which arrived in Hamburg by train in December 1857. It should be noted that Hamburg turned to Habsburg Austria rather than risking dependence on Prussia which, being on Hamburg’s doorstep, seemed uncomfortably close. A decade later, Austro-Prussian rivalry and Hamburg’s geographical position meant that the city found itself firmly in the Prussian orbit.

Bremen

Bremen originated as a small settlement called *Brema*, [from the Old Low German *Bremun* meaning “on the edge”, probably referring to the edge of a sand dune on the River Weser]. Bremen’s initial significance was as the site of a bishopric, and later on, of an archbishopric. Early market and toll privileges stemmed from the ambitions of churchmen seeking to expand the power of the ecclesiastical territory of Bremen.⁷⁵ From the twelfth century onwards, the city increasingly sought to emancipate itself from its religious overlords, in part through trade with Scandinavia, the Lower Weser and Westphalia.⁷⁶ In the thirteenth century, Bremen, with the help of the Holy Roman Emperor Henry VI, managed to grow ‘vom geistlichen Herrschaftszentrum mit angeschlossenem kaufmännischem

⁷³ Gerhard Ahrens, ‘Die Überwindung der Hamburgischen Wirtschaftskrise von 1857 im Spannungsfeld von Privatinitiative und Staatsintervention’, in: *ZHG* 64 (1978), pp. 1–29, particularly p. 7; for more information on the Panic of 1857 see also Gerhard Ahrens, *Krisenmanagement 1857: Staat und Kaufmannschaft in Hamburg während der ersten Weltwirtschaftskrise* (Hamburg, 1986)

⁷⁴ Gottfried Cohen quoted in Grobecker, “*Dem heilsamen Commercio diensahmb*”, p. 67

⁷⁵ See for example Asmut Brückmann, *Bremen: Geschichte einer Hansestadt* (Bremen, 2008), pp. 8–12

⁷⁶ Herbert Schwarzwälder, *Geschichte der Freien Hansestadt Bremen, Band 1: Von den Anfängen bis zur Franzosenzeit (1810)* (Bremen, 1995), pp. 37–38

suburbium zu einer tatsächlichen Stadt heran.’⁷⁷ The city was able to join trading networks with Northern Europe’s most significant economic area, which included Flanders and England. Finally, Bremen’s leading families defeated Archbishop Albert II in 1366, freeing the city from ecclesiastical rule.

Since Bremen’s trading system was based on bilateral agreements, the city was ambivalent about the Hanseatic League. What is more, Hanseatic trade was mostly conducted in and across the Baltic, whereas Bremen’s mercantile community tended to look westward. Thus, in contrast to Hamburg, Bremen attempted to stay out of the Hanseatic League.⁷⁸ Indeed, Bremen only reluctantly joined the *Hanse* in 1358, then went on to ignore the Hanseatic embargo of Flanders and only supported the League as much as necessary. Unsurprisingly, Bremen’s relationship with the Hanseatic League was often fraught, with the city even expelled from the League between 1427 and 1433. The city was bursting with self-confidence. As Elmhäuser points out, ‘[die] Stadt hatte um 1400 einen Höhepunkt ihrer Bedeutung erlangt.’⁷⁹

Yet for all that, Bremen’s constitutional status within the Holy Roman Empire remained unclear. It was only in 1646, when Emperor Ferdinand III issued the *Linzer Diplom*, that Bremen formally became a *Freie Reichsstadt*. The Thirty Years War and Germany’s resulting economic exhaustion, combined with the tendency of the River Weser to sand up, delayed Bremen’s economic development in the Early Modern period.

This changed during Bremen’s prosperous eighteenth century. The city’s merchants expanded their trading relations to Africa and the Caribbean, and started to directly import those exotic and valuable goods which were later to become Bremen’s main trading goods, such as tobacco, cotton, coffee and sugar.⁸⁰ As in the case of Hamburg, Bremen’s prosperity and independence ended abruptly with the arrival of the French at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Again, like Hamburg, Bremen was annexed by Napoleon and was only able to reclaim its political independence at the Congress of Vienna. Alongside Hamburg and Lübeck, Bremen became a sovereign member of the *Deutsche Bund*.

⁷⁷ Konrad Elmhäuser, *Geschichte Bremens* (München, 2007), p. 32

⁷⁸ See Elmhäuser, *Geschichte Bremens*, pp. 27–42

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 38

⁸⁰ Elmhäuser, *Geschichte Bremens*, p. 64

Like Hamburg, Bremen sought to re-establish and expand its overseas connections after 1815. Already at the end of the eighteenth century, once the North American ports became open to traders of any nation, Bremen's merchants had begun to establish branch offices there. After the Napoleonic Wars, these relations were revived. As a result, in 1827, the three Hanseatic Cities of Bremen, Hamburg and Lübeck were able to conclude an agreement with the United States. In this contract both parties guaranteed to one another the rights of most-favoured states. Ludwig Beutin argues that this contract was important for the whole of Germany, as it established the framework for German-American economic relations for almost a century.⁸¹ Furthermore, in 1846, after a competitive bidding war and a lot of lobbying work, Bremen also triumphed over Antwerp and became the first continental European destination for an American-subsidised regular steam ship post line – the *Postdampferverbindung*.⁸²

North America became Bremen's most important trading partner and remained so until the First World War. Between 1840 and 1850, an average of 20–30 per cent of total imports to Bremen came from North America. For Bremen's exports this number is even higher; in the same period, 40–50 per cent of total exports went to North America.⁸³ In this North American trade, tobacco played a crucial role, especially from the 1830s onwards. During the 1850s, Bremen became Europe's leading tobacco importer. Its imports from North America accounted for about a quarter of North America's total tobacco production.⁸⁴ From 1821 to 1850, Bremen's tobacco imports increased by a staggering 600 per cent, from 70,000 to 420,000 quintals, of which about two thirds came from North America. Other significant imports from or via North America included whale oil, rice and goods like coffee and sugar. American cotton, which became highly important for Bremen's merchants, only gained significance from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards.⁸⁵

Bremen's exports to North America mostly consisted of emigrants. In fact, emigration was a pre-requisite for Bremen's trade with North America. It allowed

⁸¹ Beutin, *Bremen und Amerika*, pp. 29–32

⁸² Rübner, *Konzentration und Krise*, p. 33

⁸³ Rainer Wallentin, 'Schiffahrt und Zugfahrt', in Heide Gerstenberger, *Zwischen Ankunft und Abfahrt: Zur Geschichte des Bremer Hauptbahnhofs* (Bremen, 1989), pp. 11–106, here p. 12

⁸⁴ Tessmer, *Bremische Handelsbeziehungen*, p. 12

⁸⁵ Beutin, *Bremen und Amerika*, pp. 34–39

Bremen's merchants to use the empty shipping space on the way to North America and, therefore, to make American imports more profitable. Between 1839 and 1847, the number of people emigrating via Bremen increased almost tenfold from 3,500 to 33,700.⁸⁶

Crucial to Bremen's success during the nineteenth century was the foundation of a new port facility on the North Sea coast. This solved all customs issues with the Grand Duchy of Oldenburg along the lower Weser and the recurring problem of the sanding up of the Weser. Already in 1816, at the *Bundestag* in Frankfurt, Senator Smidt –the father of Bremerhaven – had suggested building a port on the Hanoverian side of the Weser estuary. However, at that point, Bremen's Senate regarded these plans as unfeasible. It was not until 1825 that Smidt, who had become Bremen's Burgomaster in 1821, resumed the discussions about founding a port on the North Sea coast. Thereupon, Smidt entered negotiations with the Kingdom of Hanover, culminating in an agreement in 1827 with George IV of Hanover (and Great Britain), allowing Bremen to purchase Hanoverian land. In September 1830, Bremen was able to open its new port, the *Bremer Hafen*. Today, this port is known as Bremerhaven and it remains part of the City of Bremen.⁸⁷ The foundation of Bremerhaven was a clear indication of the significance of overseas trade to Bremen and its mercantile community.⁸⁸

The creation of Bremerhaven was complemented by the construction of a railway line between Hanover and Bremen in 1847, which opened up the hinterland to Bremen's merchants.⁸⁹ With this new railway line it was possible for emigrants from as far as the South West of Germany to easily access Bremen and then to cross the Atlantic.⁹⁰ The railway line was necessary because the Weser

⁸⁶ Wallentin, 'Schiffahrt und Zugfahrt', p. 14

⁸⁷ For more information on the foundation of Bremerhaven, see the chapter on 'Die Gründung Bremerhavens' in Herbert Schwarzwälder, *Geschichte der Freien Hansestadt Bremen, Band 2. Von der Franzosenzeit bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg (1810–1918)* (Bremen, 1995), pp. 121–134

⁸⁸ Even though Elmshäuser argues that the investments into Bremerhaven only resulted in a drastic increase of Bremen's imports and exports in the 1840s, it certainly helped the city to retain its position as an important German seaport. See Elmshäuser, *Geschichte Bremens*, p. 73

⁸⁹ For a more detailed investigation of the relationship between shipping and the construction of a train line, see Wallentin, 'Schiffahrt und Zugfahrt'

⁹⁰ See for example: James Boyd, *An Investigation into the Structural Causes of German-American Mass Migration in the Nineteenth Century* (unpublished PhD, Cardiff, 2013), pp. 122–123

winds its way picturesquely from nowhere to nowhere, while Hamburg, thanks to the Elbe and its tributaries, had a huge catchment area. At first, the majority of Bremen's merchants had refused to financially support the construction of a railway to Bremen. It was only in the 1840s that the railway question gained some importance. Arnold Duckwitz, a merchant and politician from Bremen, and a group of 'second hand merchants', which defines the group of merchants that were trading with the inland, then successfully headed the pressure group for a railway. The railway line between Hanover and Bremen was opened to the public in December 1847. Wallentin demonstrates that the building of the railway did not only improve Bremen's connections to the rest of Germany, but also helped Bremen in becoming Europe's most important cotton and rice trading centre. There was a close connection between Bremen's port and the new central station. Between 1851 and 1865, the railway's share of Bremen's total goods traffic increased from 40 per cent to 80 per cent.⁹¹ Furthermore, the railway offered a major advantage to Bremen in increasing its share in the emigration business. Once companies from Bremen had opened a joint office in Cologne, emigrants were able to book journeys from their hometowns directly to their desired destinations, and even at reduced railways rates.⁹²

It is against this background that we have to understand Bremen's development after the *Reichsgründung*. At that time, according to Oppel, it was only the Hanseatic Cities of Hamburg and Bremen that were involved in overseas trade outside Europe.⁹³ However, the foundation of the German Empire brought new tasks to the City of Bremen.

Emden

Like Hamburg and Bremen, Emden has a long-standing history as a port city. Located in East Frisia, the city's name originates from its location at the mouth of the River Eke (or Aa) into the River Ems. Emden's foundation was most likely part of the establishment of a North-South connection between East Frisia and Westphalia in the ninth century. Thereafter, the city grew along with the coastal

⁹¹ See the chapter on 'Durch die Eisenbahn wurde Bremen Europas führender Reis- und Baumwollhafen' in Wallentin, 'Schiffahrt und Zugfahrt', pp. 94–101

⁹² Engelsing, *Bremen als Auswandererhafen*, p. 143

⁹³ See Oppel, 'Stellung im internationalen Warenhandel', p. 361

and Baltic trade. While this trade centred on the estuaries of the Rhine and the Maas/Meuse, the area between East Frisia and the River Weser also benefited. Eckart Krömer has emphasised the profitability of this trade, arguing that only the great urban centres of Paris, Saint-Omer, Liège, Maastricht and Cologne surpassed the population density in West Frisia by around 900. According to Krömer, it can be assumed that the population density was similarly high in East Frisia.⁹⁴ Significantly, during the tenth and eleventh century, Frisians had already started to do business on cash terms.⁹⁵

Although the territorial sovereignty had lain in the hands of the Bishops of Münster since 1253, local chiefs wielded actual power. After some colourful episodes involving piracy, which provoke the ire of the Hanseatic League (and resulted in Hamburg actually taking over Emden for a while), the town and its port grew steadily in the fifteenth century, with the crucial Staple Right confirmed by Emperor Maximilian I in 1494.

Emden rose to European significance in the sixteenth century, when it exploited exceptionally propitious economic and political circumstances on its doorstep. During the conflicts between France and the Habsburg Emperor Charles V, the French blockaded the Dutch ports. Emden was thus able to establish itself as an alternative to Antwerp and Amsterdam. At the same time, Westphalia's increasing demand for grain imports from the Baltic – due to the shift of iron and linen production to rural areas – gave Emden a second income stream, the more obvious route up the Rhine having been likewise blocked off by the French. Suddenly, opportunity seemed to beckon everywhere for Emden. The town's merchants became involved in the salt trade from Western France and Portugal to the Netherlands and in wine exports from France to the Baltic. Emden even got involved in the overseas trade with Brazil at the end of the century. In most cases, the reason for this trading relationship was political: many Portuguese traders feared the British privateers on their journey back to Lisbon. Still, there are also cases of journeys to Brazil that started from Emden. For example, in 1599, a vessel

⁹⁴ Krömer, *Kleine Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, p. 18

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 18

was for the first time sent directly to Brazil, most likely sailing under Emden's flag.⁹⁶

This dazzling rise – Heinrich Schmidt has called it 'ein glitzernder Zug des Außergewöhnlichen, auf fragile Weise Zeitbedingten' – was in some ways highly contingent.⁹⁷ Protestant refugees fleeing Spanish (Habsburg) persecution in the Netherlands in 1550 and then again in 1567/68, provided Emden with an influx of skilled artisans and merchants. The Company of Merchant Adventurers of London, trading in cloth, also repeatedly moved from their staple port of Antwerp to Emden. The extra consumers in Emden, in turn, led to the establishment of an important herring fishery.

Things began to turn against Emden when the Dutch got the upper hand against the Spanish in Northern parts of the Netherlands, and the refugees began to head home again in large numbers. Emden, though weakened, managed to maintain its role as a central import port for some time.⁹⁸ According to Wolfgang Schöningh, the most devastating blow to Emden's economy was not the remigration of Dutch Protestants but the shifting of the river channel in the sixteenth century.⁹⁹ From this point onwards, the issue of the water level became the bane of Emden shipping.

In 1595, the people of Emden, predominantly members of the (Calvinist) Reformed Church, revolted against their Lutheran overlord, the count of East Friesland. With the help of Dutch troops, Emden became a self-governing city-state, whose independence was guaranteed by the States General of the Netherlands. The city was now increasingly influenced by the Netherlands, which resulted in the virtual termination of trade with Westphalia. Emden thus experienced in the early sixteenth century what Hamburg and Bremen would experience only two centuries later, namely that small city-states can become pawns in the conflict of greater powers. Emden attempted at first to remain neutral in the Dutch War of Independence against Spain, but when in 1602 Dutch soldiers were allowed into the city, Emden's trade with Spain ended abruptly. The city's central position in European trade was lost within a few months and could

⁹⁶ Bernhard Hagedorn, *Ostfrieslands Handel und Schiffahrt vom Ausgang des 16. Jahrhunderts bis zum Westfälischen Frieden (1580-1648)* (Berlin, 1912), pp. 408–409

⁹⁷ Heinrich Schmidt, *Politische Geschichte Ostfrieslands* (Leer, 1975), p. 183

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 200

⁹⁹ Schöningh, *Überblick über die Geschichte der Stadt Emden*, p. 13

not be recovered thereafter. The town, as Schmidt puts it, ‘... sank wirtschaftlich in den Schatten Hollands, Hamburgs und Bremens ab, und ihre Situation sowohl wie ihre Politik bot dem abgewanderten Handel kaum Anreize zur Rückkehr.’¹⁰⁰

That situation more or less prevailed until the nineteenth century, in spite of some efforts to revive trade, notably the *Brandenburgisch-Afrikanische Compagnie* founded in 1682 by the Great Elector, Frederick William of Brandenburg.¹⁰¹ In 1684, the company’s headquarters were moved to Emden but the *Brandenburgisch-Afrikanische Compagnie* did not meet with lasting success. After a re-launch as *Brandenburgisch-Africanische-Americanische Compagnie* in 1692, the company was finally dissolved in 1711.

Brandenburg’s – and thus Prussia’s – interest in Emden stemmed from the fact that historically Prussia’s ports had all been considerably to the north-east of Berlin, whereas prior to eighteenth-century canal building efforts, Brandenburg’s waterways all led west to the North Sea. Brandenburg-Prussia was thus keen to acquire from the Emperor Leopold I the right of succession to the County of East Friesland (where the male lineage was about to become extinct). In 1744, the region duly fell to Prussia, which also signalled the end of Emden’s city-state status. For Emden, the loss of independence seemed tolerable, since in exchange it gained access to a new hinterland. As the kingdom’s only North Sea port, it was pivotal to Prussian trade policy – Frederick the Great did not come all the way to Emden twice for no reason. Emden was transformed into a free port in 1751, thus becoming Germany’s second free port city (in 1664, Danish-ruled Altona had become Germany’s first port city). Furthermore, between 1751 and 1766, chartered companies for the trade with Asia (founded in 1750), Bengal (1753) and with the Levantine (1766) were founded (plans for an East India Chartered Company were not realised). From 1769 until 1781, a new river channel was dug in order to stop silting-up. While the success of the various chartered companies was moderate, overall Emden’s economy experienced a more significant upturn, making Prussian rule a Silver Age to Emden’s Golden Age during the sixteenth century. Here too, as in Bremen and Hamburg, everything changed with the arrival of French troops and the annexation that followed. French rule marked the nadir of Emden’s fortunes.

¹⁰⁰ Schmidt, *Politische Geschichte Ostfrieslands*, p. 261

¹⁰¹ For more information on this topic see van der Heyden, *Rote Adler an Afrikas Küste*

Things did not improve much at the Congress of Vienna, when East Friesland became part of the Kingdom of Hanover. Emden was at the furthest fringes of the expanded Hanoverian territory, and relief came only decades later when the new railway line linking Emden via Papenburg to Lingen due south began to open up new markets. Overall, Hanoverian rule was marked by economic stagnation and a resulting nostalgia for the town's Prussian era. Unsurprisingly, the majority of Emden's citizenry sided with the Prussians during the Austro-Prussian War of 1866 (whereas the Kingdom of Hanover had fought alongside Austria). Although it was hoped that Emden would immediately benefit from the Prussian takeover, it had little effect, at first, on Emden's economy. Things would only change after the creation of the German Empire.

Wilhelmshaven

Wilhelmshaven is a case apart. It completely lacked the centuries-old trading traditions of Hamburg, Bremen and Emden.¹⁰² In fact it lacked history altogether. At the time of the Prussian purchase in 1853, only 123 people in twenty-odd hovels lived on the land upon which Wilhelmshaven would be built.¹⁰³ The Prussian incentive for building a port on the German North Sea coast was certainly dictated by strategic considerations, as it would be Prussia's only direct access to the North Sea – a challenge of Hanoverian supremacy in the area. Oldenburg's decision to sell the land was partly territorial – it had an eye on the county of Kniphausen – and partly economic. The perennially cash-strapped Grand Duchy, entirely lacking in natural resources or major industry, regarded the likely needs of a Prussian port as its best chance of being connected to the growing rail network in Germany.

Negotiations began in August 1852, shortly after Prussia had acquired two vessels from the former *Bundesflotte* – the old Federal Fleet of the German Confederation. The main participants in these negotiations were Samuel Gottlieb Kerst on the Prussian side and Albrecht Johannes Theodor Erdmann on the Oldenburg side. Martin Wein has argued that an essential reason for the formation

¹⁰² Even though de facto Wilhelmshaven did not receive its town charter until 1919, it was commonly referred to as the City of Wilhelmshaven. This thesis will adopt this usage, as referring to it as a rural municipality would not adequately describe its status at the time.

¹⁰³ Wein, *Stadt wider Willen*, p. 34

of the treaty was the 'enge persönliche Verbundenheit der beiden Vertragsführer'.¹⁰⁴ With the help of Ernst Gaebler on the Prussian side, the three negotiators managed to conclude the treaty in less than a year. It was also Gaebler who eventually signed the "Vertrag wegen Übernahme des Schutzes des Oldenburgischen Seehandels und der Oldenburgischen Küsten, sowie der Abtretung zweier Gebietsteile im Jadebusen an die Krone Preußens" on July 20 1853. It goes without saying that an important part of the treaty dealt with the military protection of Oldenburg's merchant fleet. Significantly, article 13 of the treaty stated that Prussia would forego any intentions of constructing a commercial port or even just a trading city. The Grand Duchy of Oldenburg wanted to benefit as much as possible from the upcoming construction of Wilhelmshaven and hence the influx of craftsmen and businessmen was also limited to the actual need of the new city. In a subsequent treaty between Prussia and Oldenburg, signed on February 16 1864, the limitation of Wilhelmshaven's use to a military port was then revoked.¹⁰⁵

On 23 November 1854, more than a year after the Jade treaty was concluded, Prince Adalbert of Prussia, in his capacity of admiral of the Prussian Navy, solemnly received the area of around 400 acres from Oldenburg. The ceremony took place in the middle of nowhere, followed by a meal at a tavern nearby. All in all, the Prince had stayed no more than three hours. It is not for nothing that a well-known local doggerel warns, 'Und wen Gott will bestrafen, den schickt er nach Wilhelmshaven.'¹⁰⁶

Prussia had gained sovereign power over the territory. It now had to buy the land itself from its respective owners. Only once this was successfully completed could the construction work begin. Progress was slow. By 1869, construction was still unfinished and so Prussia decided to stage a symbolic inauguration – after all, the new port had not even received a name as yet. The King, Wilhelm I, chose to name the city after Himself. Local officials then spelt the new name of Wilhelmshaven with a "v", which is the Low German spelling. In Berlin this was changed to Wilhelmshafen, the orthographically correct High

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 48

¹⁰⁵ According to Wein, the restriction on trade had become obsolete by this point, which is why it was revoked. For more information on the details of the treaty between Prussia and Oldenburg signed in 1864: Wein, *Stadt wider Willen*, pp. 85–90

¹⁰⁶ Theo Schuster quoted in Wein, *Stadt wider Willen*, p. 31

German variant. When King was asked by his minister of war, Albrecht von Roon, which of the two spellings he preferred, the King chose the Low German version, adding: 'Ich habe es ja auch gleich so ausgesprochen, lieber Roon.'¹⁰⁷ There is only one thing to add to this brief overview: in 1873, the administration of Wilhelmshaven was transferred from the admiralty to the civil authorities, and thus the Province of Hanover.

It is important to take away from this overview of the four cities that three of their mercantile communities were used to bolster the reputation of their individual port cities. Hamburg acted as the gateway to the large hinterland along the Elbe; Bremen played a similar role further west on the River Weser. Emden's self-image, though the remarkably prosperous years of the sixteenth century had long passed, revolved around the hope that former glories might perhaps be regained if the town was to become the principal port leading to and from the industrial Ruhr area. Thus, the question that has to be asked is how these competing and traditionally self-contained cities got along with each other once they became part of a greater whole, in other words the new German nation state. As will have become apparent, Hamburg and Bremen (and Lübeck further afield) were used to striking their own deals and negotiating their treaties with trading partners up to the foundation of the *Kaiserreich*. Emden hoped for support from the Prussian kingdom, and only Wilhelmshaven was unconditionally Prussian from the outset.

d. Methodology and Aims

This thesis needs to be situated within the current debate between maritime historians and practitioners of "new thalassology", as described by Gelina Harlaftis.¹⁰⁸ Supporters of this new rivalling sub-field of history have criticised maritime history for its narrow specialisation. Harlaftis offers six areas of disagreement between maritime historians, who reject all accusations of narrowness, and the practitioners of the new 'thalassology'. Not all of these are relevant to this study but it is worth looking into some parts of this discussion, for

¹⁰⁷ Wein, *Stadt wider Willen*, p. 96

¹⁰⁸ For the discussion see Harlaftis, 'Maritime History or the History of Thalassa', pp. 213-220

it also opens up the question of how research in maritime history, such as the present one, should be conducted.

This thesis is a study in maritime history. However, since ‘maritime history or the history of *thalassa* means different things to different historians’, a clarification regarding the aims of this research may be helpful at this point.¹⁰⁹ In the present study, the analysis will be centred on the second of Frank Broeze’s six categories of traditional maritime history. This category can be summed up as ‘the use of the sea for transport; the sea as a means of communication, of carrying and cargoes, of the development of ports and port cities for the development of the hinterland’.¹¹⁰ This broad definition leads to the question of what might prompt advocates of “new thalassology” to criticise a study in maritime history as too narrow.

One of the reasons suggested by Harlaftis is the fact that maritime history is still widely associated with social and economic history. According to Harlaftis, this is why the field of maritime history suffered badly during the cultural turn of the 1990s. In contrast to this, “new thalassology” regards itself as a more interdisciplinary and global form of investigating the sea and its economic utilisation. Additionally, critics of maritime history argue that maritime historians have not paid enough attention to what is vital to their field: the sea. Closely linked to this is another point raised by the champions of “new thalassology”: the apparent lack of ‘globalness’ of maritime history. Even though maritime history deals with the sea and the global connections that are formed by using the sea, this does not necessarily mean that all maritime histories are global. Finally, Harlaftis points to the unclear relationship between maritime history and colonial history. Generally speaking, ‘maritime history has profited from historians who consider themselves as working in different historical fields but are involved with their maritime aspects.’¹¹¹

The critique suggested by the supporters of “new thalassology” leads to the question of how present-day research in maritime history should ideally be conducted. When examining the second of Broeze’s categories, it seems vital to include an economic viewpoint, since port cities exist in order to generate profit.

¹⁰⁹ Harlaftis, ‘Maritime History or the History of *Thalassa*’, p. 211

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 212

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 218

Yet, the cities examined in this thesis also operated in a cultural setting. In three of the cities – the exception being Wilhemshaven – trade was a long-established institution, which contributed in large measure to the cities' self-conception. It is thus, for instance, not surprising that Bremen's Chamber of Commerce is situated directly opposite the City Hall and that Hamburg's City Hall abutted on the Chamber of Commerce. Therefore, the methodology adopted in this thesis would be in line with what practitioners of "new thalassology" would expect of a modern maritime historical analysis.

On the other hand, these critical points should not lead one to neglect the port cities, since these are at least equally important as analyses of the sea. It is certainly appropriate to argue that maritime history cannot ignore the sea but at the same time it is impossible to understand the sea without an awareness of the situation on its shores. Similarly, accusing maritime history of not realising its global potential does not mean that maritime historians can neglect examinations of regional developments. Harlaftis is right in reminding us that 'what maritime history has done is to provide a methodology for linking the local, the regional, the national, the international, the global, so giving us the possibility of comparing the small and the unimportant, the big and the important, the everyday life, the material culture and the transactions of the most remote places around the world.'¹¹² The local, the regional and the national are what this thesis sets out to link. Furthermore, since Germany's colonial history is utterly different from any of the colonial histories of the other European powers, a maritime history of Germany's North Sea ports should include at least a glance at colonial history. By doing all this, the present examination will be able to offer a more rounded account.

Today, Germany is one of the leading trading and shipping nations in the world. Yet less than one and a half centuries ago, there was neither a national government nor a common shipping and trade policy in Germany. This thesis therefore seeks to trace the developments, starting with the foundation of a German Empire in 1871, that would produce within a few decades one of the leading players in international trade. In the process the thesis will examine how these cities changed economically and also culturally following German unification.

¹¹² Ibid., p. 220

With this aim in mind, the choice of port cities will be particularly rewarding. Hamburg and Bremen had been “Free and Hanseatic Cities” for centuries. This means that both of them were and, astonishingly, are still today small city-states under their own government. They first had to be incorporated into the newly formed national state. The Frisian city of Emden had existed for centuries but had been in stagnation during the beginning of the nineteenth century. Once the expression of Frisian trading ambitions, it had been left to dilapidate during Hanoverian rule between 1815 and 1866. As a consequence, an emphasis will be put on the integration of each of the cities into the *Kaiserreich*, a process that was not completed until 1888. In the cases of Hamburg and Bremen, the Empire generated opportunities but also barriers to the thitherto politically independent Free and Hanseatic Cities.

While these three port cities are already fundamentally different in their history and structure, Wilhelmshaven constitutes a special case. The city had just been founded by Prussia in the middle of the century. It was built to allow the Kingdom of Prussia access to the North Sea after the idea of a German Navy, discussed in Frankfurt in 1848/49, had failed and before the German Empire was founded. However, research for this thesis in Wilhelmshaven determined that it would not be worthwhile to dedicate a whole chapter to the development of commercial trade in this city. As will be revealed later in this thesis, even though it was used as a commercial oil harbour after the Second World War, its use before then was all but limited to naval use.

Initially, the treaty between Prussia and Oldenburg stated that no trade would be allowed in the new port city. Even though this point was not amended until 1864, the port was from the beginning also built to serve as a commercial port.¹¹³ Gotthilf Hagen, the man who provided the Prussian admiralty with a plan for the new port, counted on the fact that Wilhelmshaven would one day have ‘große kommerzielle Tätigkeit’.¹¹⁴ Yet, Hagen’s foresight did not materialise during the time of the German Empire, as can be gathered from Grundig’s definitive work on Wilhelmshaven. Grundig underlines that Wilhelmshaven was primarily a naval port and that commercial trade ‘hat daneben [...] eine gewisse, obschon recht

¹¹³ Wein, *Stadt wider Willen*, p. 19

¹¹⁴ Edgar Grundig, *Chronik der Stadt Wilhelmshaven, Band II, 1853–1945* (Wilhelmshaven, 1957), p. 6

bescheidene Rolle gespielt.’¹¹⁵ In the early days of Wilhelmshaven, large parts of the incoming merchant ships carried building materials for the building of the port facilities. Gradually, the city also began to import wine, coffee, grain, rice, herring, tropical fruits and tobacco. Only a small number of these incoming vessels carried goods out of Wilhelmshaven: from March 1 1871 to February 28 1872, a total number of 2,302 vessels called at the port of Wilhelmshaven. However, only 42 of these were used to export goods, such as butter, beans and oat, amounting to a total of 92 tons.¹¹⁶ Occasional rises in vessels calling at Wilhelmshaven until 1913 are explained by Grundig with further construction works during those years.¹¹⁷ Oppel offers a table that gives the following numbers for Hamburg, Bremen, Emden and Wilhelmshaven regarding the number of incoming and outgoing vessels and its overall seaward trade (in 1,000 register tons) for 1909:

Figure 1.1: Trade in 1909

| Cities | Number of vessels | 1,000 register tons |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Hamburg | 32,441 | 24,337 |
| Bremen (including Bremerhaven) | 9,612 | 6,750 |
| Emden | 4,308 | 1,783 |
| Wilhelmshaven | 1,099 | 144 |

Source: Oppel, *Die deutschen Seestädte*, p. 75

This table clearly illustrates that Wilhelmshaven’s use as a commercial port was more or less negligible – it is ranked below ports like Emmerich and Stolpемünde regarding register tons. It seems that at the time of the great Anglo-German naval race, there was no space for considering that a naval port might as well be used for anything else than the Navy.

One of the reasons for Wilhelmshaven’s weak position in commercial trade might be derived from the fact that the location of the commercial port area changed several times. Once the new canal connecting Wilhelmshaven with Emden was completed in 1888, this situation improved. Even a railway connection from the commercial port area to Wilhelmshaven’s central station was realised. However, progress in developing the commercial port area happened slowly. In

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 732

¹¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 732–733

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 735

1904, the *Einkaufsverein der Kolonialwarenhändler von Wilhelmshaven und Umgegend* finally succeeded in receiving a plot of land in the commercial port area. Instead of having the goods shipped to Hamburg and Bremen, which led to additional freight costs, and storing them there until storage or buyers were found in Wilhelmshaven, plans were made to build a bonded warehouse in Wilhelmshaven. However, this undertaking proved to be more difficult than first thought. The city council had to negotiate with many different parties. These were the mercantile community of Wilhelmshaven, the customs office, the tax authorities and, last but not least, the minister of trade. Eventually, it was decided that only the city itself could manage the difficult task presented by the mixture between the responsibilities of the public administration of a bonded warehouse and private business interests. All these hurdles were not cleared until October 10 1911 when the *Magistrat* and the *Bürgervorsteher-Kollegium* agreed on the building of the bonded warehouse, which was carried out by a firm from Bremen. Furthermore, a connection to the railway system and the construction of a dockside crane were also concluded.

Even though all this sounds promising at first, the future of commercial trade in Wilhelmshaven remained uncertain. The permission for the construction was bound to strict regulations. Besides the obligation to ensure that the lines of rails were cleaned immediately when they became dirty, the city council also renounced any possible financial claims in case the facilities had to be changed or removed due to naval interests – the Navy had priority in Wilhelmshaven. The completion of the new bonded warehouse was planned for October 1 1912, but this turned out to be too ambitious. In the end, it took until April 1 1913 for the warehouse to go into service. Large parts of the building were rented out and the overall reception was positive, according to Ulrich Räcker-Wellnitz.¹¹⁸ Its function consisted of safely storing domestic duty unpaid goods, such as foodstuffs, alcohol and tobacco products, for the German Navy or non-military customers. Moreover, the warehouse was also used as a transit warehouse; for instance, foreign duty unpaid goods for overseas Navy stations were stored temporarily. However, the fact that the warehouse suffered badly from the reduction of the Navy after the

¹¹⁸ 100 Jahre Lagerhaus: Schwieriger Kurs durch wechselnde Konjunktur, Ulrich Räcker-Wellnitz, 9. März 2013, Heimat am Meer: <http://www.wilhelmshaven.de/portal/info/13-01-HaM-100-Jahre-Lagerhaus.pdf>. Accessed 12/01/2016

First World War also illustrates that Wilhelmshaven's commercial trade lived on the demand created by the Navy.

It is also telling that the plan to found a Chamber of Commerce in Wilhelmshaven, which the *Kaufmännischer Verein* handed in to the regional government representative on June 1 1874, was eventually denied. Instead the Prussian Minister of Trade ordered the city to become part of the regional Chamber of Commerce for East Friesland and Papenburg. It is certainly right to conclude that this was emblematic for the first years of the recently built city 'als man glaubte, mit stürmischem Eifer alles auf einmal erreichen zu können, ohne daß die nötigen Grundlagen vorhanden gewesen wären [...]'.¹¹⁹ In the Chamber of Commerce for East Friesland and Papenburg, Wilhelmshaven was represented by a single member from the date of joining in 1875 until 1897, when this was increased to two representatives. Altogether, these factors did not make it seem plausible to analyse the development of the port and trade in Wilhelmshaven during the German Empire in any further detail.

While Wilhelmshaven was struggling to set in motion any commercial trade, Bremen's plan to found a new port named Bremerhaven further downstream was a huge success. At the time of its construction, it was doubted that Bremerhaven would be profitable to the City of Bremen. However, as it turned out, Burgomaster Johann Smidt, who is recognised as the founding father of Bremerhaven, made the right decision in deciding to build a new port for Bremen. The numbers of incoming and outgoing vessels for Bremen and Bremerhaven prove that by the time the German Empire had been founded, Bremerhaven played a major role in Bremen's overseas trade.

Figure 1.2: Comparison between Bremen and Bremerhaven

| 1873 | Bremen | Bremerhaven |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Incoming vessels (Tonnage in 1000 NRT) ¹²⁰ | 1,096 (43,9) | 1,354 (701,0) |
| Outgoing vessels (Tonnage in 1000 NRT) | 1,082 (42,9) | 1,455 (715,8) |

Source: Andreas Kunz, Lars U. Scholl (eds), *Die deutsche Seeschifffahrt 1821–1989: Ein Datenhandbuch* (Bremen, 2011), pp. 232/238 and 244/250

¹¹⁹ Grundig, *Chronik der Stadt Wilhelmshaven*, Band 2, p. 792

¹²⁰ NRT is used as an abbreviation for net registered tonnage

The table shows that Bremerhaven had a larger share of incoming and outgoing tonnage. At the same time the number of vessels were not too far apart, which allows us to conclude that the average tonnage of vessels coming in and going out of Bremen was significantly lower than in Bremerhaven. Due to the sanding up of the River Weser, large vessels were not able to go all the way to Bremen anymore – the average tonnage lies at around 40 NRT for Bremen. This situation for Bremen certainly improved during the period of the *Kaiserreich* but it leads to an important methodological question for this thesis: namely, how does one deal with the fact that the State of Bremen consists of two ports?

Bremerhaven will not be examined in detail in this thesis, and there is good reason for this. It is true that Bremerhaven, particularly as the homeport of the *Norddeutscher Lloyd*, was of immense importance to the state of Bremen. Nevertheless, the mercantile community which gave Bremen its political and economic direction was still residing in Bremen, not Bremerhaven. While Bremerhaven offered the port and port facilities, Bremen remained the head of the State of Bremen. This means that it cannot be wrong to include Bremerhaven in the statistics for the State of Bremen but, at the same time, disregard Bremerhaven's political voice in both the State of Bremen and the German Empire. Therefore, since this thesis aims to analyse the economic and cultural change that took place during and as a result of the German Empire, the centre of focus has to remain on the City of Bremen. Bremerhaven will be regarded as a part of the State of Bremen, not as a port city in itself. When the State of Bremen instead of the City of Bremen is meant, this will be indicated.

Also connected to the problem of how to deal with Bremerhaven is the case of Cuxhaven. From 1394 to the *Groß-Hamburg-Gesetz* of 1937, Cuxhaven, which is located on the left bank of the mouth of the River Elbe, belonged to the City of Hamburg. Still, unlike in Bremen, the relationship between Hamburg and Cuxhaven was absolutely straightforward at the time of the German Empire: Hamburg was the main port and Cuxhaven was its auxiliary. The following table underlines this argument.

Figure 1.3: Comparison between Hamburg and Cuxhaven

| 1873 | Hamburg | Cuxhaven |
|-------------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Incoming vessels (Tonnage in 1000 NRT) | 4,809 (1842,6) | 1,108 (57,9) |
| Outgoing vessels (Tonnage in 1000 NRT) | 4,956 (1884,1) | 1,051 (54,8) |

Source: Kunz, Scholl, *Die deutsche Seeschifffahrt*, pp. 256/ 262 and 268/ 274

The table above clearly shows the importance of Hamburg over its outpost directly on the North Sea coast. However, the numbers for Cuxhaven are also flattering for the city. Oppel points to the fact that the shipping and trade were negligible. The shipping traffic was primarily carried out under the German flag.¹²¹ While Bremerhaven was intensively used by the *Norddeutscher Lloyd*, Cuxhaven became the calling port for fast liners of the *Hapag*. In 1897, the *Neue Hafen*, which was designed to handle the large passenger vessels of the *Hapag*, was put into operation – before the passengers were brought to the liners on tenders. Furthermore, Hamburg also built a new reception building in Cuxhaven. The building, inaugurated in 1902, was owned by the State of Hamburg but it was leased to the *Hapag* for 25 years. In spite of all this, Cuxhaven did not go beyond being an auxiliary port for the City of Hamburg. Neither did it equal the importance that Bremerhaven had for the State of Bremen when the River Weser was sanding up. Thus, Cuxhaven will not be examined in more detail in this thesis.

After the question of places that will be investigated further in this thesis is answered, the precise dates that are meant when speaking of the period of the *Kaiserreich* also need to be specified. The German Empire obviously existed from January 18 1871, the date it was proclaimed in Versailles, until November 1918. On November 9, Max von Baden announced Wilhelm's abdication and the German Republic was proclaimed; and on November 10, Wilhelm II left Germany for his Dutch exile but he did not abdicate himself as German Emperor and Prussian King until November 28. Carsten Burhop has already pointed out that economic historians tend to stop in 1914 when looking at the economic development of the German Empire.¹²² Burhop, in contrast, continues to also look at the wartime economy in Germany during the First World War, since it offers 'sowohl

¹²¹ Oppel, *Die deutschen Seestädte*, pp. 168–169

¹²² Carsten Burhop, *Wirtschaftsgeschichte des Kaiserreichs 1871-1918* (Göttingen, 2011), p.

Kontinuitäten zur Wirtschaftsgeschichte des Kaiserreichs als auch zur Wirtschaftsgeschichte der Weimarer Republik'.¹²³ For a general overview of economic developments during the period, this is certainly a valid point. However, for a study that examines the developments of trade in three North Sea overseas ports, it would be all but futile.

Certainly, it is of immense importance to show the effects of the First World War on the German shipping and trading industries, as Hartmut Rübner has done. Rübner reveals that the German shipping industry was hardly hit by the outbreak of the World War. Even though the German government issued warnings to the shipping companies prior to the actual beginning of hostilities due to the parlous political situation, not all vessels were able to return to Germany or to call at ports in neutral states. Of the remaining vessels, large numbers were placed at the disposal of the German Navy. In addition to this, the German Empire's access to the sea was almost entirely sealed off by the British blockade. When the Dutch ports were used as substitute ports, the Allies also quickly intervened and took over the whole of the Dutch merchant fleet. Even coastal shipping on the North Sea coast was difficult to maintain in the face of the British blockade. At the same time, this did not mean that transatlantic trade was altogether discontinued. Rübner points to the venture of Hugo Stinnes, who managed to maintain a secret trading relationship with North and South America. It was pretended that the traded commodities were determined for Switzerland.¹²⁴ Trade in the Baltic was less restricted by the war. Although the Allies attempted to put German trade with the Scandinavian countries on hold, the German Empire successfully maintained this significant trading relationship. The shipping companies involved in this trade, which was largely in the hands of the Germans, made enormous profits. According to Rübner, the cargo rate pro tonne between Middle Sweden and the River Elbe rose from 3 to 4 Mark in 1913 to 14 to 15 Mark in 1918, which is an increase of 400–500%.¹²⁵

The famous blockade-runners certainly received more attention than Stinnes' undertakings. Although there were initially plans to build more, only two merchant submarines were realised, the *Deutschland* and the *Bremen*. While the

¹²³ Ibid., p. 13

¹²⁴ Rübner, *Konzentration und Krise der deutschen Schifffahrt*, p. 66

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 67

Bremen went missing on its maiden voyage, a telling fate for Bremen and other cities on the North Sea coast, the *Deutschland* was able to do two journeys to the USA and back.¹²⁶ Still, all this cannot hide the fact that commercial trade to and from the port cities on the North Sea coast during the First World War was virtually non-existent. That is why the period of the First World War will not be included in this thesis.

The aims of this thesis are remarkably straightforward. Among historians, the prevailing opinion is that the *Kaiserreich* was, from an economic point of view, a success story. For example, Miranda Carter argues that ‘the boom that had started in the post-unification years continued and continued; money poured into the country.’¹²⁷ This economic success also had another positive consequence: ‘the fact was Germany was rich, and wealth was a great political emollient.’¹²⁸ This point made by Carter is also supported by economic historians such as Carsten Burhop. He has illustrated that the period from 1871 to 1913 was one of economic success: the national product tripled and the per capita income increased.¹²⁹ Central to this economic growth was Germany’s foreign trade. From 1872 to 1913, imports in current prices rose from 3.5 billion to 10.8 billion Mark. During the same period exports increased from 2.5 billion to 10.1 billion Mark. Apart from 1890 to 1892, the German Empire always had a trading deficit. Yet, at the same time, Germany’s export industry expanded rapidly in international comparison. While it was only ranked fourth in the 1870s behind Great Britain, the USA and France, Germany managed to overtake France in the second half of the 1880s and began to challenge the USA for its second place in the years leading up to the First World War. This trend becomes apparent in the German Empire’s share of the world’s total exports: from an average of 9.5% in the years 1874–78, it rose to an average of 12.2% in 1909–12. For the *Kaiserreich* itself these international developments meant that

¹²⁶ For more information on the two merchant submarines see: Hartmut Schwerdtfeger, Erik Herlyn, *Die Handels-U-Boote “Deutschland” und “Bremen” – Ein vergessenes Kapitel der Seefahrt* (Bremen, 1997). Furthermore, Paul König, captain of the merchant submarine *Deutschland* has published his experiences during the journey to the USA in Paul König, *Die Fahrt der Deutschland* (Berlin, 1916)

¹²⁷ Miranda Carter, *The Three Emperors: Three Cousins, Three Empires and the Road to World War One* (London, 2009), p. 159

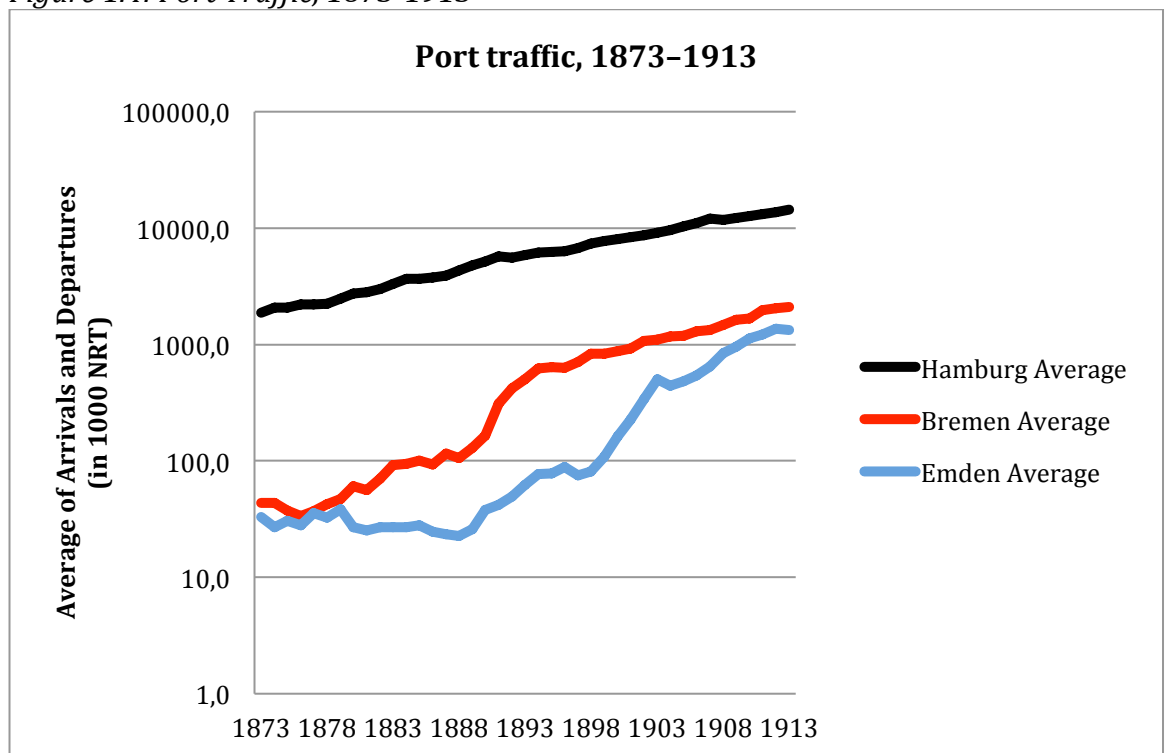
¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 159

¹²⁹ Burhop, *Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, p. 215

the share of exports and of imports as part of the national product also grew. In the case of exports, the numbers rose from 8.5% in 1874–78 to 15.8% in 1909–13. The same trend applies to the share of imports during the same period: it rose from 15.2% to 19.2%.¹³⁰

These numbers show that foreign trade was flourishing during the time of the German Empire. However, they do not tell us the story of the individual developments of port cities during the period. Overall, foreign trade certainly flourished but this does not shed light on the fate of the Empire's individual port cities. As can be gathered from the graph below, all three cities under investigation in this thesis were able to significantly increase their port traffic, i.e. the average of arriving and departing vessels measured in net register tonnage:

Figure 1.4: Port Traffic, 1873-1913



Source: The numbers for this graph are taken from Kunz, Scholl, *Die deutsche Seeschifffahrt*, pp. 154–156/ 160–162, 232–234/ 238–240 and 256–258/ 262–264

Obviously, the period of the German Empire was a period of success for Hamburg, Bremen and Emden. It is not surprising that Hamburg dominated the field and was far ahead of Bremen and Emden. The graph confirms that Hamburg was the German Empire's most significant North Sea port, which is certainly not a

¹³⁰ All numbers are taken from Burhop, *Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, pp. 102f

revelation. If we look at the development of trade in Bremen and Emden, we can see that in both cities it naturally increased more rapidly than in Hamburg. Bremen, in particular, experienced a steady rise, which began slowly and then rapidly increased during the beginning of the 1890s. Even though Bremen's average traffic in 1913 was only slightly higher than Hamburg's traffic of 1875, the progress that had been made since 1873 is remarkable: the average of incoming and outgoing vessels in NRT increased almost fiftyfold. Emden was not quite able to match this success but its average traffic grew from 32,900 NRT to 1,332,400 NRT between 1873 and 1913– at least a fortyfold increase. However, unlike in Bremen, a rapid rise in average traffic did not occur until the beginning of the twentieth century. In contrast to other small port cities in Emden's proximity, such as Leer and Papenburg, Emden experienced a considerable rise in port traffic. In the early years of the German Empire, port traffic in Leer and Papenburg was definitely comparable to that of Emden. Still, neither Leer nor Papenburg were able to grow in importance as much as Emden did throughout the German Empire. In fact, in both ports, port traffic hardly increased between 1873 and 1914. Hence, this study will only look at Emden.

However, what the graph above does not reveal is the relationship of the port cities to the German Empire. Here, it is necessary to look at how Hamburg and Bremen, two traditionally independent port cities, functioned in the conglomerate that was the German Empire. This thesis will look at how these two Hanseatic cities understood themselves but also were understood in the German Empire. In addition to this, it is vital to look at why Emden was suddenly capable of competing with Bremen after centuries of stagnation. Hence, the economic integration of the three port cities into the German Empire will be analysed. Furthermore, based on the assumption that port cities are inclined to foster the emergence of cosmopolitanism, it will be analysed if and how it was possible to culturally integrate Hamburg, Bremen and Emden. The port cities under investigation have been part of a transnational system of trade for centuries. Such a system of trade encourages the participants, i.e. the merchants, to develop an international, if not global perspective and cosmopolitan tastes. Although there are many different forms of expression, what all forms of cosmopolitanism then share 'is a disposition

of openness to the world around them.’¹³¹ The merchants of Hamburg, Bremen and Emden had the opportunity to form trading links outside their surrounding regions and the rest of the German Empire. It was, for example, much easier for a merchant in Hamburg to reach his trading partners around the world rather than other German cities, such as Stuttgart or Munich. It will be examined in this thesis how the merchants of the three port cities reacted to the foundation of the newly founded German nation-state. Thus, this thesis will trace back the economic but also cultural integration of these three port cities into the German Empire. Such a comparative study on a regional basis constitutes a gap in the existing historiography of German overseas trade and shipping. It is about time that this gap is filled.

The core of this study will be divided into three sections, one for each of the port cities. It is the aim to analyse the development of the three port cities, where possible, in a chronological order. Thus, the study will begin by looking at the integration of the three cities into the new national state. Whenever required, connections and similarities between two or even all three cities will be mentioned. Particularly, with regard to the problem of the *Zollanschluss* in Hamburg and Bremen this will be inevitable. In the chapters on Hamburg and Bremen, the emphasis will be placed on the *Zollanschluss* and on German colonialism. By looking at the two from a port city perspective, it will be possible to argue for or against a relationship between the *Zollanschluss* of Hamburg and Bremen and the beginning of German colonialism.

The chapter on Emden will focus particularly on the so-called Fürbringer era. Leo Fürbringer was mayor of Emden from 1875 until 1913. His dedication to the cause of Emden was unquestionably crucial for the development shown in the graph above. Together with Emden’s member of the Prussian *Landtag*, Carl Schweckendieck, Fürbringer invested a lot of effort into the improvement of Emden’s run-down port facilities. However, simply improving the port facilities in Emden in order to increase overall traffic was definitely not sufficient; Emden’s mercantile community also had to play their part. Even when all these components geared into each other, for example with the emigration business, Emden was still dependent on the good will of its bigger neighbours, Hamburg and Bremen.

¹³¹ Skrbis and Woodward, *Cosmopolitanism*, p. 2

Even though one would most likely expect that due to its pivotal role within Germany, Hamburg should be dealt with first, this will not be the case in this dissertation. The reasons for this are straightforward. Firstly, there is no way of arguing against Hamburg having been by far the largest of the port cities. Thus, starting with Hamburg's achievements would cast a negative light over Bremen and Emden. By turning to Hamburg in the final chapter, Bremen and Emden can be analysed and understood in their own right. Secondly, it is hoped that this order will assist in putting Bremen and Emden back on the historical radar, on which Hamburg has loomed too large in the past. For all that, the order of cities analysed in this thesis will not have any consequences for its content. Therefore, it is a purely structural matter.

All in all, this thesis will reveal how port cities with strong international links and a long history of independence, such as Hamburg and Bremen, became integrated, on an economic and cultural basis, into the newly founded German Empire. The waiving of its right to remain outside the German customs union was decisive in this respect, as was the concession of overseas colonies to the mercantile communities of both cities. Emden, on the other hand, did not have to be integrated, as it had been delighted to again become part of Prussia in 1866. However, this cheerful integration into the Prussian state was linked to concrete demands.

e. Sources

This thesis is based on a wide range of archival sources. Since Hamburg and Bremen are still city-states today, most of their official documents are collected in the *Staatsarchiv Hamburg* and the *Staatsarchiv Bremen*. In the State Archives of Hamburg, the great majority of sources were drawn from the *Zoll- und Akzisedeputation* (314-1) and the *Deputation für Handel, Schiffahrt und Gewerbe* (371-8). These two collections offer an important insight into Hamburg's overseas trade including the German colonies. Invaluable sources for an understanding of the mercantile community of both cities can be found in the Chambers of Commerce of both cities. However, in this respect, the situation in Hamburg is less clear. While in Bremen the majority of sources can be viewed in the *Archiv der Handelskammer Bremen*, there are two independent archives in Hamburg's

Chamber of Commerce, the *Hanseatisches Wirtschaftsarchiv* and the *Archiv der Handelskammer Hamburg*. In the *Hanseatisches Wirtschaftsarchiv*, the minutes of the *Commerzdeputation*, the highest body of Hamburg's Chamber of Commerce, and the appendices of these minutes for the period of the *Kaiserreich* were consulted. The appendices of the *Protokolle der Commerzdeputation* contain further information and more detail on the issues that were discussed during the sessions of the *Commerzdeputation*. Naturally, not all volumes of these minutes were examined, as this would have simply exceeded a manageable workload. Instead, certain, decisive years were chosen and examined together with respective appendices.

In the *Archiv der Handelskammer Hamburg*, which is not as easily accessible as the *Hanseatisches Wirtschaftsarchiv*, the focus was laid on sources regarding the processes leading up to Hamburg joining the German customs union and on the Chamber's involvement in the German Empire's acquisition of colonies. Of particular interest in the collection of the *Archiv der Handelskammer Hamburg* was certainly Adolph Woermann's memorandum on the demands of Hanseatic merchants at the West Coast of Africa. By working in both the State Archives and the Archives of the Chamber of Commerce, the aim was to show the close relationship between politics and economics in Hamburg, and of course, in Bremen as well.

In Bremen's city archives, primarily sources from the *Ratsarchiv* and the *Senatsregistratur* were reviewed. The sources of the *Ratsarchiv* include important information on Bremen's decision to become part of the Empire's customs union – these files are grouped in 2-Ss.4. On the other hand, documents which shed light on Bremen's foreign affairs, such as colonial affairs, are found in the *Senatsregistratur* (these documents are collected under 3-R.1.). The *Archiv der Handelskammer Bremen* offers sources with a large variety of focus areas. These are ordered alphabetically with regard to their topic. Since sources from different focus areas have been analysed in order to get a comprehensive impression of the mood in Bremen's Chamber of Commerce, it is not necessary to go into detail about the structure of archiving in these archives.

While it is needless to point out that all of the archives mentioned above incurred losses in material during the Second World War, Emden's city archives have had to deal with a second difficulty. Although the collection of important

documents in Emden dates back to the sixteenth century, the task of archiving did not receive its due attention until the end of the twentieth century. From 1934 to 1945, the *Stadtarchiv Emden* was headed by Dr Louis Hahn, after it had been deserted in 1914. Hahn provided a new order for the archived records. The removal of the archives to several different locations during the Second World War led to large losses of files as well as file indices. After the war, the city archives were managed as part of the *Ostfriesisches Landmuseum*, where the archives were also based. As a result of this, it was not possible to restore the order of the *Stadtarchiv*. This only began with the relocation of the City Archives to its current premises in 1995/96. At present, the inventory of the archives is being re-registered by Dr Rolf Uphoff, head of the *Stadtarchiv*, and his team. This circumstance means that not all files are available for visitors. Archival research in Emden for this thesis was focused on the fourth registry, which covers the period from 1866 to 1918. Although not all files of the fourth registry have been made accessible, large numbers of files could be analysed.

The archival sources were then augmented by an examination of local press reactions to decisive events, such as the *Samoa-Vorlage* or the decision to build the *Dortmund-Ems-Kanal*. For this, three major newspapers, the *Bremer Nachrichten*, the *Courier* and the *Weser-Zeitung*, were investigated in Bremen. All three newspapers are available in Bremen's city archives. In Hamburg, another three newspapers were analysed. These were the *Hamburger Nachrichten*, the *Börsenhalle* and the *Correspondent*, which are collected in the *Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg Carl von Ossietzky*. Emden's most significant local newspapers at the time, the *Ostfriesische Zeitung* and the *Emder Zeitung*, were accessed in Emden's *Stadtarchiv*.

Furthermore, most of the data for the period that will be examined in this study is taken from the impressive collection of data published in *Die deutsche Seeschifffahrt 1821–1989: Ein Datenhandbuch* by the editors Andreas Kunz and Lars U. Scholl.¹³² This enormous effort to offer a comparative overview of the development of trade encompasses 63 port cities – of which not all are still located in present-day Germany.

¹³² Kunz, Scholl, *Die deutsche Seeschifffahrt*

II. Bremen

When the German Empire was founded in 1871, Bremen already had a long-standing history of overseas trade and consequently of overseas networks. The question of how it became part of the newly founded German nation-state will be studied in this chapter. In order to answer this question, it will be important to examine the processes leading up to Bremen's accession to the Empire's customs union. Incorporating Bremen into this new entity was essential for the economic unification of the Empire. However, as the chapter will demonstrate, the accession did not simply lead to economic unification but also to a cultural unification. Once the customs border between Bremen and the Empire was abolished, Bremen's cultural values began to align themselves with the rest of the German Empire. Furthermore, this chapter will also look at an issue, which occurred at roughly the same time as the customs union debate: that of German colonialism, and more precisely, Bremen's involvement in German colonialism. Together, these subjects will tell the story of Bremen's development from an independent to a German port city.

a. Bremen versus Germany

First of all, it is essential to take a look at the role that Bremen assumed in the new German nation-state. Central to this discussion is the issue of competing identities, i.e. a Hanseatic one and pan-German one.¹ There are problems with previous examinations of these competing identities. For example, Maischak took a rather pessimistic view of Bremen's fate as part of the new German nation-state. It is certainly true that Bremen lost most of its former independence with the formation of the Northern German Union after the war of 1866. As Maischak rightly points out, 'trade policy, consular matters, foreign relations, shipping regulations and questions of war and peace were no longer decided in Bremen, but

¹ In his work on *German merchants in the nineteenth-century Atlantic*, Lars Maischak dedicated one chapter on 'Patriarchs into Patriots: Hanseats in a World of Nation-States, 1867–1945'. See Maischak, *German merchants*, pp. 250–262

in Berlin.’² Certainly, there was no disguising Prussian hegemony after 1866. Even Bremen’s Burgomaster, Arnold Duckwitz, was not able to whitewash the negative consequences of this step towards Prussian hegemony. In a private letter to Rudolf Schleiden, the Hanseatic Minister Resident in Washington D.C. and London, Duckwitz admitted that ‘[e]ven if Germany will be strengthened [...] and even if Bremen shares in these advantages, nevertheless many things that were our pride will undoubtedly be buried.’³ The new situation also unquestionably led to changes in one of the prides of Hanseatic identity, namely family businesses. Instead, it was joint-stock companies, such as the *Norddeutscher Lloyd*, that now took the lead. Overall, Maischak comes to the conclusion that ‘the age of nation-states and industrial capitalism had begun’.⁴ Yet, Bremen’s Hanseatic identity did not end with the foundation of the Northern German Union.

Before looking more closely at the conflict between Bremish and German identity, it is necessary to attempt to define what is meant by Bremish identity. Most importantly, certainly not all people in Bremen shared the Bremish identity under examination in this thesis. It has to be emphasised that this thesis analyses the mercantile community instead of the entirety of Bremen’s population. Bremen’s mercantile community was a politically and economically powerful unit. That means it was not part of the broader population but it was an elite group within Bremen’s society. The mercantile community of Bremen consisted of the people who, at least in part, formed the city’s identity by representing its values. So, this section looks at how one of Bremen’s elite groups, the mercantile community, reacted to the foundation of the German nation-state. We cannot of course deduce from this that all of the city’s population felt the same way. Yet, at the same time, these merchants had formed Bremen’s identity as a port city for a long time. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that the merchants’ attitudes played a significant role in defining the city’s political, economic and cultural identities.

The definition of Bremish identity used in this thesis is closely linked to the idea of cosmopolitanism. As mentioned in the introduction, port cities are inclined to foster the emergence of cosmopolitan thought. Bremen’s historic trading networks had always led its mercantile community to look beyond those states

² Ibid., p. 248

³ Ibid., p. 249

⁴ Ibid., p. 249

that later formed the German Empire. As in the case of the *Hanse*, the political dimension of cosmopolitanism ultimately aims at the establishment of supra-national institutions. If trading networks lay at the root of cosmopolitanism thought in Bremen, we also have to suppose that they had an impact on Bremen's identity. Certainly, by 1871, the Hanseatic League was long gone but its heritage was proudly commemorated in Bremen's self-image. In addition to its Hanseatic past, there were also other features imported by Bremen's merchants that added to the community's identity.

It would be all but impossible to accurately determine the characteristics of Bremish identity. In any way, this identity was not the same for all of Bremen's merchants. Still, there are some cornerstones of it, and some common features, that are worth mentioning. Although written in an excessively romantic manner, Hans Konrad Röthel is still able to skilfully convey the essence of the Hanseatic and Bremish identity in his study on the Hanseatic Cities of Hamburg, Lübeck and Bremen. Instead of feeling connected to the people of Munich or Stuttgart, the Hanseatic merchants are more attached to other mercantile communities, such as those of Amsterdam, Scandinavia, London and Valparaiso.⁵ Consequently, Röthel defines the Hanseatic (and therefore also Bremish) identity as follows:

[...] Das Weltoffene und Meerverbundene; der ins Große greifende Wagemut verquickt mit nüchtern-klugem Rechnen; das Aristokratische ihres Bürgertums und die in jahrhundertealter Tradition bewährte republikanische Gesinnung; Stille und Stolz und jene feine Mischung von Urbanität und kühler Zurückhaltung, die ihnen der Ruf der Steifheit eintrugen [...].⁶

Thus, Röthel points to distinctive differences in the characteristics of the Hanseatic people and other Germans. Unlike other Germans, the Hanseatic people have a Republican and cosmopolitan conviction.

Naturally, the trouble with these definitions is that, as Matthias Wegner has pointed out, they tend to perpetuate clichés.⁷ Wegner argues that we should not exaggerate the accuracy of such characterisations. Instead, he points to the fact

⁵ Ibid., pp. 10–11

⁶ Röthel, *Die Hansestädte*, p. 10

⁷ Matthias Wegner, *Hanseaten: Von stolzen Bürgern und schönen Legenden* (Berlin, 1999)

that 'wie stets erweisen sich auch hier alle noch so sensiblen und vorsichtigen Etiketten menschlicher Gemeinschaften eben doch als höchst fragwürdige Klischees.'⁸ Certainly, we have to be careful when attributing any kind of characteristics to a certain group of people, such as the people of Bremen. Even more, searching for overarching characteristics of the Hanseatic people can only lead to categorisation and simplification. Yet, at the same time, we also have to acknowledge that a trading community, such as Bremen's mercantile community, will make contacts to the outside world through the form of international trade. These contacts shape an identity for a community and also for a city. The marks that the experience of the Hanseatic League left were but one factor for the Bremish identity.

Apart from the Hanseatic identity, Lars Maischak has analysed the economic, political and cultural relationship between Bremen and its most important trading partner, the United States. Links like the one between the United States and Bremen markedly shaped the Bremish identity. At the same time, the values and norms of Bremen's mercantile community influenced the identity of the United States. Trading links tend to have a reciprocal effect on its trading partners. In this respect, Maischak points out that 'France, Britain and America made appearances in Bremish thought not just as abstract examples.'⁹ This cosmopolitanism then led to a line of thought that was different to other German states. Furthermore, Maischak is able to demonstrate that this foremost economic relationship also gave Bremen's merchants a significant political voice in countries that were benefitting from Bremen's economic success.¹⁰

Taking all these factors described above together, we get an idea of some of the features of what can be described as a Bremish identity: urbane, cosmopolitan, open, and republican. As we saw earlier, Bremish identity drew parts of its substance from Bremen's historical role as a member of the Hanseatic League. In addition, the mercantile community's contact with its trading partners played a role in the development of Bremish identity at the time of the foundation of the German Empire.

⁸ Ibid., p. 33

⁹ Maischak, *German merchants*, p. 266

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 263

Prior to becoming part of the Northern German Union, Bremen had already made a step towards economic cooperation between the German states. This was the *Deutsche Handelstag* (DHT), a Chamber of Commerce transcending the smaller German states. From the beginning, Bremen's Chamber of Commerce played an important role in the preparations for the DHT as well as its foundation, which took place in Heidelberg between May 13 and May 16 1861. Due to the high level of commitment to the course of the DHT, the *Handelskammer Bremen* was able to set influential impulses.¹¹ One of the first of these impulses was a request to the DHT. The request asked for the coordination of external tariff rates between all German states by concluding collective commercial treaties. In this way, the differential treatment of German states would be abolished. Thus, Bremen's aim of being part of the DHT became clear from the outset: it wanted to promote free trade – an aim that was not entirely unselfish. The request resulted in a resolution from the DHT that called for keeping in mind the unity of all German states pertaining to commercial and shipping treaties.

The participation of Bremen's Chamber of Commerce in the DHT reveals that the city's mercantile community was aware of the necessity to work together with the other German states. Bremen was *de jure* still completely independent. Since it was not part of the German Customs Union it was even *de facto* still not dependent on the other German states. All the same, the initiative of Bremen's Chamber of Commerce clearly shows a trend towards a growing sense of collectiveness among the German states. It was no longer possible to pursue a policy of complete political and economic exclusion. At the same time, Bremen did not succumb to the feeling of German unity altogether. Bremen remained outside the *Deutsche Zollverein* even after the foundation of the German Empire. It is a cultural aspect that sheds the most light on Bremen's role in Germany.

In particular, Bremen's *Kriegerdenkmal*, which was erected in memory of Bremish soldiers during the Franco-Prussian War, delivers insight into Bremen's self-conception in the German Empire. The need to build a memorial to the war opened up the question of what precise function it should have. To this end, a special deputation was appointed with the task of discussing the matter, which presented different options to the *Senat* in 1872. The choices were:

¹¹ See Holger Bischoff, *150 Jahre DIHK: Beiträge der Handelskammer Bremen zur Geschichte des DIHK* (Bremen, 2011)

Es könnte sich darum handeln durch ein Monument die Erhebung und Einigung Deutschlands zu verherrlichen, oder denjenigen Truppentheil, in welchem die größte Zahl der Bremer angehörigen Krieger an der Vertheidigung des Vaterlandes Theil genommen hat, ein Denkmal zu errichten, oder endlich das Denkmal zunächst und vorzugsweise den für das Vaterland gefallenen Söhnen Bremens zu widmen.¹²

In the end, the deputation opted for the last of the three choices, a memorial to the fallen soldiers of Bremen. It was argued that '[e]in Monument, bestimmt, die nationale Erhebung in ihrer ganzen Bedeutung zu verherrlichen würde der Stellung Bremens und bei einer entsprechenden Ausführung den Mitteln Bremens kaum angemessen sein.'¹³

Certainly, the decision to dedicate the memorial to the soldiers of Bremen does not necessarily mean that it was not a symbol for Bremen's patriotism and nationalism. Yet, to the members of the deputation, it was more important to grant a sense of home to the monument than to simply glorify the unification of the German states. In the justification for the deputation's choice, it was added that Bremen's youth should be reminded of the participation of soldiers from their home city in the war that unified Germany. Hence, it was not the unified German nation that was of primary concern to the elites of Bremen when the need to build a memorial was decided. Rather, the soldiers of Bremen and the city's contribution to the Franco-Prussian War were thought to be more significant. After some delay, the *Kriegerdenkmal* was inaugurated on December 5 1875. According to the newspaper *Courier*, it showed a German soldier with a waving flag in his left hand, a drawn sword in his right hand and trophies at his feet. Nevertheless, some sort of national symbol also had to be included: a frieze depicting 'Kaiser Wilhelm, den Kronprinzen des deutschen Reiches u.s.w.'¹⁴ Hence, in Bremen, which was still a republic, it was merely a frieze that was dedicated to the royal family.

Without question, the representation of national feeling and pride as part of the new unified nation was not lacking in Bremen. Yet, even by 1875, the ranking order of belonging to Bremen and the nation was not as clearly settled as, for

¹² StaB 2-M.6.g.2.m., Anlage zur Mittheilung des Senats vom 8. März 1872

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ StaB 2-M.6.g.2.m., *Courier*. Montag, 6. Dezember 1875

example, Malte Ritter likes to believe.¹⁵ Ritter has argued that the people of Bremen were able to build a dual identity, which combined Hanseatic with national pride. In his conclusion, Ritter suggested 'daß der nationale Gedanke seine Durchdringungs- und Lebenskraft erst dadurch ausbildete, daß er alte Identitätsbindungen nicht kappte oder verdrängte, sondern vielmehr auf ihnen aufbaute, in ihnen und durch sie wirkte.'¹⁶ Still, the situation seems to have been more complicated than Ritter is willing to accept when he argues that '[w]enn man in Bremen für den Partikularismus plädierte, dann meinte man damit etwas anderes, als das Streben, die eigenen Interessen gegen die allgemeinen Interessen der übergeordneten staatlichen Gemeinschaft durchzusetzen.'¹⁷ National pride in Bremen did not automatically mean that the German nation became first priority. In a similar vein, Reinhard Alings has put forward his interpretation, which goes as follows: 'Die nationale Sinnstiftung ergab sich auch hier wieder durch das Herausstreichen des lokalen Anteils am Zustandekommen des Sieges im Einigungskrieg – einer deutlich territorialstaatlichen Komponente.'¹⁸ Furthermore, Alings also pointed out that Bremen's memorial served as an example not only with regard to its form and formation but also with respect to its local reference.¹⁹

Hence, the *Kriegerdenkmal* was first and foremost a monument to the fallen soldiers of Bremen. While it is without doubt that patriotic feelings towards Germany played an important role in the building of this monument, it also gave an identity to the fallen soldier. This identity was not rooted in Germany but in Bremen. There remained a difference between fallen soldiers from other parts of Germany and casualties from Bremen. Thus, having died during the war which unified Germany and which heralded the foundation of a German nation-state was not tantamount to being a German soldier. In Bremen, these soldiers were still regarded as people of Bremen, not of the newly founded German nation.

In any case, arguing for a strong local identity in Bremen at the time of the foundation of the *Kaiserreich* does not mean that Bremen's situation is completely atypical to the rest of Germany. In fact, it is extremely difficult to imagine that all

¹⁵ Ritter, *Die Bremer*

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 299

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 299

¹⁸ Reinhard Alings, *Monument und Nation: Das Bild vom Nationalstaat im Medium Denkmal – zum Verhältnis von Nation und Staat im deutschen Kaiserreich, 1871-1918* (Berlin, 1996), p. 99

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 99

people, from one day to the next, became convinced German nationals. One other example that immediately comes to mind when talking about Bremen is the former Kingdom of Hanover, which bordered on the Free and Hanseatic City. The Kingdom of Hanover was annexed by the Prussian Kingdom after the Austro-Prussian War of 1866.²⁰ Yet, the Hanoverians did not simply give in to their fate. The joint opposition of the Centre Party and the Guelfs, exemplified by Ludwig Windthorst, towards the Prussian Kingdom and Bismarck was a thorn in the Reich Chancellor's side. Consequently, Bismarck attempted to transform the Hanoverian population into Prussians from 1866 until the *Reichsgründung*. Any Hanoverian participating in 'Protestkundgebungen [...], setzte sich der Gefahr aus, wegen Beteiligung an "welfischen Agitationen" hart bestraft zu werden.'²¹ In the end, Bismarck's intention of forming Hanoverians into Prussians had the opposite effect, namely parts of the Hanoverian population refused to identify themselves with the Prussian Kingdom. For all that, it is important to note at this point that not all Hanoverians were against the annexation of Prussia, as we shall see in the chapter on Emden. As a result, Heide Barmeyer concludes that the annexation 'traf [...] alle Hannoveraner tief, war unerwünscht auch bei denen unter ihnen, die aus nationalen und wirtschaftlichen Gründen eng mit Preußen zusammengehen wollten, und erschütterte alle Konservativen zutiefst in ihrem Rechtsbewußtsein.'²² Consequently, at the time of the *Reichsgründung*, one was able to again regard oneself in good conscience as 'guter Hannoveraner und guter Deutscher.'²³ Hanoverians did not want to be Prussians, 'da erinnerte man sich schon lieber in historischer Traditionspflege niedersächsischer Anfänge und kultivierte ein auf älteste Stammeszusammenhänge angeblich zurückgehendes Zusammengehörigkeitsbewußtsein [...].'²⁴ The case of the former Kingdom of Hanover shows that there were similar cases to Bremen in the Protestant North of

²⁰ For more information on the annexation of the Kingdom of Hanover and its opposition to Bismarck see for example: Helmut Maatz, *Bismarck und Hannover, 1866–1898* (Hildesheim, 1970); Heide Barmeyer, *Hannovers Eingliederung in den preußischen Staat: Annexion und administrative Integration, 1866–1868* (Hildesheim, 1983). On the topic of identities within the German Empire see also: Michael B. Klein, *Zwischen Reich und Region: Identitätsstrukturen im Deutschen Kaiserreich (1871–1918)* (Stuttgart, 2005)

²¹ Maatz, *Bismarck und Hannover*, p. 38

²² Barmeyer, *Hannovers Eingliederung*, pp. 182–183

²³ Ibid., p. 186

²⁴ Ibid., p. 186

the German Empire, where local identity still played an important role after 1871.²⁵

The example of the *Kriegerdenkmal* thus cannot be used in order to argue that Bremen remained an isle of non-conformist cosmopolitans surrounded by a sea of patriots and nationalists in the German Empire. The people of Bremen were not suddenly willing to give up their local identity once the *Kaiserreich* was founded, as the *Kriegerdenkmal* demonstrates. Consequently, the process in which Bremen's population became German instead of Bremish has to be examined further if we want to find out how and when exactly the German identity replaced the Bremish identity in this port city. Hence, the noticeable feature about the City of Bremen at the time of the foundation of the *Kaiserreich* is that it was neither culturally nor economically fully integrated into the Empire.

b. Bremen, the Empire and the Gründerkrise

The event that certainly dominated the 1870s in the German Empire was the *Gründerkrise*. From the perspective of economic history, it is difficult to precisely pinpoint the directions of trade cycles. It is generally accepted that the period around Germany's unification led to increased economic activity, a period that is known as the *Gründerzeit*. The *Gründerzeit* was then disrupted by a depression, the *Gründerkrise*, beginning with a stock exchange crash in 1873. Aided by the French reparation payments after the war, the German economy received large inputs of capital, which were not exclusively invested reasonably. Due to a new law introduced in 1870, joint stock companies no longer needed a public concession. As a result, no fewer than 928 joint stock companies with a total capital of 2.78 billion Marks were established in 1871, 1872 and 1873.²⁶ Yet, the origin of the *Gründerkrise* is not found in Germany but in the Austro-Hungarian Empire and its financial capital Vienna. In the Austro-Hungarian Empire, there was a founding

²⁵ For more information on Bismarck's domestic policy see also: Christoph Nonn, *Bismarck: Ein Preuße und sein Jahrhundert* (München, 2015), pp. 208–261; Hans-Christof Kraus, *Bismarck: Größe – Grenzen – Leistungen* (2015, Stuttgart), in particular pp. 211–224; Otto Pflanze (ed.), *Innenpolitische Probleme des Bismarck-Reiches* (München, 1983); Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Krisenherde des Kaiserreichs, 1871-1918* (Göttingen, 1979); Jonathan Steinberg, *Bismarck: A Life* (Oxford, 2011) pp. 312–362

²⁶ Rolf Walter, *Wirtschaftsgeschichte: Vom Merkantilismus bis zur Gegenwart* (Köln, 2003), p. 109

boom of new companies similar to the one taking place in the German Empire. In the end, factors such as a generous issuing of concessions and capital coming in from Germany led to a bubble. As soon as the players in Austria's booming financial sector, the *Franko-Ungarische Bank* in Budapest, experienced problems of liquidity, the bubble burst. Vienna was hit by a wave of ceased payments. Inevitably, repercussions of the Austrian stock exchange crash were also felt in the German Empire. In October 1873, the *Vereinsbank Quistorp & Co.* became insolvent, which meant that the crisis had reached Berlin. Compared to 1872, the market values of 444 joint stock companies decreased by 46 per cent in 1873. Furthermore, only 34 of the 107 joint stock banks founded between 1870 and 1872 were left at the end of 1873.²⁷

The fact that there was a financial crisis in 1873 is undeniable. Still, the effect of this crisis on the German economy is not as straightforward as some historians like to think. In this respect, Carsten Burhop has shown that it is difficult to base the strict scheduling of events, such as the *Gründerzeit* and the *Gründerkrise*, on economic data.²⁸ Burhop's argument is based on the idea that, if economic historians stopped using a linear trend model for the national product to illustrate long-term economic growth, a model which indeed reveals a crisis from the 1870s to the mid-1890s, the *Gründerkrise*, would not have existed.²⁹ Thus, the *Gründerkrise* is a model of how economic data is used and processed. Burhop presents the following example: 'Lässt man beispielsweise einen Strukturbruch im langfristigen Wachstumsverlauf zu, dann zeigt sich, dass die deutsche Wirtschaft im Verlauf der 1870er Jahre auf einen höheren Wachstumspfad einschwenkte, was mit der These einer jahrzehntelangen Depression nur schwer in Einklang zu bringen ist.'³⁰ According to Burhop, even a precise dating of the *Gründerkrise* to the year 1873 would be problematic if economic historians did not exclusively rely on the cyclical component of the national product.

Hence, it is time for historians to turn away from looking at the trade cycles of the German Empire from the perspective of strict economic metrics. While general economic development and long-term processes are of course important, short-term crises and phases of increasing and decreasing economic activity are at

²⁷ Ibid., p. 111

²⁸ Burhop, *Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, p. 69

²⁹ Ibid., p. 69

³⁰ Ibid., p. 69

least equally significant. As Nipperdey has rightly pointed out, to contemporaries these short-term up- and downturns were even more important than to historians.³¹ Consequently, by examining the way contemporaries experienced the *Gründerkrise*, historians are able to overcome the narrowness of economic data and the difficulty of determining a precise date to the upper turning point of a trade cycle for all of Germany.

A contemporary view of the booming *Gründerzeit* and the *Gründerkrise* is given by the *Jahresberichte der Handelskammer in Bremen* for the respective years. Usually these reports were issued on a yearly basis. Yet, the reports for the years from 1870 to 1872 and for the year 1873 were published in one volume in 1874. This was justified with the fact that the four years represented a self-contained whole, marked by the war and its consequences, as far as the Chamber of Commerce was concerned.³² As we would expect, the Chamber of Commerce also noticed a continuing economic upturn after the Franco-Prussian War. Unsurprisingly, the Chamber of Commerce regarded the war 'als den Störer jeder Friedensthätigkeit, der plötzlich die Arbeit des Einzelnen und der Gesamtheit in andere Bahnen lenkt, wie die gewohnten, der daher Handel und Gewerbe lähmt und jeglichen materiellen Fortschritt hemmt.'³³ Yet, the war turned out to be beneficial for Bremen's economy. After all, it was the war, 'der den Verkehr mit einem Male wie von einem Alpdruck erlöste, der uns das deutsche Reich gründete und der uns den Goldstrom der Milliarden brachte.'³⁴

It is remarkable that the Chamber of Commerce dates the beginning of the downturn, which followed the *Gründerzeit*, to the end of 1872. Hence, while economic historians are still struggling to specify the beginning of the crisis from an analytical viewpoint, contemporary sources provide a clearer answer. Remarkably, the Chamber of Commerce assumes indeterminable reasons behind the end of the economic upturn, 'da naturgemäß der gewaltigen Anspannung aller Kräfte Abspannung folgen muß'.³⁵ Since Bremen's Chamber of Commerce

³¹ Thomas Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte 1866-1918, Band 1: Arbeitswelt und Bürgergeist* (München, 1998), p. 283

³² AdHB B54 1 (1), *Berichte der Handelskammer in Bremen für die Jahre 1870–1873* erstattet an den Kaufmanns-Konvent (Bremen, 1874)

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 5

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 5

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 5

considered the years leading to the crisis as one whole, it is worth looking at these in more detail.

Indeed, while there was not much the Chamber thought it could do about the emerging crisis, it focused on other projects. Naturally, one of the greatest dangers of the sudden outbreak of war in 1870 for Bremen's trading and shipping industry lay in the capturing of merchant vessels by the French Navy. Additionally, Bremen's Chamber of Commerce apparently also feared a French invasion, which probably brought back memories of the French occupation of Bremen during the Napoleonic Wars for Bremen's elderly.³⁶ In regard of the former danger, Bremen remained a trailblazer in reforming the law of naval warfare. In fact, Bremen had played this role since 1859, when it first campaigned for the principle: 'frei Schiff unter Feindes Flagge'.³⁷ This principle said that even merchant vessels belonging to hostile countries should not be attacked or captured. Although German states were adhering to this principle, the French were not. The Austro-German War of 1866 had already been fought on the basis of this principle, agreed upon by the Reichstag, and Bismarck, the Chancellor of the Confederation, had promised to do his best in order to let it be acknowledged by international law. Towards the end of 1870, Bismarck was willing to abandon the principle, due to the French North Sea blockade, which led to objection on the part of Bremen's Chamber of Commerce.³⁸

Ultimately, Bremen's undertaking to make private property inviolable at sea was not successful, since it was never recognised by the French government, not even during the peace negotiations. Still, German owners of ships and cargo were at least reimbursed. This did not happen directly by French reimbursement payments to the ship and cargo owners, however, but rather as part of the French reparations payments, as regulated in a law regarding *Kriegsentschädigung der Rheder und Ladungseigenthümer*. It was the result of a joint effort by Chambers of Commerce from all over Germany. In the case of Bremen, it led to reimbursements amounting to 782,340 Taler, equivalent to 2,347,020 Marks, to ship and cargo owners.³⁹ Hence, at this point, it of course made more sense for Bremen to raise its claims in a joint effort with other Chambers of Commerce. This indicates that

³⁶ Ibid., p. 6

³⁷ Ibid., pp. 11–12

³⁸ Ibid., p. 12

³⁹ Ibid., p. 14

Bremen realised that it was starting to become more reliant on other parts of the German Empire.

Despite this joint effort for reimbursements, Bremen's Chamber of Commerce persisted as a stronghold for economic liberalism and it used its status to get involved in the economic affairs of its trading partners. While the Chamber of Commerce admitted that it was difficult to campaign for free trade when this was not practised in the rest of Germany, it still did not shrink from issuing a report which included its wishes and demands to North America. Simultaneously, the Chamber was occupied with putting up a fight against a first attempt at a tobacco monopoly put forward by Württemberg, which envisaged a replacement of the existing customs duty and tax on tobacco. Tobacco was of course one of Bremen's most significant trading goods. Fortunately for Bremen, the Federal Assembly rejected this first attempt but the idea would become an important matter in the dispute between Bremen and the German Empire. Similarly, in 1873, another attempt was made to increase the customs duty and taxes on tobacco, this time in order to abolish the duty on salt. The draft law was once again rejected, yet the draft law itself had negative short-term consequences for Bremen's tobacco trade. The Chamber of Commerce argued that it would be strongly desirable 'daß in Zukunft bei Berathung so wichtiger Steuergesetze ein anderes Verfahren beobachtet wird.'⁴⁰ Overall, the *Handelskammer* observed a development towards free trade in the German Empire, but there was always the danger of tariffs, like the one on tobacco. Even debates on the introduction of such laws had an impact on trade in Bremen. Thus, although a free port under the Empire's Constitution, Bremen's economy was definitely also dependent on Berlin and the policies pursued there. This should not be overlooked when discussing Bremen's independence as a free port.

Overall, it seems that the *Gründerkrise* did not strongly affect Bremen immediately, since it was first and foremost a financial crisis and not a commercial crisis. Yet, it certainly also had an impact on Bremen's trade and shipping sector. More precisely, the annual report of the Chamber of Commerce described that, even though commodity trade was not altogether spared, this area of business was

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 47

not deeply affected by the crisis, at least in Germany.⁴¹ As already mentioned, the crisis started at the Vienna Stock Exchange in May 1873 and then made its way to Berlin and New York. As the Chamber of Commerce observed, the downturn had come to an end in late 1873, although a lasting recovery had not occurred.⁴²

Overall, it seems that in 1873 the crisis was not as significant to Bremen's mercantile community as were the changes in law prepared and concluded in Bremen as well as in the rest of the Empire during that year. For instance, the Reichstag prompted a revision of the law from 1870 regarding the foundation of joint stock companies, which is generally regarded as having been facilitated by the following economic crisis.⁴³ When the individual German states were asked to report on their experience with the new law, Bremen's response was neutral. According to the Chamber of Commerce, it was not yet able to determine the effect the new law had on the current crisis. It also added that 'in Bremen seien übrigens keinerlei Erscheinungen zu Tage getreten, welche als Mißbrauch bezeichnet werden könnten.'⁴⁴ More significant to Bremen was the reform of the Empire's tariff law, which came into effect on July 7 1873. This reform was a step towards a freer trading policy in the customs union. As a result of this reform, a large number of goods, such as iron and ironware, became exempt from import duties, and other duties were reduced. Naturally, Bremen's mercantile community welcomed this reform, even though 'es lebhaft bedauert werden muß, daß die Volksvertretung mehr, als die Regierung, durch schutzzöllnerische Interessen beeinflusst wird, und sich durch diese Interessenpolitik zu einer Verschlechterung der Regierungsvorlage hat bestimmen lassen.'⁴⁵ Hence, at this point, Bremen's *Handelskammer* seems to have been satisfied with the Imperial government's stance on trade policy. It was the German Parliament that was linked with protectionism. So, while the Reich Chancellor was viewed favourably, the representative body of the German people was criticised. This proves that the interests of Bremen were still at odds with those of the rest of the German Empire when it came to trade policy.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 33

⁴² Ibid., p. 33

⁴³ Walter, *Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, p. 109

⁴⁴ AdHB B54 1 (1), Berichte der Handelskammer in Bremen für die Jahre 1870–1873 erstattet an den Kaufmanns-Konvent (Bremen, 1874), p. 46

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 47

The following year did not hold any unwelcome surprises for Bremen's mercantile community either. In fact, the Chamber of Commerce was satisfied with the progress that had been made regarding new legislation the previous year. Consequently, 1874 was a relatively quiet year for Bremen. Contently, Bremen's Chamber of Commerce concluded that: 'Die Aufgaben, welche durch den Art. 54 der Reichsverfassung gegeben waren und deren allmähliche Lösung die stetige und zusammenhängende Arbeit der vorhergehenden Jahre gebildet hatten, waren erledigt.'⁴⁶ Article 54 of the German Constitution of 1871 stipulated amongst other things that the German Empire 'hat das Verfahren zur Ermittlung der Ladungsfähigkeit der Seeschiffe zu bestimmen, die Ausstellung der Meßbriefe, sowie der Schiffscertificate zu regeln, und die Bedingungen festzustellen, von welchen die Erlaubniß zur Führung eines Seeschiffes abhängig ist.'⁴⁷ The road to unity of the German merchant marine was also completed with the coming into effect of the new maritime labour act in March 1873. In this regard, it is not unsurprising that Bremen's Chamber of Commerce utilised this situation to instigate further changes to the German Empire's maritime law. These changes consisted of the preparation of the *Gesetz über die Errichtung einer deutschen Seewarte* and the publication of the *Standungsordnung* in 1874.

A look at the trade statistics for 1874 reveals that the six year period spanning from 1869 to 1874 was in fact not unsuccessful for Bremen's port.

Figure 2.1: Bremen's trade, 1869–1874

| | Number of arriving vessels | Number of departing vessels | Total (in register tons) |
|-------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1869 | 3,032 | 3,176 | 1, 325, 064 |
| 1870 | 2,350 | 2,368 | 1, 058, 936 |
| 1871 | 3,237 | 3,241 | 1, 704, 555 |
| 1872 | 3,638 | 3,568 | 1, 667, 552 |
| 1873 | 3,465 | 3,324 | 1, 883, 336 |
| 1874 | 3,407 | 3,243 | 1, 893, 116 |

Source: AdHB B54 1 (1), Jahres-Bericht der Handelskammer in Bremen für 1874 erstattet an den Kaufmanns-Konvent (Bremen, 1875), p. 49

⁴⁶ AdHB B54 1 (1), Jahres-Bericht der Handelskammer in Bremen für 1874 erstattet an den Kaufmanns-Konvent (Bremen, 1875), p. 5

⁴⁷ Internet-Portal "Westfälische Geschichte". Bundes-Gesetzblatt des Deutschen Bundes No. 16. Verfassung des Deutschen Reiches. Artikel 54:

<http://www.lwl.org/westfaelische-geschichte/que/normal/que840.pdf>

Accessed: 26/04/2016

Thus, the table above reveals that even though we would expect a drop in Bremen's trade statistics in view of the *Gründerkrise* which began in 1873, there is a slight – but noticeable – increase in trade, measured in register tons, from 1871 to 1874. It has to be noted at this point that the statistics only show tonnage and not prices. That was precisely the approach adopted by Bremen's mercantile community: in order to avoid the effect of the *Gründerkrise*, prices of Bremen's staple goods were adjusted downwards. This led to positive trade statistics, as shown above. If at all, one could point to the decline in total trade in 1872. Still, the decrease was only around two per cent of the total trade of the previous year and the total number of arriving and departing vessels increased at the same time. To speak of a crisis with respect to tonnage handled in Bremen would surely be exaggerated. During the first years of the *Gründerkrise*, Bremen's mercantile community was able to avoid adverse effects.

Furthermore, it is also worth examining the trading partners of Bremen during the same period. This will give insight into a possible change to trading partners that took place after the foundation of the German Empire. For the six-year-period from 1869 to 1874 we get the following picture:

Figure 2.2: Bremen's trading partners

| | European Ports | | | | Transatlantic Ports | | |
|-------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | Total Vessels | Total Register Tons | Of which German (in Reg. Tons) | Of which British (in Reg. Tons) | Total Vessels | Total Register Tons | Of which USA and Canada (in Reg. Tons) ⁴⁸ |
| 1869 | 5,355 | 588,375 | 144,183 | 267,005 | 873 | 736,689 | 584,427 |
| 1870 | 4,043 | 464,372 | 100,975 | 231,311 | 675 | 594,564 | 495,349 |
| 1871 | 5,491 | 827,594 | 117,477 | 511,138 | 987 | 876,961 | 686,303 |
| 1872 | 6,326 | 816,971 | 152,833 | 482,581 | 880 | 850,581 | 671,311 |
| 1873 | 5,673 | 810,056 | 133,139 | 436,526 | 1,116 | 1 073,280 | 876,812 |
| 1874 | 5,517 | 800,060 | 139,836 | 465,051 | 1,138 | 1 092,516 | 917,903 |

Source: AdHB B54 1 (1), Jahres-Bericht der Handelskammer in Bremen für 1874 erstattet an den Kaufmanns-Konvent (Bremen, 1875), pp. 49–50

⁴⁸ Note that the report for 1873, from which the numbers for 1869 are taken, subdivides into North America instead of the USA and Canada. For some reason, there is a slight but tolerable difference between these two categories of North America and of the USA and Canada regarding tonnage as well as the number of vessels.

If we compare Table 2.1 and Table 2.2 with attention to the increase in trade between 1869 and 1871, we can gather from it that the German unification did not directly affect Bremen's choice of trading partners. From 1869 to 1871, Bremen's overall trade measured in register tons increased by no less than 28.6 per cent. At same time, trade with German ports even went down from 144, 183 register tons to 117, 477 register tons, which constitutes a decline of 18.5 per cent. The market that benefitted most from Bremen's steep increase in trade between 1869 and 1871 was the British market. Here, we can observe almost a doubling of tonnage. Overall, trade with other German ports between 1869 and 1871 played a minor role compared to trade with British and North American ports. In 1869 and 1871, Bremen's share of tonnage to and from German ports was at 10.9 and 6.9 per cent respectively. Tonnage to and from the USA and Canada accounted for 44.1 and 40.2 per cent in 1869 and 1871 respectively. The second most important trading partner were the British Isles with 20.2 and 30.0 per cent in the two year. Until 1874, the share of German ports as part of Bremen's trading pattern did not change significantly and the same is true for Britain and the USA and Canada. Thus, Table 2.1 and Table 2.2 demonstrate two important points. One of these is the fact that Bremen's merchants succeeded in averting any possible impacts of the *Gründerkrise* on Bremen trade statistics by adjusting prices accordingly. Until 1874, the growth of Bremen's incoming and outgoing tonnage was stable. The second point is that the foundation of the German nation did not lead to more trade with the rest of the German Empire. On the contrary, trade with unified Germany actually decreased, and in particular, trade with British ports increased.

However, the fact that the *Gründerkrise* had not affected Bremen's trade statistics by 1874 does not mean that Bremen was untroubled by its consequences. It only took longer for the crisis to have an impact on Bremen's trade. The report for 1875 concludes that '[d]as Bild, welches ein Rückblick auf die wirthschaftlichen und handelspolitischen Aufgaben gewährt, ist im Allgemeinen ein erfreuliches, so wenig ersprießlich freilich das vergangene Jahr für Handel und Verkehr selbst gewesen ist.'⁴⁹ By 1875, the economic crisis had reached Bremen and its mercantile community. By a hair's breadth, Bremen would have ended up even worse than just the consequences of the *Gründerkrise*. One of the city's most

⁴⁹ AdHB B54 1 (1), Jahres-Bericht der Handelskammer in Bremen für 1875 erstattet an den Kaufmanns-Konvent (Bremen, 1876), p. 5

important trading businesses, the migration business, was in danger of being prohibited by the German Empire. Initially, German penal law only forbade persuading Germans to emigrate by advertising false facts. This would be changed in a way that would have included any kind of enticing German nationals to emigrate. Naturally, this met with incomprehension in Bremen. The Chamber of Commerce commented: 'Es leuchtet ein, daß diese Tendenz eine grundfalsche ist, nachdem der Grundsatz der Auswanderungsfreiheit im deutschen Reiche einmal in vollem Maße anerkannt ist.'⁵⁰

The intended change in penal law was introduced due to the belief that the existent penal law had increased emigration.⁵¹ According to Bremen's *Handelskammer*, the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71 led to a short upsurge in emigration. Still, the average emigration per year in the five year period from 1870 to 1874 was in no way higher than in the previous five year period – the annual average of people emigrating from Hamburg and Bremen was at around 80,000.⁵² What is more, the number of emigrants actually fell from 100,040 in 1873 to 30,000 in 1874, the lowest number since 1850. Again, as had been the case with the Empire's new tariff law in 1873, Bremen got off lightly. In the end, a tightening of the German penal law with respect to emigration was not undertaken. However, this example together with the discussion about a new tariff law make absolutely clear that from 1871 onwards, Bremen's mercantile community was to a large degree dependent on decisions made in Berlin.

At the same time, Bremen was not cut off from the global economy. Hence, it is hardly surprising that the *Gründerkrise* eventually had some effect on Bremen's trading sector. From 1874 to 1875, the total tonnage of vessels arriving and departing dropped from 1, 893, 116 to 1, 600, 986 register tons – the lowest number since 1870.⁵³ This constitutes a fall of 15.4 per cent in a single year and the decrease in the total number of vessels was similar. Remarkably, trade with North

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 14

⁵¹ Indeed, in Prussia, emigration was made illegal in 1812 due to the Napoleonic Wars. While the *Deutsche Bundesakte* of 1815 effectively allowed migration between the German states, only the Kingdom of Saxony put this freedom into effect. In the remaining states, emigration remained prohibited. For example, in Prussia, there was a strict prohibition of emigration until 1842. See Wolfgang Riechmann, „Vivat Amerika“ – *Auswanderung aus dem Kreis Minden 1816-1933* (Minden, 1993), pp. 46–50

⁵² AdHB B54 1 (1), Jahres-Bericht der Handelskammer in Bremen für 1875 erstattet an den Kaufmanns-Konvent (Bremen, 1876), p. 14

⁵³ Ibid., pp. 43-44

America was hit the hardest by the coming crisis. In this trade sector, total tonnage decreased from 917, 903 to 692, 322 register tons, which amounted to almost 25 per cent. Trade with the German Empire, on the other hand, remained relatively stable: it only shrank from 139, 836 to 136, 795 register tons. In fact, a more severe slump in Bremen's trade with Germany had taken place from 1872 to 1873 when total tonnage decreased from 152, 833 to 133, 139 register tons.

Consequently, these numbers allow us to evaluate the impact of the *Gründerkrise* in the same way as the mercantile community of Bremen did in the report for 1876. Here, it is described that '[d]ie Krisis, in welche seit 1873 nach und nach fast alle Produktionszweige hineingezogen sind, hat sich auch im verflossenen Jahre dem Handel noch immer fühlbar gemacht.'⁵⁴ Yet, at the same time, the Chamber of Commerce also recognised a slight improvement to the situation – a situation that, as admitted by Bremen's *Handelskammer*, was never as damaging as first predicted. In 1876, it was possible again to price up these goods, and some of them could even be made considerably more expensive. As a result, 'das dem legitimen Waarenverkehr entzogene Capital kehrte mehr und mehr zurück und auch die in Folge der vielen fehlgeschlagenen Hoffnungen verminderte Unternehmungslust scheint wieder aufzuleben.'⁵⁵

For all that, it is highly difficult to assess the concrete impact of the *Gründerkrise* in Bremen. As already examined, during the first five year period after the foundation of the Empire, there was hardly any effect on Bremen's incoming and outgoing tonnage. Table 2.3 below gives an overview of Bremen's trade statistics between 1874 and 1876.

Figure 2.3: Bremen's trade, 1874-1876

| | Number of arriving vessels | Number of departing vessels | Total (in register tons) |
|-------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1874 | 3,407 | 3,243 | 1, 893, 116 |
| 1875 | 2,801 | 2,809 | 1, 600, 986 |
| 1876 | 2,720 | 2,799 | 1, 782, 711 |

Source: AdHB B54 1 (1), Jahres-Bericht der Handelskammer in Bremen für 1876 erstattet an den Kaufmanns-Convent (Bremen, 1877), p. 41

⁵⁴ AdHB B54 1 (1), Jahres-Bericht der Handelskammer in Bremen für 1876 erstattet an den Kaufmanns-Convent (Bremen, 1877),p. 6

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 6

As can be seen from this table, traded tonnage remained relatively stable throughout the years, and following the slump in 1875, it went up again in 1876. In addition, it is noticeable that during the *Gründerkrise*, in 1876, the wealth tax paid to the City of Bremen was remarkably high, as the annual report reveals. While it was estimated that income from wealth tax would lie at around 700, 000 Marks, this number was surpassed by more than 200, 000 Marks. According to the Chamber of Commerce, this amounted to an increase of at least 60% in the total assets of the City of since 1866, the last time the tax was called in.⁵⁶

Overall, the second half of the 1870s still remained impacted by the consequences of the economic crisis. The report for 1878 stated once again '[d]ie wirtschaftliche Krisis der letzten Jahre ist noch immer nicht vorüber.'⁵⁷ However, according to the Chamber, worse than the adverse effect of the crisis on trade and shipping was the fact that it paved the way for protectionist measures. There was an imminent danger:

Die Gefahr, daß die ruhmvollen Traditionen der gemäßigt freihändlerischen preußisch-deutschen Wirtschaftspolitik von den leitenden Männern in der Reichsregierung geringer geschätzt werden sollten, als die schillernden Schutzzollprojecte, nach denen beim Eintritt einiger Verkehrsbeschränkungen die Heilung des kranken Wirtschaftskörpers mit Sicherheit zu erwarten steht, ist denn auch in Wirklichkeit während des verflossenen Jahres erheblich gewachsen, der Kampf zwischen Freihandel und Zollschutz auf der ganzen Linie entbrannt.⁵⁸

From the beginning of this conflict, Bremen campaigned for free trade. Although Bremen's trade recorded a positive year in 1879, the struggle between free traders and protectionists in the German Empire could no longer be prevented.⁵⁹

In fact, by then protectionism had already gained the upper hand with the Customs Act of July 15 1879. Naturally, the Chamber of Commerce was opposed to

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 5

⁵⁷ AdHB B54 1 (2), Bericht über die Thätigkeit der Handelskammer in Bremen im Jahre 1878 erstattet an den Kaufmanns-Convent (Bremen, 1879), p. 5

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 5

⁵⁹ AdHB B54 1 (2), Bericht über die Thätigkeit der Handelskammer in Bremen im Jahre 1879 erstattet an den Kaufmanns-Convent (Bremen, 1879), p. 5

these protectionist measures. In December 1878, Reich Chancellor Bismarck announced his protectionist programme. Following this, a committee of the *Bundesrat* was formed in order to discuss Bismarck's plans. In this committee the Hanseatic Cities had one vote, while Bismarck and Prussia had three each out of a total of 15 (Württemberg, Saxony, Baden, Hessen, Mecklenburg and Saxony-Weimar were the other members of the committee). Theodor Barth, who will be looked at in more detail below, represented the Hanseatic vote. As a consequence of having just one vote it was realised in Bremen that these circumstances together with that the character of the committee 'sich sehr bald in den wirklichen Charakter eines nach politischen Gesichtspunkten abstimmenden Collegiums verwandelte, so war die Opposition der freihändlerischen Minorität von vornherein wenig aussichtsvoll.'⁶⁰

Against all expectations, Bismarck's protectionist programme was approved of in the committee in just three months. Still, Bremen did not lose hope, although this proved to be extremely difficult. Despite the fact that the final report of the committee still mentioned the free traders' objections to protectionism, these were simply omitted in the report to the Reichstag.⁶¹ Nonetheless, Bremen continued to lobby for free trade. In February, Bremer's *Handelskammer* took part in a conference for Chambers of Commerce with a free trade disposition that took place in Berlin and another one organised by the *Deutscher Nautischer Verein*. The impact of these measures on government policy was negligible but it is significant that Bremen did not simply accept its fate. Even a city-state as small as Bremen felt that it could have an effect on state affairs in Berlin.

To conclude, in this part, it was examined how Bremen was integrated into the German Empire during the 1870s. Politically, Bremen was far from independent from decisions made in Berlin. Yet, economically, Bremen's mercantile community was capable in fending off the *Gründerkrise* from having an impact on Bremen's trade. In fact, for the merchants, the period between 1866 and 1876 was mainly successful despite the *Gründerkrise*. What must have been concerning for the mercantile community, however, was the fact that Bremen was more and more dependent on goodwill towards the Hanseatic City from Berlin. This is exemplified best by the continuous struggle to fight off any protectionist

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 6

⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 67

agitations, such as the tobacco monopoly or the Customs Law, and to further promote free trade. While the prevention of the Customs Law of 1879 was eventually unsuccessful, there were still more areas of conflict between Bremen and the German Empire.

c. The Case of Theodor Barth

The case of Theodor Barth is particularly intriguing, since it demonstrates the fragility of Bremen's relationship with the Reich Chancellor and the German Empire. Therefore, it will be necessary to take a look at Theodor Barth's life and work in Bremen. In an article on Barth's life and his dedication to liberalism, Hans Kloft described him as follows: 'Wirtschaftsmann, politischer Abgeordneter und vehemente Gegner Bismarcks, Herausgeber und Publizist eines herausragenden liberal Organs in der Wilhelminischen Zeit – es war eine Kombination, wie sie für das Kaiserreich in dem, was sie leisten, und auch: was sie nicht leisten konnte typisch, vielleicht nur in ihrer Bilanz außergewöhnlich war.'⁶²

Theodor Barth was born on July 16 1849 in Duderstadt near Göttingen. Four years later, he and his family moved to Bremerhaven, where his father opened a pharmacy. He went on to study law and economics in Bremen, Heidelberg and Leipzig. Barth did not come from one of the long-established Bremish families. He returned to Bremen as a lawyer and then went to Bremerhaven as an assessor before he became the Chamber of Commerce's in-house lawyer, a so-called *Syndikus*, in 1877, a post that he held until 1883. Additionally, Barth also became a member of the Reichstag for the *Liberale Vereinigung*, a liberal party, in 1881. Later on, he joined the so-called *Freisinnige Vereinigung*, before founding the *Demokratische Vereinigung* together with Rudolf Breitscheid and Hellmut von Gerlach in 1908, just one year before his death.

Kloft has aptly pointed out that the position of *Syndikus* 'in seinen Zuständigkeiten leicht, in seinem realen Einfluss schwer zu bestimmen [ist]'.⁶³ Barth's assigned areas of responsibility – trade and shipping, emigration, budget affairs, coinage and banking – set the stage for great conflict. He certainly made the

⁶² Hans Kloft, 'Politik und Journalismus im Wilhelminischen Reich. Theodor Barth (1849–1909): Politiker, Publizist und Syndikus der Bremer Handelskammer', in: *Bremisches Jahrbuch* 88 (2009), pp. 172–193, here p. 175

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 174

most of this potential conflict. Not without reason did the *Vossische Zeitung* write about Theodor Barth: 'Es war eine wunderliche Erscheinung wie der jugendliche Vertreter der Bremer Handelskammer im Jahre des zollpolitischen Umschwungs 1879 als Vertreter der Hansestädte in der bundesrätlichen Tarifkommission den Plänen des Fürsten Bismarck mit Mut und Nachdruck entgegentrat.'⁶⁴

1879 marked the end of free trade in the German Empire. The changeover from a national liberal to a conservative Reichstag went hand in hand with the transition from free trade to protectionism in the Empire's customs policy. While the tariff law of 1879 was mainly concerned with textiles, produce of the heavy industry and agricultural products, there had also been a persistent debate about a possible tariff on tobacco. This debate started in 1873 and experienced its height around 1878. This of course called Bremen into action, as tobacco was still a profitable and thus significant commodity for the mercantile community. After all, the value of imported and exported tobacco amounted to 140 million Marks, to which 9 million Marks in cigars could be added.⁶⁵ Plans were made to introduce a tax based on the weight of tobacco that was grown in Germany and a triplication of the tobacco tariff.⁶⁶ However, the most controversial point was a projected state monopoly on tobacco. Regarding the value of its tobacco trade, Bremen's reaction was entirely unsurprising. While Bremen's Chamber of Commerce realised that an increase of the tax on tobacco was inevitable, it was decisively against the introduction of a monopoly.⁶⁷ For this, the Chamber of Commerce succeeded in convincing the Senate to take up this position in the Federal Assembly.

In fact, Bremen did not stand alone in its rejection of protectionism and the planned tobacco monopoly. At the delegates' conference of German maritime trading towns in May 1878, the delegates objected to protectionism, the tobacco monopoly and also the idea of a national economic senate, the *Volkswirtschaftlicher Senat*. Naturally, this idea led to criticism from the opposite side. The wording of

⁶⁴ *Vossische Zeitung*, 3. Juni 1909, Nr. 254,1 cited in Kloft, 'Politik und Journalismus', p. 174

⁶⁵ Schwarzwälder, *Geschichte der freien Hansestadt Bremen*, Bd. 2., p. 332

⁶⁶ The cultivation of tobacco in Germany goes back around 400 years. Today, the majority of tobacco is cultivated in Baden-Württemberg and Rhineland-Palatinate. At the time of the foundation of the German Empire, tobacco was, for example, still cultivated in the area around Göttingen. However, 'der hiesige Tabakanbau hatte keine Zukunft.' See Rudolf von Thadden, Günter J. Trittel (eds), *Göttingen – Geschichte einer Universitätsstadt, Band 3: Von der preußischen Mittelstadt zur südniedersächsischen Großstadt, 1866-1989* (Göttingen, 1999), p. 7

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 332

this criticism was extremely harsh, as can be gathered from an article from the *Deutsche volkswirtschaftliche Correspondenz*. In this article the author raged as follows: 'Was die Vertreter der Seehandelsstädte vorgebracht haben, übersteigt an Rücksichtslosigkeit und krasser Sondersucht Alles, was in den letzten Jahren bei ähnlichen Vereinsversammlungen geleistet worden ist.'⁶⁸ But as if that was not enough, the author went on to stylise the debate into a question of being for or against the whole German nation. He argues: 'Durch ihre Debatten zieht sich wie ein rother Faden der cynische Gedanke hindurch: wir wollen uns auf Kosten des gesammten Hinterlandes mästen, gleichviel ob unsere selbstsüchtige Politik zum Ruin des Vaterlandes führe oder nicht.'⁶⁹ This is the situation that Theodor Barth found himself in when he published his book on *Die handelspolitische Stellung der Deutschen Seestädte* in 1880. The book was based on a paper that Barth had given at the *Volkswirtschaftliche Gesellschaft* in Berlin in January 1880. It is worth looking at this publication of Barth in more detail, as it outlines his political outlook and conviction, which in the end put Barth at war with the Reich Chancellor.

It is not surprising that Barth's publication is aimed at defending the disposition of trading cities towards free trade in the dispute between supporters of free trade and protectionism. As seen above, it was not untypical in this dispute to equate support for free trade with egoism and unpatriotic attitudes on the part of the trading cities. This of course gave the critics of free trade an edge over mercantile communities insisting upon free trade. In such an emotionally charged atmosphere it was not easy to counter the arguments put forward by supporters of protectionism. Theodor Barth nevertheless made an attempt to highlight that free trade did not stand in opposition to the advancement of the German nation. First of all, Barth argued that mercantile communities did not principally oppose protectionism due to 'nackte[m] Eigennutz'.⁷⁰ Instead, if Bremen had been selfish, that would not mean that it had to oppose protectionism. The share of industrial products as part of total trade was not significantly high, so even a complete loss of this trade would have been bearable. Furthermore, customs duties would be passed on entirely to the consumer; in Bremen, these consisted largely of people

⁶⁸ Theodor Barth, *Die handelspolitische Stellung der Deutschen Seestädte* (Berlin, 1880), p. 6

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 6

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 7

who bought staple goods, like tobacco and petroleum, and foodstuffs. Since demand for such goods tended to be inelastic, Bremen would remain more or less unaffected by protectionist measures. Due to a tariff on thread, Bremen's trade in raw materials, such as cotton and wool, would possibly even have increased. This argument was supposed to underline that Bremen acted on economic rationale rather than idealism when defending free trade.

With Barth mentioning in passing that '[d]ie Neigung zu derartigen künstlichen Regulirungen des Seehandels ließ sich bei dem Alles vermögenden Reichskanzler präsumiren', we also get an idea of his attitude towards Bismarck and his political views. In this quote, Barth was referring to Bismarck's attempt to convince the merchants of a *Surtaxe d'Entrepot*, an additional customs tariff on goods from European ports outside Germany. This tariff was aimed at discriminating against other European ports.⁷¹ Bismarck's attempt backfired and was rejected by Hamburg's merchants, to which Bismarck had made this offer hoping that it would make them shift from their free trade stance. Hamburg's mercantile community rejected Bismarck's offer on the grounds that free trade would find the cheapest option available even without any public aid.⁷²

Barth asked: why was it not just idealism then that made the trading cities on the coasts reject protectionism? In response to this question, Barth himself revealed a highly idealised view on mercantile communities in Bremen and other German cities. He argued that:

Interessen sind gewiß maßgebend für die handelspolitische Stellungnahme der deutschen Seestädte, aber die dauernden Interessen, nicht die des Augenblicks. Die Seestädte operiren, wie Capitalisten, die auf kleine augenblickliche Annehmlichkeiten verzichten, indem sie ihr Geld in ein Unternehmen stecken, um dauernde Vortheile dagegen einzutauschen. Sie haben den Egoismus von Leuten, die der Henne, welche ihnen goldene Eier legt, den Hals nicht umgedreht wissen wollen, so viel man ihnen auch vordemonstrirt, daß die Henne nothwendigerweise den ganzen Leib voll Gold haben muss.⁷³

⁷¹ Julia Laura Rischbieter, *Mikro-Ökonomie der Globalisierung: Kaffee, Kaufleute und Konsumenten im Kaiserreich 1870-1914* (Köln, 2011), p. 82

⁷² Ibid., pp. 82–83

⁷³ Barth, *Die handelspolitische Stellung*, p. 9

The business acumen of merchants leads to an understanding that their prosperity is linked to that of the German nation. Thus, to Barth, it was clear that defending free trade was equivalent to doing his best for the German nation. After all, not without reason did merchants fear protectionism, '[s]ie fürchten das Schutzzollsystem wie eine falsche Heilmethode, den Körper momentan belebt, um ihn schließlich noch kränker zu machen, als er vorher war.'⁷⁴

After clarifying that merchants acted in accordance with the interests of the German nation, Barth turned to the reasons for the emphasis that was put on the idea of free trade. According to Barth, this significance was based on three factors: geographical, historical and political. Geographical factors encouraged German port cities to strive for free trade, since they also acted as gateways to countries beyond Germany, such as Russia, Switzerland and parts of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. After all, the industrial heartland of the Habsburg Monarchy, Bohemia, was situated on the River Elbe and not on the Danube. Similarly, the industrial areas of Austrian Silesia and Northern Moravia were not connected to the Danube Basin but to the German Empire via the Oder and Vistula. Finally, due to the railway, the German North Sea ports were no less accessible for the textile industries of the western Crown Land of Vorarlberg than were Trieste or Flume. Furthermore, the significance of free trade for port cities on the Baltic Sea coast was based on the fact that they focused on transit trade in wood and grain. Therefore, these cities were hit hard by the protectionist measures, as these shrunk their hinterlands.

Interestingly, the historical and political factors are rather problematic when it comes to Hamburg and Bremen, as they had not always been advocates of free trade in the nineteenth century. During the 1830s and 1840s, both port cities stood up for protectionism in the form of favouring the German trade over the flag of other nations. Barth explained this with the fact that different Navigation Acts in other countries discriminated against the German flag.⁷⁵ Naturally, in the end, '[d]iese schutzzöllnerischen Velleitäten hatten jedoch in den Hansestädten keinen langen Bestand.'⁷⁶ By the late 1840s, the tide had turned. According to Barth, proponents of free trade were now able to gain the upper hand in the Hanseatic

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 9

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 13

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 17

Cities of Hamburg and Bremen. Barth argued that this circumstance was proven by the publication of an official memorandum by Hamburg's Senate in 1847 titled *Das Differential-Zollsystem*. In this, it is concluded that 'niemals aber wird der Vortheil der einzelnen Stadt, des einzelnen Landes die Annahme eines Systems rechtfertigen können, welches der Nation mehr Schaden als Nutzen bringt.'⁷⁷ It was along this line that the German port cities argued in a petition to the Reichstag in May 1879: 'Die deutschen Seestädte haben sich in allen Perioden der deutschen Geschichte als die treuesten Anhänger von Kaiser und Reich bewährt; und auch wir werden, wenn die Nothwendigkeit von den gesetzgebenden Factoren anerkannt ist, uns selbst schweren Opfern willig unterwerfen.'⁷⁸

Inevitably, Barth depicts those port cities that were opponents of protectionism as loyal patriots. Anything else would have been unthinkable in a debate as charged as this one. Still, it also becomes clear that Barth was not simply looking to get the best deal for Bremen and other port cities. On the contrary, it was his liberal viewpoint that made him argue for free trade. Apart from protectionism, Barth was also opposed to the *Samoa-Vorlage*. This will be looked at in detail later on and, therefore, it suffices to emphasise that the *Samoa-Vorlage* was intended by Bismarck to financially support a private overseas venture from Hamburg. Barth's principle remained: 'Denn mit dem einen neuen Privilegium schafft man den Appetit nach Privilegien bei hundert anderen Gewerben, und gerade diese Sucht nach Begünstigungen auf Kosten Dritter, das ist das Entnervende, was die Freihändler in erster Linie bekämpfen müssen.'⁷⁹ It was wholly unacceptable for a merchant to accept gifts, as this would run contrary to the merchants' economic pride. Even worse, protecting one branch of domestic industry was accepted just as reluctantly as subsidising one particular business. All of these actions were seen to lead to 'eine[m] Krach, bei dem auch die gesunden schlecht wegkommen, und dann ist die allgemeine Misère da.'⁸⁰ Furthermore, Barth already warned that concessions like the *Samoa-Vorlage* and possibly others could be used as a protectionist lure.

By analysing Barth's publication, *Die handelspolitische Stellung der deutschen Seestädte*, it becomes obvious that there was potential for conflict

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 19

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 19

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 22

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 23

between Barth's liberal point of view and the direction of Bismarck's politics towards protectionism. As we shall see later on, Barth was at least representing large parts of Bremen's mercantile community, who sympathised with his liberal ideas. In 1881, Theodor Barth became a member of the Reichstag for the *Liberale Vereinigung*, which had split from the *Nationalliberale Partei*. Thus, Barth was able to defend his point of view even more publicly. However, it is also important to remark that Barth was not a representative for Bremen but for the constituency of Gotha.

In the same year, the mandate of Alexander Georg Mosle, a member of the *Nationalliberale Partei* to the Reichstag, had come to an end. Mosle had sided with Bismarck during the debate on protectionism. As a result of the uproar this caused in Bremen, he was urged to resign his seat immediately in 1880. Even though Mosle left the party, he refused to resign and remained in office until 1881.⁸¹ So, while Mosle, who was supporting Bismarck's change of policy, left the Reichstag, Barth, an opponent of Bismarck's protectionism, joined the Reichstag.

With Barth acceding to his new role as a member of the Reichstag, it is worth looking at the letters he sent back to the Chamber of Commerce, for which he remained active as a *Syndikus*. The few letters that can be found in the Chamber of Commerce's archives date from January 1882 to February 1883. Most of the contents of these letters are only understandable in context with the prevalent debates in the Reichstag. However, in their entirety they give a good impression of Barth's political agenda. For example, in his letter from January 7 1882, Barth made no secret of his opposition to Ludwig Windthorst, a member of the *Zentrum*. He complained that Windthorst 'erweist sich mehr und mehr als Figaro, der dem Bismarck gern für gute Bezahlung jeden Gefallen tut.'⁸² Overall, Barth saw himself in a difficult position, as both, the government and the Centre Party, were opposed to him. As a result of this, Barth expected a 'Hagel von Schmutz und Steinen in der nächsten Zukunft [...].'⁸³ However, he was already prepared for this: 'Ich werde es kaltblütig hinnehmen.'⁸⁴

Barth never failed to emphasise his liberal conviction. He was completely at odds with the *Nationalliberale Partei*, whose members, he suspected, 'möchten

⁸¹ Schwarzwälder, *Geschichte der freien Hansestadt Bremen*, Bd. 2., p. 333

⁸² AdHB, D13, Barth, Berlin, den 7. Juni. 1882, Sehr geehrter Herr Praeses.

⁸³ Ibid..

⁸⁴ Ibid..

Bismarck immer noch gern wieder aus der Hand fressen.’⁸⁵ In Barth’s eyes, this cooperation with Bismarck was enough to deprive the party of its right to exist. However, it was not just the *Nationalliberale Partei* that incurred Barth’s wrath. On the subject of a debate in the Reichstag, he depicted the Reich Chancellor’s course of action regarding an intervention, as follows: ‘[I]ch vermuthe, er wird es thun, wenn er Centrum oder Nat.-Lib. kirre gemacht hat; andererseits wird er wol vorziehen, krank zu werden.’⁸⁶ This frustration with Bismarck also became transparent in another letter from January 1883. In a debate about a ban on imports, Bismarck took a hand. Barth described the situation: ‘Die Commissare des Bundesraths spielten die übliche klägliche Rolle und Bismarck that durch Hereinziehen eines ganz heterogenen Gegenstandes das Seinige, um eine ordnungsmäßige sachliche Debate zu hintertreiben.’⁸⁷

Thus, Barth was definitely not prepared to restrain himself when it came to a situation that did not conform to his liberal outlook. This also became obvious in his depiction of another conflict, which he had with Wilhelm Freiherr von Minnigerode, a member of the *Konservative Partei*. In a Reichstag session on customs matters on February 7 1883, Barth took the opportunity ‘das Huhn, welches ich noch mit Minnigerode zu pflücken hatte, gehörig [zu rupfen]. Er hat jedenfalls nicht den Längeren bei dieser Auseinandersetzung gezogen.’⁸⁸ This proves that Barth was certainly not afraid of openly exchanging differences with other members of the Reichstag.⁸⁹

However, in the end, Barth’s willingness to take action against Bismarck’s politics eventually led to his downfall, at least in Bremen. Barth’s political agenda displeased the Reich Chancellor to such an extent that he instructed the Prussian Minister Resident, Friedrich Krüger, to see to Barth’s dismissal as *Syndikus* in Bremen’s Chamber of Commerce. As a result, Barth himself resigned from his post in May 1883.⁹⁰ After this, Barth moved to Berlin to concentrate on his role as a member of the Reichstag and to actively pursue his political goals. Together with Ludwig Bamberger, Barth founded the liberal weekly journal *Die Nation*, published

⁸⁵ Ibid..

⁸⁶ Ibid..

⁸⁷ AdHB, D13, Barth, Berlin, d. 11. I 83. Verehrter Herr Prases!

⁸⁸ AdHB, D13, Barth, Berlin, d. 8. Febr. 83, Verehrter Herr Präses!

⁸⁹ In fact, as will be shown below, Bismarck also took offence at Barth’s expressions of opinion and his adamant defence of liberalism and especially free trade.

⁹⁰ Kloft, ‘Politik und Journalismus’, p. 175

between 1883 and 1907.⁹¹ One year before his death, Barth was also involved in the foundation of a political party, the *Demokratische Vereinigung*.

In summary, one could argue that Barth's role as a member of the Reichstag was independent of his position in Bremen's Chamber of Commerce. Yet, Bismarck obviously still perceived Barth as a representative of the general mood in Bremen. In accordance with Bremen's politics, Barth stood for a left of centre worldview. Particularly after Bismarck's turn to protectionism, Barth's views were in stark opposition to those of the Reich Chancellor. When Bremen was forced to give in to the Chancellor's demands, Barth's position as *Syndikus* of the Chamber of Commerce, which still associated him with Bremen, became unacceptable. In line with this, Barth's resignation was certainly a step towards integration into the German Empire.

d. Economic Integration – The Zollanschluss

Recently, the proceedings of a conference on *Ökonomie und Nation. Der Deutsche Zollverein als Faktor der ‚kulturellen Nationsbildung‘ im 19. Jahrhundert* were published.⁹² In this miscellany, Hans-Werner Hahn and Marko Kreutzmann point to the fact that the history of the *Zollverein* has attracted relatively little attention by historians, especially in recent years.⁹³ This is why there are only two comprehensive analyses of the German customs union, one of which dates back to 1939.⁹⁴ The authors claim that the *Zollverein* did not only play 'für die wirtschaftliche Entwicklung, sondern etwa auch für die Geschichte des Föderalismus, des Parlamentarismus und nicht zuletzt auch des Nationalismus und der Nationsbildung eine zentrale, bislang jedoch selten systematisch untersuchte Rolle.'⁹⁵ For this reason, it is essential to focus on the history of the German customs union.

⁹¹ For a detailed evaluation of the journal, see also Kloft, 'Politik und Journalismus', pp. 178–190

⁹² For the publication see: Hans-Werner Hahn and Marko Kreutzmann (eds), *Der Deutsche Zollverein: Ökonomie und Nation im 19. Jahrhundert* (Köln, 2012)

⁹³ Hans-Werner Hahn, Marko Kreutzmann, 'Der Deutsche Zollverein in der Geschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts: Neue Perspektiven der Forschung', in: Hahn, Kreutzmann, *Der Deutsche Zollverein*, pp. 1–29

⁹⁴ See William O. Henderson, *The Zollverein* (London, 1939); Hans-Werner Hahn, *Geschichte des Deutschen Zollvereins* (Göttingen, 1984)

⁹⁵ Hahn, Kreutzmann, 'Der Deutsche Zollverein', p. 3

The ideas of the *Neue Kulturgeschichte* and its influences on the concept of nation building are regarded as central by the authors. This new approach is identified as emphasising the 'Charakter der Nation als ein in den Wahrnehmungen und Vorstellungen der Menschen entstehendes Konstrukt'.⁹⁶ Instead of accepting the notion of "nation" simply as a natural fact, we should accept that the *Zollverein* was crucial in constructing one version of nation. If we do this, then the question follows of where Bremen was positioned and positioned itself in this version of a nation. Certainly, the national version of the *Zollverein* was but one version of a German nation. Jürgen Müller, for example, has argued that the economic integration initiated by the *Deutscher Bund* cannot simply be overlooked, as it had been done until then.⁹⁷ Müller shows that Bremen was an active member in some of the committees working towards a higher degree of economic integration; Johann Smidt, who is known as the founder of Bremerhaven, is mentioned as a particularly active member.⁹⁸ Still, even Müller has to admit that '[w]enn auch nicht in den Ergebnissen, so doch vom politischen Ansatz her waren die nationalen Integrationsprojekte des Deutschen Bundes auf wirtschaftspolitischem Gebiet viel umfassender und vielfältiger'.⁹⁹

It was not without reason that the Austrian Chancellor Clemens von Metternich expressed that what the beginning of economic integration between German states represented was 'der erste Keim zu einem Bunde im Bunde'.¹⁰⁰ In line with this thought, Christopher Clark has pointed out that the *Zollverein* was pivotal for one particular reason: 'It was here that ministers and officials learned to think in an authentically German compass [...]'¹⁰¹ Even though the *Zollverein* was definitely not the Prussian predecessor of a German nation-state, it still played a central role in the process of German nation building.¹⁰² Consequently, if it is

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 5

⁹⁷ Jürgen Müller, 'Der Deutsche Bund und die ökonomische Nationsbildung: Die Ausschüsse und Kommissionen des Deutschen Bundes als Faktoren politischer Integration', in: Hahn, Kreutzmann, *Der Deutsche Zollverein*, pp. 283–302

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 290

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 288

¹⁰⁰ Metternich quoted in Adreas Etges, *Wirtschaftsnationalismus: USA und Deutschland im Vergleich (1815–1914)* (Frankfurt, 1999), p. 60

¹⁰¹ Christopher Clark, *Iron Kingdom: The Rise and Downfall of Prussia* (London, 2007), p. 394

¹⁰² Hahn and Kreutzmann argue: 'Der Deutsche Zollverein spielte eine nicht zu unterschätzende Rolle für die „kulturelle Nationsbildungs. Zunächst einmal schuf er mit der gemeinsamen Institution eine Deutungssubstanz, die im Gegensatz zu eher amorphen

argued that the *Zollverein* had an integrating and nation building effect on its member states, it is indispensable to ask how the Hanseatic Cities positioned themselves towards this economic union after the foundation of the German nation-state.¹⁰³

We have already examined Theodor Barth's role in Bremen's relationship with the German Empire at the end of the 1870s and beginning of the 1880s. As we have seen, the prevalent liberalism in Bremen stood in the way of Bismarck's conservative turn at the end of the 1870s. Inevitably, this led to conflict. One major area of conflict was definitely the question of Bremen's accession to the German customs union. Article 34 of the *Reichsverfassung* of 1871 stated that:

Die Hansestädte Bremen und Hamburg mit einem dem Zweck entsprechenden Bezirke ihres oder des umliegenden Gebietes bleiben als Freihäfen außerhalb der gemeinschaftlichen Zollgrenze, bis sie ihren Einschluß in dieselbe beantragen.

Thus, the right to remain outside the Empire's customs union was guaranteed to the Hanseatic Cities of Hamburg and Bremen by the Federal Constitution. In theory, it was the cities' right to decide when joining the customs union. Yet, this right proved illusory. It is important to note that even though there were supporters of Bremen's position as a free port city – particularly in Bremen – there were naturally also opponents of this situation. Even in Bremen, there was no consensus about the right path for Bremen. We cannot look at just one side of the debate and pretend that this was the general opinion in Bremen.

Projektionsflächen wie der gemeinsamen Sprache ein klar abgrenzbares Substrat für politische Identitätsentwürfe bot.' See: Hahn, Kreutzmann, 'Der Deutsche Zollverein', in: Hahn, Kreutzmann, *Der Deutsche Zollverein*, p. 21

¹⁰³ This question was not adequately answered in either of the two standard works on the *Zollverein* by Henderson and by Hans-Werner Hahn. In fact, only Henderson dedicates a sub-section of a mere six pages to the Hamburg and Bremen's accession to the customs union, while Hahn's analysis only mentions the case of Hamburg and Bremen on the last two pages. In respect of these shortcomings, Otto Pflanze's study on Bismarck in two volumes represents a rare example. Even though the *Zollanschlussfrage* is only dealt with on four pages, Pflanze is at least one of a few historians of the German Empire taking this topic into consideration. Hence, it is unquestionably necessary to pay more attention to the processes leading up to the Hanseatic Cities' accession to the customs union in 1888. See Henderson, *Zollverein*, pp. 330–335; Hahn, *Geschichte*, pp. 187–188 and Otto Pflanze, *Bismarck: Der Reichskanzler* (München, 1998), pp. 252–255

Bremen's traffic conditions with the *Zollverein* were regulated in two separate treaties between the two, one from January 26 1856 and the other from December 14 1865. Due to the changes that had taken place in the meantime – the foundation of the German Empire and with it the creation of the Empire's customs union in place of the *Zollverein* – the agreement between the *Zollverein* and Bremen was terminated as of January 1 1878 by the Imperial government at the beginning of the year 1877. As a result, Bremen needed to enter negotiations with the Empire. However, on November 6 1877, *Senator* Otto Gildemeister, Burgomaster of Bremen, complained to Friedrich Krüger, the Hanseatic Minister Resident in Berlin, that since Bremen had expressed willingness to enter negotiations 'herrscht altum silentium.'¹⁰⁴ Gildemeister also noted with elegant understatement: 'Begreiflicher Weise empfindet man hier einige Neugier, was denn am 1. Januar werden soll.'¹⁰⁵ Within a day, came Krüger's response. Krüger notified Gildemeister that 'die Angelegenheit wegen Erneuerung des Zollvereinsvertrages mit Bremen bisher nicht für dringlich ansehen und daher im Reichskanzler-Amt noch nicht zum Vortrag gebracht ist.'¹⁰⁶ This was justified with the fact that only slight changes were seen as necessary and that these could be dealt with in a short period of time. Yet, in the end, the termination of agreements had to be postponed until January 1 1879 and then again until July 1 1879. The second postponement was requested, as it was regarded as inevitable to also regulate the protection of the customs border. This resulted in the shift of the borderline, so that a small part of Bremen, the Stadtwerder, was henceforth part of the Empire's customs union.¹⁰⁷ The final draft of the new agreement was only brought before the Federal Assembly in June 1879 but it was resolved and published by the end of June 1879.

In February 1877, as a consequence of the terminated agreement, Bremen's *Bürgerschaft*, the city parliament, requested the formation of a deputation. This deputation was set up in order to deal with the question of whether Bremen's status as a free port city should be suspended. This deputation forwarded the question to Bremen's *Handelskammer*, the *Gewerbekammer* and the

¹⁰⁴ StaB, 2-Ss.4.d.2.e.2.g.1., Letter to Krüger, Bremen 6. November 1877.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid..

¹⁰⁶ StaB, 2-Ss.4.d.2.e.2.g.1., Hanseatische Gesandtschaft, No. 113, Berlin, den 7ten November 1877

¹⁰⁷ See Schwarzwälder, *Geschichte der freien Hansestadt Bremen*, Bd. 2., p. 346

Landwirtschaftskammer. All three Chambers were asked to submit a survey in response to the question. Their views varied and, thus, it is worth looking at the way the three Chambers justified their decisions.

Having outlined Barth's position, it does not come as a surprise that Bremen's Chamber of Commerce argued for staying outside the Empire's customs union.¹⁰⁸ First of all, the report clarified that a decision for joining the customs union could not be predicated on the fact that other important port cities, such as Amsterdam, Antwerp or London, flourished without being free port cities. Neither, it was contended, did the positive experience of the accession of the Hanseatic City of Lübeck in 1868 count as a valid argument for Bremen's accession. Lübeck's accession happened simultaneously with that of the duchies on the River Elbe and of Mecklenburg. Since these places were no longer able to trade freely with Hamburg, Lübeck was used as a replacement of Hamburg and saw an increase in trade.¹⁰⁹ Subsequently, the report discussed three viable possibilities for Bremen's accession. Firstly, the accession of the whole of the State of Bremen's territory, including Bremerhaven. Secondly, an accession with the exception of the docks in Bremerhaven and, thirdly, leaving Bremerhaven entirely outside the customs union.

First of all, the report explained the three consequences an accession to the customs union would have on Bremen's shipping and trade. These were: a prolongation of the discharging time, a reduction of worker performance and the rise of expenses due to charges for customs guards. The damage an accession would cause is illustrated by the fact that discharging a steamer arriving from London or Hull to Bremerhaven took around one day, whilst discharging a transatlantic steamer could be accomplished in two. In Lübeck, the discharge of a small steamer took up to eight days on average after the city's accession to the Empire's customs union.¹¹⁰ What would have been worse, was the fact that 'insbesondere in Bezug auf die unendlich wesentliche Handhabung der Regulative wäre Bremen einem fremden Willen und Verständniß unterworfen.'¹¹¹ It was argued that as a result of this, Bremen would lose out to its competitors in the Low

¹⁰⁸ For the report see AdHB, Z I 3, Bd. 2 Gutachten der Bremer Handels in der Zollanschluß-Frage Bremen, 1877

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 5-6

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 8-9

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 10

Countries, such as Rotterdam, Antwerp and Flushing. So, the foundation of a German nation-state was one thing, losing control over its trade and shipping was unacceptable in Bremen. This is an interesting aspect to the nation that was founded in 1871: being part of the German nation was acceptable as long as this did not interfere with business.

Again and again, Lübeck served as an example of where the accession to the customs union created a disadvantageous situation instead of constituting a positive example for an accession. Here, an official complaint about a shortage of customs personnel was simply rebuffed by the Federal Assembly. It follows from this that an accession of the whole of Bremen's state territory, which includes Bremerhaven, would have been highly detrimental with regard to Bremish shipping companies.

Since Bremen's Chamber of Commerce did not regard this as an option, the Chamber next discussed the possibility of simply leaving the docks in Bremerhaven outside the customs union. Even assuming that a complete separation of the free port area from the rest of Bremerhaven would somehow have been possible, the City of Bremen itself would have suffered. Cargo arriving in large vessels was usually transported in lighters to Bremen. Had it been possible to facilitate customs handling in Bremerhaven, this would have had to happen in Bremen at the latest – irrespective of a free port area in Bremerhaven or the whole of Bremerhaven being a free port. As a result, 'Bremerhaven [würde dann] für denjenigen Theil des Handels, welcher den Freihafen sucht, eine solche Anziehungskraft besitzen, daß derselbe sich sehr bald von Bremen nach Bremerhaven ziehen müßte.'¹¹² Thus, although Bremerhaven's importance in Bremen's overseas trade was certainly highly significant, trade was still conducted from the City of Bremen. It is understandable that Bremen's Chamber of Commerce would not allow the relocation of the trading centre from Bremen to Bremerhaven. Consequently, not only was the Chamber of Commerce against an accession to the customs union, it also emphasised that '[sie] für die Schifffahrt in dem Zollanschluß keinen einzigen Vortheil sieht.'¹¹³

Apart from shipping, the Chamber of Commerce also considered the effect of an accession on Bremen's commodity trade. The report analyses the effect on

¹¹² Ibid., p. 13

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 13

five different trading goods, namely tobacco, rice, colonial goods, wine and manufactured goods.¹¹⁴ It will suffice at this point to present the effect on tobacco and rice, as these were two of the most significant trading goods in Bremen.¹¹⁵ From the outset, the *Handelskammer* insisted that an accession to the customs union would have a damaging effect on Bremen's trade in rice and tobacco. Regarding rice, the main concerns expressed involved practical issues. Most of the raw rice, which amounted to a total of 68 million kilograms in 1876, was imported seasonally, meaning it had to be processed within a short period of time. Since the increased processing of rice during peak season would put stress on the customs authority, it was doubted that Bremen could expect its full support during these times of working to capacity. Even though the Chamber of Commerce did not provide any concrete evidence, the fact that major rice mills did not exist outside Hamburg and Bremen spoke for itself.

The tobacco trade was immensely important for Bremen. With a value of almost 63 million Marks out of a total of 421,824,680 Marks, tobacco was the most valuable exported good in Bremen. Out of this total export value, 43.85% consisted of transit trade, which was less profitable for the merchants. Yet, a large majority of the traded tobacco was dealt for Bremish merchants' own account: 60,778,635 Marks of the 63 million total.¹¹⁶ Apart from the sheer value of the tobacco trade, it also created other jobs in Bremen. In contrast to other commodities, most of the traded tobacco was stored in Bremen for an average period of a whole year. Its quality was examined, sorted and processed, thus creating jobs, such as the role of a *Küper* (tallyman) who was responsible for examining the quality of goods and the correct storing. The job market created by the tobacco trade was valued at around 2 million Marks per year. Furthermore, Bremen had established itself as a major player in the international tobacco trade and the value of traded tobacco had increased steadily even during the economic crisis of the mid-1870s.

If Bremen was to become part of the Empire's customs union, this would have left importers of tobacco with three options.¹¹⁷ Firstly, paying the duty on tobacco immediately after importing. Secondly, the importer could store his goods in a bonded warehouse or, thirdly, store it in a private warehouse bonded by the

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 14

¹¹⁵ For rice and tobacco see: Ibid., pp. 20-26

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 22

¹¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 23-24

customs authority. Paying the duty on imported tobacco directly was not considered an option, as 40% of it was re-exported and due to the loss of tobacco during the cleaning and sorting process. Unsurprisingly, the Chamber of Commerce also regarded the two remaining options as unacceptable. This was due to the fact that both options would have led to extra costs on the side of the importer. Amongst a list of objections, the reader finds the restricted access to the warehouses and taking samples can only be undertaken after notifying customs authority. At this point, it becomes obvious that Bremen's mercantile community feared that it was losing control over its established trading procedure. This is justified with the fact that the loss of control would most likely give other tobacco traders the edge over Bremen. These traders did not necessarily have to be foreign. The idea of losing this trade to Hamburg, and within Bremen's own territory from the older wharfs in the city itself to the newer docks downriver in Bremerhaven, was not acceptable.¹¹⁸

Overall, the report concludes that 'Handel und Schifffahrt beim Zollanschluß zurückgehen würden und zwar besonders stark zurückgehen würden, wenn Bremens größter Concurrent Hamburg nach wie vor Freihafen bliebe.'¹¹⁹ The effect on shipping and trade were given in detail in the report and the outlook was not at all promising. Yet, it has to be remembered that the Chamber of Commerce painted a bleak picture without knowing the details of a possible accession to the customs union. Its decisively hostile stance on a possible accession was merely founded on the experience of other port cities in the customs union, such as Lübeck and the Prussian port of Stettin.

In order to get the full picture of arguments for and against Bremen's accession, it is inevitable to also look at the reports handed in to the deputation by the *Gewerbekammer* and by the *Kammer für Landwirthschaft*.¹²⁰ In contrast to the Chamber of Commerce, Bremen's Chamber of Industry argued for an accession to the customs union. According to the report, Bremen's free port status imposed burdens on Bremen's industry. Even though the city had to pay an *Aversum*, a lump sum amounting to 3 Marks per person, to the Empire for its forgone tax revenue,

¹¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 24-25

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 26

¹²⁰ For both reports Gutachten der Bremischen Gewerbekammer in der Zollanschluß-Frage (Bremen, 1877) and Gutachtliche Äußerung der Kammer für Landwirthschaft, Bremen den 19ten September 1877 see StaB 2-Ss.4.e.1., Bd. 1

duty still had to be paid on Bremen's labour input.¹²¹ This meant that customs-free raw materials and semi-finished products that were imported to Bremen, processed in Bremen and then exported to the customs union had to be cleared first. The same was true for goods which were imported from the customs union and then re-exported. Besides, the report pointed out that the role of the merchants began to change, that they became less important to trade due to the improved ways of direct communication for people in the hinterland. Consequently, Bremen had to keep an eye on the development of its industry.

After emphasising this unsatisfactory situation, the report went into detail on the disadvantages that came with the free port status. The long list of these disadvantages included the narrowness of the industry's market area in Bremen. In 1875, Vegesack and parts of Bremen's new town had already become part of the customs union. Hence, the market area for goods produced in Bremen had been further downsized.¹²² This in turn led to the problem that economies of scale could not be realised and that capital for mechanisation was lacking. Under such conditions, the report argued, it was hardly surprising that 'die meisten gewerblichen Erzeugnisse so vertheuert worden, daß die hiesigen Gerwerbtreibenden zum Theil nur mit großen Opfern im Stande sind, mit denjenigen aus dem übrigen Deutschland zu concurriren'.¹²³ The Chamber of Industry also criticised the fact that entrepreneurial spirit was lacking in Bremen. This further aggravated the position of Bremen's industry. In Bremen, new trends were only slowly adapted and, hence, Bremen's more affluent population had to fall back on imported goods. The Chamber of Industry even goes so far as to attest to the people of Bremen a 'gewisse[...] Geschmacksstagnation, die man vielfach mit patriarchalischen Sitten und Gewohnheiten zu beschönigen versucht.'¹²⁴ According to the Chamber of Industry, the people of Bremen had retained their traditional taste rather than giving in to predominant fashion fads. In this aspect, the people of

¹²¹ Schwarzwälder, *Geschichte der freien Hansestadt Bremen*, Bd. 2., p. 345

¹²² Note that certain parts of Bremen's territory had already become part of the *Zollverein* in the 1850s, when the discussion about Bremen's accession was first brought up. This was done in order to impede smuggling. The areas joining the *Zollverein* in 1857 included Huchting and Grolland in Bremen's South-West and parts beyond the *Holler-Deich* in the North-East.

¹²³ Gutachten der Bremischen Gewerbekammer in der Zollanschluß-Frage (Bremen, 1877), p. 6

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 8

Bremen remained true to their patriarchal customs and habits. This demonstrates that there were obviously still major differences between the people of Bremen and the people of other regions of the German Empire. Interestingly, in Hamburg, the situation seems to have been different, at least according to the report. Here, industry was supported by the mercantile community, which, unlike in Bremen, even exported products on its own account. Also, Hamburg's trading connections, notably South America, showed more interest in German products than the countries Bremen was trading with. Added to this was the fact that Hamburg's market area was significantly larger.

Bremen's Chamber of Industry had a simple solution to all the problems: Bremen's accession to the customs union. Naturally, an accession would lead to a boom in industry with literally unpredictable dimensions, although it could 'freilich weder durch Zahlen, noch für einzelne bestimmte Gewerbe mit apodictischer Gewißheit im Voraus nachgewiesen, aber nach den Verhältnissen und dem Vergleich mit anderen Städten gar nicht bezweifelt werden [...]'.¹²⁵ Again, the example of Lübeck was invoked. However, in contrast to the Chamber of Commerce, the Chamber of Industry was anxious to show how beneficial Lübeck's accession to the customs union was for its industry and trade. Still, while arguing that Bremen's trade would benefit from the boom in industry, it was also admitted that an accession could only take place 'wenn für den bremischen Handel diejenigen Erleichterungen erlangt werden können, deren er zu seiner Existenz und Weiterentwicklung bedarf'.¹²⁶ With regard to the 'in den letzten Jahren in der Zollgesetzgebung zur Geltung gelangten liberalen Grundsätze', it was hoped that these concessions would be granted to Bremen.¹²⁷

So, on the one hand, the Chamber of Industry claimed that it was absolutely essential for Bremen to become part of the Empire's customs union from an industrial point of view. On the other hand, it was realised that Bremen's accession was only feasible if shipping and trade received the necessary concessions from the German Empire. Hence, the report gives insight into the arguments in favour of a possible accession but it also underlines the significance of trade and shipping to the fate of Bremen's entire economy at the time.

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 11

¹²⁶ Ibid., pp. 14–15

¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 15

Finally, Bremen's Chamber of Agriculture was also asked to submit a report. The City of Bremen's territory was of course not extremely large, so agriculture played a minor role compared to the trade and shipping and industry. Hence, not too much focus will be put on this report. In addition to this, the report emphasised that the goods that were produced in Bremen were mostly also consumed in Bremen. The report was based on the experiences made in those parts of Bremen that had become part of the *Zollverein* or the Empire's customs union in 1857 and 1875 respectively.

First of all, it was noted that in those areas that had joined the customs union the disadvantages decisively outweighed the advantages. The only positive development accepted by the Chamber of Agriculture was the positive development in pig breeding. Pig breeding had already become more popular in some of the areas accessed by the Empire's customs union. However, although it was remarked that the upswing led to the creation of an export market, this was not regarded as significant enough to justify an accession of Bremen to the customs union. Instead, an accession would inevitably lead to an increase in foodstuffs, for example, colonial goods, imported manufactured goods and clothing. Consequently, the Chamber of Agriculture suggested that an accession 'in hohem Grad bedenklich sein würde, wenn dabei die Möglichkeit auf dem Spiele steht vorhandene Quellen des Absatzes und Erwerbes aufzugeben gegen die unsichere Aussicht auf Erlangung neuer Vortheile.'¹²⁸ In fact, it was argued in the report that farmers in the whole of the German Empire preferred free trade instead of protectionism. Naturally, this was also the case in Bremen. All in all, the conclusion given by the Chamber of Agriculture is hardly surprising. While it was admitted that those farmers who were breeding pigs would benefit, for all other farmers 'würde unter im Übrigen gleichen Verhältnissen die Aufgabe der Freihafen-Stellung Bremen's, soviel erweislich, nur Nachteile zur Folge haben.'¹²⁹ Hence, just like the Chamber of Commerce, the Chamber of Agriculture argued resolutely against an accession.

Therefore, by the end of 1877, the deputation in charge of discussing Bremen's *Zollanschluss* was in possession of views from all the most important branches of Bremen's economy. The Chamber of Commerce and the Chamber of

¹²⁸ Bericht Kammer für Landwirthschaft, p. 13

¹²⁹ Ibid., p.15

Agriculture were both opposed to an accession. The Chamber of Industry, on the other hand, was fiercely arguing for an accession. Therefore, the deputation was slow in coming to a final evaluation about the pros and cons of a possible accession. The reason for this was that the deputation decided to postpone discussion due to the unresolved debate about the Imperial tobacco tax, which could have influenced the deputation. Hence, between February 1878 and December 1879, debates in the deputation were put on ice.

As (bad) luck would have it, it was at this moment that Bremen's government was put to the real test regarding the *Zollanschlussfrage*. On May 20 1879, the royal Prussian envoy to Mecklenburg and the Hanseatic Cities, Otto von Wentzel, enquired in confidence after Bremen's attitude towards an accession to the Empire's customs union. The letter pointed out that during the making of the constitution of the *Norddeutscher Bund* it was noted 'daß die Hansestädte Bremen und Hamburg nicht für immer außerhalb der gemeinschaftlichen Zollgrenzen bleiben würden, sondern der Nichtanschluß an das deutsche Zoll- und Handelsgebiet ein vorübergehender sein werde.'¹³⁰ Despite acknowledging the right granted to the Hanseatic Cities in Article 34 of the Empire's Constitution, namely to decide on the moment of accession themselves, Wentzel emphasised that there was a wish for Bremen's accession not only in the rest of the Empire but also in Bremen itself. Naturally, Wentzel did not act of his own accord. He did not fail to mention that Bismarck had ordered contacting Bremen in this matter.

The timing of this letter is particularly remarkable. As we have seen, between 1877 and 1879, Bremen was in more or less constant discussion with the Empire about adjustments to the tariff conditions between Bremen and the Imperial customs union. Despite Bremen's willingness to enter and conclude negotiations with the Empire, no such agreement had occurred even after more than a year of negotiations. This fact must have played into the Empire's, or rather Bismarck's, hands. While the continued negotiations between the Empire and Bremen left no doubt about Bremen's legitimacy to stay outside the customs union, Bismarck, at the same time, opened the stage for a profound change in Bremen's status.

¹³⁰ StaB 2-Ss.4.e.1, Königlich Preußische Gesandtschaft in Mecklenburg und den Hansestädten, Hamburg, 20. Mai 1879.

The matter was discussed openly in the next meeting of the Senate on May 27 1879.¹³¹ It was resolved upon responding 'weder mit einem einfachen nein noch mit einem einfach ja [...]'.¹³² The reasons for this were obvious. From the outset, it was clear that Bismarck's power exceeded that of Bremen's. By giving a negative response, Bremen would have run the risk of retaliatory measures with respect to customs duties and the *Aversum*. Thus, it was argued that it was necessary 'sich der Reichsregierung gegenüber zu commissarischen Verhandlungen über die Modalitäten bereit zu erklären, unter denen Bremen im Stande sein würde ohne erhebliche Schädigung seines Handels in das Zollgebiet einzutreten.'¹³³

On May 28 1879, Bremen's Senate gave a response to Wentzel.¹³⁴ In this, it was indicated that the matter had been forwarded for reporting to the *Behörde für Handel und Schifffahrt*. The meeting of the board, of which Friedrich Grave and Theodor Barth were members, took place on June 3, 1879. In this, it was decided to keep an eye on developments in Hamburg, meaning that an accession would only be feasible if Hamburg joined the customs union as well. Otherwise, it was argued, Bremen's trade and shipping would severely suffer. Thus, Bremen was tactically invoking the example of Hamburg. Even if Hamburg opted against an accession this would have given Bremen time 'und zwar vielleicht so lange, bis eine andere Leitung der deutschen Handelspolitik eingetreten sei, welche den Handel überhaupt günstiger stelle.'¹³⁵ In Bremen, it was decided to either agree with an accession in case Hamburg also joined the customs union, or to attempt to delay the discussion about an accession. From the beginning, it was realised that Bremen on its own stood little chance of getting a lucrative deal from the Imperial government. Still, while the decision-making process in Hamburg played an important role for Bremen, it was also regarded as vital to not simply 'das Schicksal Bremen durchaus an das Hamburgs zu ketten.'¹³⁶

¹³¹ StaB 2-Ss.4.e.1, Auszug aus dem Senats-Protokolle de 1879. Mai 27. pag. 306.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ StaB 2-Ss.4.e.1, Sr. Excellenz dem Königl. Preußischen Auß. Gesandten u. Bevollmächtigsten Minister Geh. Legationsrath Herrn von Wentzel, Bremen, 28. Mai 1879.

¹³⁵ StaB 2-Ss.4.e.1., Auszug aus dem Protokoll der Versammlung der Behörde für Handel und Schifffahrt vom 3. Juni 1879.

¹³⁶ Ibid..

Naturally, the response given to the Prussian envoy Wentzel shows no sign of any such doubts about Bremen's minor role compared to Hamburg. Drafted by Gildemeister, head of the *Behörde für Handel und Schiffahrt*, and accepted by the Senate in June 1879, it was, first of all, made clear to the envoy that Bremen still interpreted Article 34 in such a way 'daß das Reich und namentlich der leitende Bundesstaat die nationale Bedeutung der haneatischen und speciell auch des Bremischen Handels- und Schiffahrtsverkehrs vollauf würdige [...].'¹³⁷ Still, Bremen did not only want the Empire to respect the rights granted in Article 34; it also asked for Imperial support for Bremen's trade and shipping industry. Even if there were debates in Bremen about the necessity of staying outside the customs union, the report leaves no doubt that the needs of Bremen's trade and shipping industry were of the highest importance to the city. This meant that keeping the status of a free port city was vital to the city. In this spirit, the report underlined that:

Dem Senate ist es aber nicht zweifelhaft, daß der werthvollste Theil des hiesigen Geschäftsbetriebes, derjenige an welchen alle übrigen Theile sich anlehnen, auf dessen Gedeihen die Existenz der Bremischen Staats beruht, und welcher dem Bremischen Handel seine eigentliche und eigenthümliche Bedeutung verleiht, heute noch ebenso, wie es im Jahre 1867 und im Jahre 1871 der Fall war, derjenigen Freiheit der Bewegung bedarf, welche die Reichsverfassung ihm hat erhalten wollen.¹³⁸

Hence, Bremen dared to decisively rebuke the Empire's attempt to suddenly take away the city's right to remain outside the customs union. After all, this right had been granted in 1867 and 1871. Furthermore, the demise of Bremen's entire economy – and in fact Bremen's existence – in case of an accession would have been aggravated if Bremen had been the only free port joining the customs union. Nonetheless, Bremen agreed to negotiate 'ganz allgemein die bestehenden Freihäfen durch anderweite Verkehrserleichterungen zu ersetzen, ohne

¹³⁷ StaB 2-Ss.4.e.1, Sr. Excellenz dem Königl. Preußischen Auß. Gesandten u. Bevollmächtigsten Minister Geh. Legationsrath Herrn von Wentzel, No 948, Bremen. 17. Juni 1879.

¹³⁸ Ibid..

Deutschland seinen Antheil am Welthandel zu verkümmern [...].'¹³⁹ So, even though Bremen argued to act in the interest of the German nation, the city was clearly concerned of its own vested interests. In this respect, the establishment of free port areas or entrepôts was discussed over the following months.¹⁴⁰

While different options for an accession were discussed in Bremen, resentment began to swell outside the city-state. In February 1880, Minister Resident Krüger gave a picture of the attitude towards Bremen in Berlin. Utterances by Bismarck towards Bremen were sparked by debates in different committees of the Federal Assembly about Bremen's continued role as a free port. For example, by October 1879, the *Centralverein der deutschen Wollwarenfabrikanten* had already handed in a resolution to the effect of discussing the role of the Hanseatic Cities. This gave Bismarck a perfect opportunity to set out his position on Bremen's free port status. In fact, it was Adolf Scholz, holding the position of Undersecretary of State in the treasury, who conveyed Bismarck's line of thinking. However, Bremen was not alone in its struggle against Bismarck. For example, the Bavarian *Ministerialrat* pointed to the fact that the *Centralverein* did not even possess the competence to hand resolutions. Bavaria was obviously prepared to support Bremen against their common enemy in Berlin. Scholz replied that Bismarck did indeed regard such industrial representative bodies as entitled to issue such resolutions.

Scholz argued that the Reich Chancellor thought of Article 34 only as a provisory measure and that Bismarck 'bedauere, daß die Hansestädte anscheinend ohne nähere Untersuchung sich ablehnend gegen den Gedanken verhalten hätten, die Ausnahmestellung zu beseitigen [...].'¹⁴¹ In response to this, Krüger pointed out that there had not been any problems with Bremen's status, which had been accepted by the customs authority, before Bismarck's turn to protectionism, 'nicht nur als ein hanseatisches, sondern als ein deutsches Interesse [...].'¹⁴² Thereupon, Scholz made it clear that 'der Reichskanzler von der Schädlichkeit der Freihafenstellung durchdrungen sei, weil sie die Hansestädte behindern, an der wirtschaftlichen Entwicklung Deutschlands vollen Antheil zu nehmen.' Both the

¹³⁹ Ibid..

¹⁴⁰ See for example: StaB 2-Ss.4.e.1., Grave, Bremen im Februar 1880 and StaB 2-Ss.4.e.1., Bremen, Februar 1880, P.M. Freihafenstellung Bremen's by Senator Lühmann

¹⁴¹ StaB 2-Ss.4.e.1., Hanseatische Gesandtschaft, No. 22, Berlin den 18ten Februar 1880

¹⁴² Ibid..

experienced tacticians that were Bismarck and Bremen, were dressing up as altruism and high-minded principle as their respective pursuit of self-interest. While it had previously been attempted to make concessions to Hamburg and Bremen, this had to end in view of the wellbeing of the rest of the Empire. This was *de facto* a declaration of war on the free ports. The determination and harshness with which Scholz presented Bismarck's attitude 'erregten ein peinliches Erstaunen, und nicht bei mir allein.' Even Scholz himself seems to have realised that this had been one step too far. After the session, Scholz apologised and pointed to the fact that the Reich Chancellor was not in favour of the current situation at all. Consequently, Krüger urged: 'Bei alledem aber läßt die Stellung, die der Reichskanzler eingenommen, voraussehen, daß wir einer Periode ernster Schwierigkeiten entgegengehen.'¹⁴³

Hence, not even ten years after the Imperial Constitution had come into effect, Bismarck was pressing for an accession of both Hanseatic Cities. The fact that the German Empire's two most significant port cities remained outside its customs union obviously was a thorn in the Chancellor's side. In order to enforce his will, the *Aversum* payments were raised to 5 Marks per inhabitant. This amount was confirmed by Scholz, who, when addressed regarding this matter, claimed: 'Ich war damals ein kranker Mann, 5 M. ist eine Lumperei.'¹⁴⁴ Still, even though this measure was certainly not welcomed in Bremen, it was not intended to give in to the Chancellor's will. Instead, Gildemeister asked Krüger for advice and stated: 'Man bewegt sich auf unberechenbarem Boden, wo Bewegung und Stillsitzen gleich unrichtig sein können.'¹⁴⁵

In Bremen's local press, Bismarck's measures were unanimously criticised. Three major local newspapers, the *Bremer Nachrichten*, the *Courier* and the *Weser-Zeitung*, all defended Bremen's free port status. For example, in April 1880, after the Prussian motion for the incorporation of Altona and St Pauli into the customs union, the *Bremer Nachrichten* and the *Courier* published an article that was almost identical. In this it was argued: 'Der einzige Vorzug also, welcher heute diesem Handel die Concurrenz mit dem Auslande ermöglicht, würde durch den

¹⁴³ Ibid..

¹⁴⁴ Ibid..

¹⁴⁵ StaB 2-Ss.4.e.1., Herrn Ministerresid. Dr. Krüger, Berlin. Bremen, den 24. Februar 1880. Auszug.

Zollanschluß Hamburgs und Bremens in sein Gegentheil verkehrt.¹⁴⁶ Similarly, the *Weser-Zeitung* also pointed to the need for facilitating trade in Hamburg and Bremen. Otherwise, it was assumed that both cities would lose out to its competitors. International traffic was described as ‘eines der freiesten Wesen [...]’, which would respond to the accession as follows: ‘Du hast die Kraft, mich anzuziehn, besessen, Doch mich zu halten hast du keine Kraft.’¹⁴⁷ The *Bremer Nachrichten* reported from Berlin that the ‘Erfindungen zweier Correspondenten [...] wonach in den Hansestädten große Zollanschlußparteien bestehen sollten haben [...] allen Credit verloren.’¹⁴⁸ Hence, in 1880, Bremen’s local press was in favour of maintaining Bremen’s free port status. Still, a letter to the editor of the *Courier* proved that Bremen’s population did not unanimously support the free port status. In this letter, the author quoted Schiller’s words from a newspaper in Hamburg: ‘Das Alte stürzt, es ändert sich die Zeit, Und neues Leben blüht aus den Ruinen.’¹⁴⁹ The author then went on to criticise the assumption that shopkeepers were selling more goods in Bremen due to the existing tariff barriers.

Eventually, in July 1880, the *Deputation wegen der Freihafenstellung Bremens* handed in its final report. The conclusion reached is similar to Gildemeister’s decisiveness against simply caving in to Bismarck’s will. At the same time, it also warned of possible measures taken by Bismarck against Bremen. Continued opposition to Bismarck could lead to more pressure, the Imperial government would ‘ihre Volle Macht anwenden [...], um ihn [the accession] durchzusetzen, und dann unter für Bremen weit ungünstigeren Bedingungen als wozu sie jetzt wahrscheinlich bereit sein würde.’¹⁵⁰ However, the overall mood in the deputation remained in the majority against a possible accession. The result of a vote in the deputation reveals that ten members voted for a continued free port status, while four members voted against – and one member abstained from voting.¹⁵¹ Not unsurprisingly, Theodor Barth is found amongst those who voted

¹⁴⁶ See StaB FB 605, *Bremer Nachrichten*, Drittes Blatt, Sonntag, 2. Mai 1880. No. 121; StaB FB 1200, Beilage zu No. 122 des *Courier*, Bremen. Sonntag, 2. Mai 1880

¹⁴⁷ StaB FB 360, *Weser-Zeitung*, No. 11968, Bremen, Dienstag, 4. Mai 1880, Morgen-Ausgabe

¹⁴⁸ StaB FB 605, *Bremer Nachrichten*, No. 116, Zweites Blatt, Dienstag, 27. April 1880.

¹⁴⁹ StaB FB 1200, *Courier*, No. 17, Bremen. Sonnabend 17. Januar 1880. Morgen-Ausgabe

¹⁵⁰ StaB 2-Ss.4.e.1., Auszug aus der Mittheilung des Senats vom 13. Juli 1880, p. 367

¹⁵¹ StaB 2-Ss.4.e.1., Auszug aus dem Beschluß der Bürgerschaft vom 14. Mai 1879

against an accession and so is the head of the deputation, *Bürgermeister* Friedrich Grave.

However, in 1881, the *Zollanschlussfrage* took a sudden turn: Hamburg's government began to approach the Imperial government regarding an accession. This was a big step, as Hamburg had initially responded with a clear no about a possible accession. This process will be looked at in more detail later on in the chapter on Hamburg. Therefore, it will suffice to point out the main developments. By March 1881, it looked as though an agreement was about to be made between Hamburg and the German Empire. After discussions regarding the terms of an accession, the Senate got in contact with Hamburg's city parliament in order to bring the *Zollanschlussfrage* to a close. Even Bismarck seemed to be willing to diffuse the situation when claiming that '[e]r glaube glaube, die Angelegenheit werde nun einen guten Fortgang nehmen. Hamburg werde beim Reiche ein viel größeres Entgegenkommen finden, als es selbst voraussetze [...]'.¹⁵² So, Hamburg was in Bismarck's favour and, in Bremen, one had to wonder what this new situation would mean for the city.

It had already been debated in Bremen to tie the city's fate to that of Hamburg. Now that Hamburg had made a decision, it was only reasonable to follow this path. Suddenly, there seems to have been a real determination in Bremen to get in contact with the Imperial government, which is proven by the speed of the decision-making process. On April 14 1881, Otto Gildemeister asked Minister Resident Krüger in Berlin to establish contact with Karl Hermann Bitter, the Prussian Minister of Finance who was in charge of negotiations with Hamburg. The matter was so urgent that Krüger was even asked to send his response as an express letter. Remarkably, Gildemeister admits to have not been able to confer with the *Senat* but he took responsibility for this step. Gildemeister expected 'daß er den gethanen Schritt gutheißen wird, welcher im Grunde nur ein Act der Geburtshülfe für eine ohnehin bevorstehende Kindsnot ist.'¹⁵³ Although Bremen was now forced to react to the situation, it still felt strong enough to determine some points that were regarded as non-negotiable. One of these was the establishment of a free port area in Bremen and not just in Bremerhaven, since

¹⁵² StaB 2-Ss.4.e.1. Bd. 2, Hanseatische Gesandtschaft, Berlin, den 31ten März 1881, Lieber Gildemeister!

¹⁵³ StaB 2-Ss.4.e.1. Bd. 2, Bremen, 14. April 81. Lieber Kr.

Bremen was still the place where the actual mercantile trade was taking place. Furthermore, Gildemeister pointed out that similar negotiations to those between Hamburg and the Empire were necessary, 'wenn überhaupt von Verständigung, nicht von Vergewaltigung die Rede sein soll.'¹⁵⁴ In particular, the linguistic images and symbolism that Gildemeister used in this context are interesting. Bremen was depicted as taking on the role of a woman in the conflict with the male Empire. The role of *Heimat* was not assumed by Germania. Instead, Gildemeister regarded the German Empire as the husband who was pestering and violating the city-state of Bremen. Still, Gildemeister's assumption that it was the *Kaiserreich* that desperately wanted an agreement with Bremen proved to be fatal in the course of the negotiations.¹⁵⁵

The Hanseatic Minister Resident in Berlin, Krüger, promptly tested the water for an accession of Bremen to the customs union. Within a day of Gildemeister's request to get in contact with the Prussian Minister of Finance Bitter, Krüger had managed to do so. According to Krüger, Bitter stated that he had been willing to carry out negotiations with Bremen in the same way as in Hamburg. In fact, Bitter had even visited Bremerhaven in order to explore the possibilities for an accession there. Yet, Bismarck seems to have been far less eager to realise the accession of both Hanseatic Cities to the customs union at the same time. Bitter confessed to Krüger that the Reich Chancellor 'habe aber gemeint, man solle sich zunächst auf Hamburg und die Elbe beschränken, „dann werde ihnen Bremen wie eine reife Frucht in den Schoß fallen.“'¹⁵⁶ Again, this quote offers valuable information about Bismarck's motives. Bismarck was obviously more concerned with the consumption of ripe fruit than with the question of unification.

Whatever it was that made Bismarck approach Hamburg and Bremen in 1879, Hamburg's expected accession to the customs union changed the situation completely. It seems that the Reich Chancellor knew very well that Bremen's position was severely weakened by Hamburg's accession and he did not mind taking advantage of this. Still, the city on the River Weser was at least able to

¹⁵⁴ Ibid..

¹⁵⁵ See StaB 2-Ss.4.e.1. Bd. 2, Bremen, 14. April 81. Gildemeister. Lieber Kr.: 'Unsere Anfrage ist das logische Product der Sachlage. Nicht wir wünschen, sondern das Reich wünscht Änderung des Bestehenden; es ist daher nicht unbillig zu erwarten, daß das Reich uns die Änderung wenigstens möglich macht.'

¹⁵⁶ StaB 2-Ss.4.e.1. Bd. 2, Hanseatische Gesandtschaft, Berlin, den 15ten April 1881, Ew. Magnificenz

secure negotiations with the Imperial government. Bitter agreed to get negotiations under way, even though *Oberzollinspektor* Klostermann, who already headed the accession process in Hamburg, was still involved with negotiations between the Empire and Hamburg. In fact, Bitter admitted a shortage of capable staff but still he was willing to start discussing the matter with Bremen.¹⁵⁷

As a result of Bremen's unpromising situation, the city's Senate officially decided to enter negotiations with the Prussian Minister of Finance on April 19 1881.¹⁵⁸ At the same time, negotiations between Hamburg and the German Empire were held up by Bismarck. Since Bismarck's focus was on coming to terms with Hamburg, this meant for Bremen that there was only moderate progress in the proceedings. At the same time, there is no indication that Hamburg attempted to take advantage of this situation. Instead, there was lively communication between the two cities and Hamburg notified Bremen of every significant step it took, such as the Senate's motion to the city parliament.¹⁵⁹ In addition, Senator Versmann even offered to mediate between the German Empire and Bremen.¹⁶⁰

In response to Bremen's approach to the Empire, Bitter sanctioned negotiations for a future accession of Bremen between the city and the *Oberzollinspektor* Klostermann at the end of April 1881.¹⁶¹ Initially, it seemed like both sides were able to quickly reach an agreement. Klostermann did not hesitate to visit Bremen. He had already arrived in Bremen for exploratory talks on April 29 1881. Yet, despite giving in to Bismarck's will and agreeing to talks, the opinion among Bremen's elite remained opposed to a possible accession. While talks between Klostermann and two Bremish representatives, Senator Dr Hermann Henrich Meier – not to be mistaken with his uncle, Hermann Henrich Meier, founder of the *Norddeutscher Lloyd* – and Senator Carl Friedrich Christian Buff, were under way, Gildemeister complained to Krüger that:

Je näher man die Anschlußfrage ansieht, desto dümmmer wird sie. Die Coulanz in der Geldfrage vermag nicht die in der Sache steckende Schwierigkeit zu beseitigen, und schließlich ist es doch auch nicht sehr rationell, Geld

¹⁵⁷ Ibid..

¹⁵⁸ StaB 2-Ss.4.e.1. Bd. 2, Auszug aus dem Senats-Protokolle de 1881. April 19. p. 178

¹⁵⁹ StaB 2-Ss.4.e.1. Bd. 2, Berlin den 28. März 81. Verehrter Herr Bürgermeister!

¹⁶⁰ StaB 2-Ss.4.e.1. Bd. 2, Bremen, 14. April 81. Gildemeister. Lieber Kr.

¹⁶¹ StaB 2-Ss.4.e.1. Bd. 2, Berlin, den 25. April 1881, Bitter, An den Herren Senator Meyer

aufzugeben, um etwas Besseres zu ruiniren und etwas Schlechteres zu schaffen. Abgesehen davon, daß bei aller Liberalität des Reichs die Städte selbst vorzugweise zahlen müssen, um sich, wie gesagt, zu verschlechtern.¹⁶²

By mid-May 1881, the first round of discussion between Klostermann and Senators Meier and Buff was concluded. Overall, both Senators seem to have been satisfied with the Imperial negotiator.¹⁶³

The result of this first meeting was a lengthy report but no major progress could be made in the matter. The situation for Bremen began to be concerning. At this point, even the Chamber of Commerce realised how important it was for Bremen to sign an agreement with the Imperial government. It argued that it was no longer desirable for Bremen to delay an accession, although 'der Zollanschluß [...] dem bremischen Handel in jedem Falle eine schwere Schädigung zufügen [werde].'¹⁶⁴ At first, it looked as if it was also Bitter's intention to finalise Bremen's accession to the customs union. When asked by Krüger on June 13 1881 about future negotiations, the Prussian Minister of Finance even agreed to visit the city in order to get an idea of its needs.¹⁶⁵

Only four days later, Krüger sent another report to Bremen claiming that Bitter's mood had changed entirely. Bitter pointed out that he was not able to deal with Bremen's accession until mid-September. However, the reasons given by Bitter are extremely dubious. According to Krüger, Bitter maintained: 'Er habe nicht bedacht, daß er noch eine Reise nach Ostpreußen anzutreten habe [...]. Später müsse er nach Tarasp in's Bad gehen.'¹⁶⁶ Unsurprisingly, Bitter's explanation seemed implausible to Krüger. In a strictly confidential conversation, Krüger was told that Bitter's attempt to delay proceedings 'einerseits in der bevorstehenden Abreise des Reichskanzlers nach Kissigen, andererseits in dem Antagonismus liegen, der fortdauernd zwischen Bitter und Scholz besteht.'¹⁶⁷ It was explained to Krüger that Bitter 'legt größten Werth darauf [...] in directem

¹⁶² StaB 2-Ss.4.e.1. Bd. 2, Bremen, 30/4. 81. Lieber Krüger.

¹⁶³ StaB 2-Ss.4.e.1. Bd. 2, Bremen, 15. Mai 1881. Gildemeister. Lieber Krüger.

¹⁶⁴ StaB 2-Ss.4.e.1. Bd. 2, Die Handelskammer an den hohen Senat, Bremen, 9. Juni 1881

¹⁶⁵ StaB 2-Ss.4.e.1. Bd. 2, Hanseatische Gesandtschaft. Berlin, den 13ten Juni 1881. An Herrn Senator Meier.

¹⁶⁶ StaB 2-Ss.4.e.1. Bd. 2, Hanseatische Gesandtschaft. Berlin, den 17ten Juni 1881. An Herrn Senator Meier.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid..

Benehmen mit dem Reichskanzler zu stehen.¹⁶⁸ Since the Reich Chancellor had decided to visit Bad Kissingen instead of Friedrichsruhe, Bitter could only get in contact with Bismarck by post. This was no option for Bitter due to the fact that the *Reichsschatzamt*, which was headed by Adolf Scholz, would be notified of the negotiations. Bitter regarded Scholz as 'einen höchst gefährlichen, zur Intrigue geneigten Rivalen [...].'¹⁶⁹ As it turned out, Bitter's thinking was even justified, since Scholz, at that point State Secretary, actually took over Bitter's position after his dismissal in 1882. Still, for Bremen, Bitter's private feud with Scholz meant that no progress could be made. Bremen's future position remained unclear, even though the city was now willing to follow Hamburg's path and to enter the Empire's customs union.

The rest of 1881 passed by without any further negotiations taking place. Bitter continued to delay even the beginning of official talks. At the end of September, Krüger approached Bitter once again.¹⁷⁰ The Prussian Finance Minister even promised to visit Bremen in order to commence proceedings. Yet, Bitter continually found ways to cancel his plans. On December 31 1881, Krüger reported to Bremen that he had approached Bitter one last time in 1881, reminding him of his promise to attend to Bremen's matter. During this conversation, Krüger learnt that Bismarck now thought 'man könne Bremerhaven ebenso wie Geestmünde, zusammt der Hafenbassins in das Zollgebiet einschließen und den Freihafen auf das Gebiet bei Bremen beschränken.'¹⁷¹ Due to the fact that Bismarck was 'erregt und schwer zu behandeln', Bitter did not attempt to change the Chancellor's mind.¹⁷²

The possible explanations given for Bismarck's new attitude towards Bremen permit a glimpse of the hidden political mechanics of the Bismarck era. First, Krüger noted that it could not have been an intrigue by Heinrich von Kusserow, since the Prussian politician advocated a free port area in Bremerhaven. Instead, Krüger concluded that either a 'bloße Rancüne gegen Bremen vorliegt – die Bitter mit Rücksicht auf die Wahlschlacht und deren Ergebnis allerdings für

¹⁶⁸ Ibid..

¹⁶⁹ Ibid..

¹⁷⁰ StaB 2-Ss.4.e.1. Bd. 2, Berlin, 29. Sept. 81. Krüger. Verehrter Freunde!

¹⁷¹ StaB 2-Ss.4.e.1. Bd. 2, Hanseatische Gesandtschaft, Berlin den 31ten Dezember 1881. Lieber Herr Senator!

¹⁷² Ibid..

möglich halt –' or that Mosle had been involved in the matter.¹⁷³ Whatever reason lay behind Bismarck's change of mind, Bitter claimed that he was still on Bremen's side and rejected the Chancellor's new idea. In his response to Krüger, Senator Meier expressed the conviction that Mosle did not insinuate such a plan to Bismarck, as he was also in favour of a free port in Bremerhaven only.¹⁷⁴ According to Krüger's line of argument, this would have meant that the Reich Chancellor bore a grudge towards Bremen.

Then, in 1882, Karl Hermann Bitter fell out of Bismarck's favour. During the ministerial crisis of 1879, Bitter, at that time Under-Secretary of State in the Ministry of the Interior, had taken over the position of Prussian Minister of Finance. His predecessor, Arthur Hobrecht, and two other liberal ministers, Falk and Friedenthal, had resigned in protest over Bismarck's conservative turn of that year. However, Bitter did not remain in office for long. Even though Bitter was more compliant than other ministers, for example Botho zu Eulenburg, he had difficulty in pleasing the Reich Chancellor.¹⁷⁵ In fact, Pflanze points out that 'Bitter versuchte, in den ihm wichtigsten Fragen seinen Standpunkt gegen den Fürsten zu behaupten.'¹⁷⁶ One of these questions was that of a balanced budget. Bitter supported the conservative idea of a balanced budget, while Bismarck wanted to use budgets in deficit as a political weapon in order to introduce new taxes. By January 1882, Bitter was fighting a lost battle against Bismarck. In June 1882, he then asked the Reich Chancellor for his dismissal out of protest over new decrees that were issued without his knowledge. According to Pflanze, 'Bismarck hielt ihn für ungeeignet und war froh, ihn los zu sein.'¹⁷⁷

Inevitably, Bitter's struggle and resignation also had consequences for Bremen's negotiations with the Imperial government. In the first half of 1882, there was again no progress made at all. Senator Meier contacted Bitter once more in May. Since Bismarck had fallen ill and was about to leave for Bad Kissingen, Bitter was not able to deliberate on the matter with Bismarck. The only thing Bitter could do was to postpone the beginning of proceedings until September of that

¹⁷³ Ibid..

¹⁷⁴ StaB 2-Ss.4.e.1. Bd. 2, Senator Dr. Meier, Bremen Januar 3, 1882

¹⁷⁵ Pflanze, *Bismarck: Der Reichskanzler*, p. 299-300

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 300

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 300

year.¹⁷⁸ Since Bitter had resigned in the meantime, Senator Meier got in contact with Adolf Scholz, Bitter's successor, asking whether proceedings were still expected to begin in September.¹⁷⁹ However, Scholz was not prepared to simply carry on without stopping. Instead, Scholz suggested that talks between Bremen and Bitter 'vielmehr den Charakter eines an die Person meines Herrn Amtsvorgängers geknüpft gewesenem Geschäfts gehabt haben.'¹⁸⁰ According to Meier, the purpose of this was to force Bremen into making an official request for talks between Bremen and the Reich Chancellor.¹⁸¹

After Bitter's resignation, Bismarck did not want to acknowledge any agreements already made between Bitter and Bremen. Instead, in October 1882, Karl von Boetticher, State Secretary in the Ministry of the Interior, let Krüger know that Bismarck was not informed of any negotiations between the Reich and Bremen.¹⁸² Scholz explained to Krüger that Bitter was authorised by Bismarck to head negotiations neither with Hamburg nor Bremen. When Bitter realised that 'seine Auffassung über die Regelung dieser Angelegenheit mit derjenigen des Reichskanzlers wesentlich differire und keine Lorbeeren bei derselben zu pflücken seien,' he started to deliberately hold up the beginning of negotiations.¹⁸³

Thereupon, Krüger approached Bitter in order to query about the incident. Not unsurprisingly, Bitter claimed that 'eine Lächerlichkeit ihm zuzutrauen, daß er ohne Legitimation Seitens des Reichskanzlers in Verhandlungen mit uns [Bremen] eingetreten sei.'¹⁸⁴ Instead, while Bitter had attempted to solve the issue diplomatically, the Reich Chancellor 'habe einen eisernen Ring um die Städte legen wolle, um den Widerstand durch die stärksten Mittel zu brechen [...]'¹⁸⁵ According

¹⁷⁸ See StaB 2-Ss.4.e.1. Bd. 2, Senator Dr. Meier, Berlin den 17. Mai 1882.

¹⁷⁹ StaB 2-Ss.4.e.1. Bd. 2, Sr. Excellenz dem Königl. Preuß. Finanzminister Herrn Scholz, Berlin, Juli 8, 1882.

¹⁸⁰ StaB 2-Ss.4.e.1. Bd. 2, Scholz to Meier, Berlin den 20. Juli 1882.

¹⁸¹ StaB 2-Ss.4.e.1. Bd. 2, Senator Dr. Meier, Herrenalb (Württemberg) den 25. Juli 82. Hochgeehrter Herr Bürgermeister.

¹⁸² StaB 2-Ss.4.e.1. Bd. 2, Hanseatische Gesandtschaft, Berlin, den 3ten Oktober 1882., Ew. Magnificenz

¹⁸³ StaB 2-Ss.4.e.1. Bd. 2, Hanseatische Gesandtschaft, Berlin, den 22ten Oktober 1882., Ew. Hochwohlgeboren

¹⁸⁴ StaB 2-Ss.4.e.1. Bd. 2, Hanseatische Gesandtschaft, Berlin, den 29ten Oktober 1882., Geehrter Herr Senator!

¹⁸⁵ Ibid..

to Bitter, after Hamburg's agreed accession, their opposing approaches led to conflict, which is why negotiations with Bremen were delayed.¹⁸⁶

However, worse than the case of Bitter was Bismarck's attitude towards Bremen. Scholz reported that 'nach seinen Wahrnehmungen der Reichskanzler sich von Bremen „sehr verletzt“ [habe] fühlen müssen.'¹⁸⁷ It was emphasised that this was not due to the Bremish government but rather due to the 'Bevölkerung, die ihn schlecht behandelt habe.' In this context, Scholz mentioned, amongst other things, 'fortdauernde Bekämpfung der Zollreform durch die Bremer Presse Agitation gegen das Tabackmonopol und das Auftreten des Dr. Barth'.¹⁸⁸ However, as already pointed out, even though Theodor Barth was a member of the *Reichstag*, he did not represent Bremen. Thus, Scholz made it obvious that Bismarck felt ill-disposed towards Bremen. Whether or not this was a strategy in order to force Bremen into accepting a deal more favourable to the German Empire than to the city whose welfare Bismarck was anxious to defend is hard to say. Still, the liberal disposition among Bremen's elite, such as Theodor Barth, certainly continued to be a thorn in Bismarck's side.

In order to come to terms with the Reich Chancellor, Bremen was asked to file a motion for official proceedings. Furthermore, Bremen was expected to cut back on its previous demands, since the German Empire 'habe an Bremens Eintritt in das Zollgebiet nicht das Interesse, wie an dem Anschlusse Hamburgs.'¹⁸⁹ Incidentally, referring to Bremen's previous demands proves that Bismarck was at least aware of the results of the informational talks with Klostermann in 1881. Still, even if Bismarck had been aware, this did nothing to change his mood towards Bremen. In the Chancellor's eyes, only Hamburg was a port city of global significance. While there was a time when Bismarck attached importance to Bremen's accession to the customs union, this was no longer the case after Hamburg's agreed accession.¹⁹⁰ Bremen was notified that if 'Bremen etwa es vorziehen sollte, in seiner dermaligen Stellung zu verharren, so würde der

¹⁸⁶ Ibid..

¹⁸⁷ StaB 2-Ss.4.e.1. Bd. 2, Hanseatische Gesandtschaft, Berlin, den 22ten Oktober 1882., Ew. Hochwohlgeboren

¹⁸⁸ Ibid..

¹⁸⁹ StaB 2-Ss.4.e.1. Bd. 2, Hanseatische Gesandtschaft, Berlin, den 3ten Oktober 1882., Ew. Magnificenz.

¹⁹⁰ StaB 2-Ss.4.e.1. Bd. 2, Hanseatische Gesandtschaft, Berlin, den 27ten Oktober 1882., Geehrter Herr Senator!

Reichskanzler es wahrscheinlich darin nicht stören.’¹⁹¹ Consequently, Krüger concludes that ‘([n]achdem wir aber durch Zuwarten uns in’s Hintertreffen gesetzt,) werden wir die Situation nehmen müssen, wie sie ist.’¹⁹² Thus, now that Bitter had been dismissed, Bremen’s fate was entirely in Bismarck’s hands. Unfortunately for Bremen, the Reich Chancellor was increasingly willing to make use of his superior position during the process of solving the *Zollanschlussfrage*.

With respect to this situation, Bremen had no choice but to comply with Bismarck’s will. Therefore, the city officially had to request negotiations with the Reich Chancellor, which was done at the end of November 1882. This request naturally met Bismarck’s approval, though he did not fail to emphasise that Bremen would not be treated like Hamburg, as in Hamburg ‘Verhältnisse maßgebend gewesen sind, welche hinsichtlich Bremens zum Theil überhaupt nicht, zum Theil nicht in gleichem Maße obwalten.’¹⁹³ Hence, since Bismarck had first sought contact with the Hanseatic Cities regarding an accession to the customs union in May 1879, Bremen’s basis for negotiations had deteriorated severely. Hamburg had made the first step and was rewarded accordingly. Bremen, on the other hand, was in danger of losing out.

On December 29 1882, Bremen presented its position in the *Zollanschlussfrage* to the Reich Chancellor, as he had requested. An official response by Bismarck was a long time coming. In July 1883, Gildemeister contacted Emil von Burchard, Scholz’s successor as State Secretary, in order to find out about the state of affairs. He was informed that ‘der Reichskanzler selbst ist völlig entschieden der nämlichen Ansicht, daß ein Freihafenbezirk nach Art 34 der Reichsverfassung Bremen nicht wird concedirt werden können.’¹⁹⁴ Yet, it was precisely this point that was regarded in Bremen as a matter of economic life or death. Burchard justified this decision with the fact that a free port area could only be established in a port city, which, in his eyes, Bremen was not. Gildemeister countered that ‘beim Seeverkehr nicht das Schiff, sondern die Waare das entscheidende für den Begriff „Hafen“ sei, daß Bremen der erste

¹⁹¹ Ibid..

¹⁹² Ibid..

¹⁹³ StaB 2-Ss.4.e.1. Bd. 2, Reichsschatzamt, Berlin, den 5. Dezember 1882.

¹⁹⁴ StaB 2-Ss.4.e.1. Bd. 2, Gildemeister, Berlin 5. Juni 1883. Hochgeehrter Herr Präsident.

Bestimmungsplatz für die seewärts kommende Waare sei [...].'¹⁹⁵ Hence, the situation remained tense for Bremen.

In the end, another year passed by, so that by the end of 1883, Bremen had still not received an answer to its request for official proceedings. Since the Reich Chancellor stayed in Bad Gastein and Friedrichsruhe for long periods in order to recover from health issues, it was difficult for Krüger to even get in contact with him in Berlin. Krüger instead instructed von Boetticher, State Secretary and Bismarck's deputy, and the *Geheimen Regierungsrat* Rottenburg to press Bismarck ahead with the matter.

Eventually, the Reich Chancellor responded on March 6 1884, around 14 months after Bremen had filed an application to him.¹⁹⁶ In this response, Bismarck advised Bremen to refer to the Federal Assembly in order to find a solution to the question of Bremen's accession to the customs union. All of a sudden, even the Reich Chancellor was benevolent towards Bremen. He pointed out:

Ich bin nicht befugt den Beschlüssen des Bundesrathes vorzugreifen, aber gern bereit, in dem weiteren Verlauf der Sache meinerseits den Wünschen des hohen Senats innerhalb meiner Kompetenz als Reichskanzler entgegenzukommen, wenn der Bundesrath durch einen Antrag der freien und Hansestadt in Gemäßheit des Artikels 34 der Reichsverfassung in die Lage gesetzt wird über den Einschluß Bremens in das Reichszollgebiet zu verhandeln und zu beschließen.¹⁹⁷

Krüger attempted to explain this stark change in Bismarck's attitude towards Bremen by highlighting that he never actually intended to cross Bremen's wish for a free port area. In this regard, Bismarck had thought about addressing the Federal Assembly before, which he ended up not doing. Furthermore, the Chancellor was not prepared to once again head negotiations about a subject that exceeded his knowledge, as had been the case with Hamburg's accession. According to Boetticher, Bismarck did not want to be bothered with issues that primarily concerned particular governmental departments, 'um seine Thätigkeit ganz den

¹⁹⁵ Ibid..

¹⁹⁶ StaB 2-Ss.4.e.1. Bd. 2, Reichsschatzamt, Friedrichsruh, den 6. März 1884. An den Senat der freien Hansestadt Bremen.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid..

auswärtigen Angelegenheiten und den socialpolitischen Reform-Bestrebungen widmen zu können.’¹⁹⁸ Thus, progress could only be made because Bismarck seemed to be fed up with the problems caused by Bremen’s accession to the customs union. It could be argued that the Empire’s growing involvement in colonial affairs, which was demanded in circles of Bremen’s mercantile community, made the Reich Chancellor settle the dispute between the *Kaiserreich* and Bremen. In this scenario, it would have been Bismarck who made use of colonial interests in Bremen to pursue other objectives.

After some discussion about the dangers of waiving the rights stated in Article 34, it was decided in Bremen to accept the Chancellor’s offer and, therefore, to file a motion to the Federal Assembly. This motion was then filed on March 29 1884. It underlined Bremen’s wish to the Federal Assembly to grant those concessions ‘welche die für das Gedeihen Bremens eben so nothwendige als für die Interessen des Reichs gewiß wünschenwerthe Aufrechthaltung der Stellung Bremens im Welthandel und deren fortschreitende Entwicklung unumgänglich erheischen.’¹⁹⁹

Subsequently, it looked like an agreement between Bremen and the German Empire could be realised within a short period of time. Proceedings between the two parties began at the beginning of May 1884. The most disputed subject was the establishment of a free port area in Bremen, instead of a simple bonded warehouse or even no free zone at all. At the outset, it even seemed as if it would be easy for Bremen to obtain this living condition, as it was regarded in Bremen. In April 1884, Senator Meier reported to Burgomaster Gildemeister that he had discussed the matter with Burchard and that he ‘habe nach einzelnen Äußerungen, die er fallen ließ, wieder große Hoffnung, daß es uns gelingen wird einen stadtbremischen „Freihafenbezirk“ (nicht bloß ein „Freilager“) zu erhalten.’²⁰⁰

Due to the fact that in the following weeks no progress was made regarding this matter, Gildemeister decided to pay a visit to the Reich Chancellor in June 1884. In the course of the discussion, Bremen’s treatment of Bismarck came up again, ‘Hinweisungen auf die oppositionelle Haltung der bremischen Bevölkerung,

¹⁹⁸ Ibid..

¹⁹⁹ StaB 2-Ss.4.e.1. Bd. 3, Bundesrath. No. 47. Session von 1883/1884. Antrag Bremens. Bremen, den 29. März 1884.

²⁰⁰ StaB 2-Ss.4.e.1. Bd. 3, Auszug aus dem Schreiben des Herrn Senator Dr. Meier an Herrn Bürgermeister Dr. Gildemeister, d.d. Berlin den 7. April 1884.

des Tabackmonopols wurde gedacht, Samoa's und Dr. Barths.'²⁰¹ However, in the meantime, Theodor Barth had resigned from his position as *Syndikus* in the Chamber of Commerce. Gildemeister referred to this as 'dies letztere Gravamen sei eliminirt [...]'²⁰² Furthermore, he also did not fail to emphasise that Bremen's resistance against a tobacco monopoly was necessary from the city's point of view. With regard to the free port area, the Reich Chancellor admitted that he was not adequately informed. Yet, he still represented the opinion that 'Bremen eigentlich keine Seestadt sei, sondern erst werden wolle [...]'²⁰³ Hence, Bismarck promised support remained restrained. In fact, Gildemeister concluded that 'wir uns auf ein wirksames Eingreifen des Fürsten zu unserm Gunsten keine Hoffnung machen dürfen und besten Falles keinen entschieden Widerstand von ihm zu befürchten brauchen [...]'²⁰⁴

Bismarck at least maintained this neutrality in the following session of the *Zollanschlusskommission* of the Federal Assembly. Finally, it was resolved to grant a free port area in Bremen. Nonetheless, the overall impression of the proceedings for Bremen's representatives was a negative one. Buff claims: 'Es scheint sich eine Abneigung gegen Bremen festgesetzt zu haben, die kaum zu erklären, jedenfalls nur auf die kleinlichsten Motive zurückzuführen ist [...]'²⁰⁵ Even if we ignore the question about Bremen's relationship to the German nation, it is obvious that, by this point, those who were involved in the city-state's political decision-making process were frustrated with the German *nation-state*. Of course, it cannot be deduced from this that the accession process necessarily diluted or reduced (pan-German) patriotic sentiment in Bremen. Still, it is hard to imagine that Senator Buff's sobering conclusions would have *enhanced* goodwill towards the German nation-state.

This point is proven in another session of the committee, in which the concerted draft of a report to the Federal Assembly was debated. In this, particularly Bavaria and Oldenburg, but also Prussia, raised a number of objections, for example, regarding the establishment of export industry in the free port area, which was not granted to Bremen. Referring to this matter, Gildemeister

²⁰¹ StaB 2-Ss.4.e.1. Bd. 3, Gildemeister, Berlin 17/6. 84. Geehrter Herr College.

²⁰² Ibid..

²⁰³ Ibid..

²⁰⁴ Ibid..

²⁰⁵ StaB 2-Ss.4.e.1. Bd. 3, Buff, Bremen, 20. Juni 84.

complained in a letter to the Senate: 'Nirgends mehr als bei diesem Punkte trat die neidische Stimmung der Binnenländischen gegen die Hanseatische Freiheit aus deren Früchte hervor.'²⁰⁶ Eventually, the committee managed to find common ground and its resolution would next be accepted by the Bremish Senate and the *Bürgerschaft*. Hoping that 'aus dem Zollanschluß wahrscheinlich wieder viel Segen für Bremen erwachsen könne [...]', both bodies naturally accepted the resolution.²⁰⁷

Therefore, the matter was discussed again in the autumn of 1884. There were only a few final obstacles to overcome for Bremen. One of these addressed the wording of Bremen's motion to the Federal Assembly. In this motion, Bremen was expected to explicitly state that it would waive its right to remain outside the Empire's customs union guaranteed in Article 34. Gildemeister commented on this; in his opinion, negligibility by pointing out that '[w]enn man beantragt geköpft zu werden, braucht man doch nicht ausdrücklich auf seinen Kopf zu verzichten.'²⁰⁸ To say the least, it is telling that Bremen's Burgomaster compared Bremen's accession to the customs union with a decapitation. However, Gildemeister was eventually prepared to add Bremen's waiver of Article 34.

On November 6 1884, Bremen's motion was finally approved by the Federal Assembly. In order to get the official confirmation for Bremen's motion, the Empire's subsidy to the building of the new free port area also had to be accepted by the Reichstag. The total costs were estimated to amount to around 34.5 million Marks and the German Empire was expected to contribute 12 million Marks. In February 1885, the Reichstag committee for Bremen's accession voted in favour of the motion. Only two of the eleven members abstained from voting. Interestingly, one of these members was Hermann Gebhard, Bremerhaven's *Stadtdirektor*. Gildemeister reported that Gebhard made an attempt 'die Discussion auf die Local-Interessen Bremerhavens zu lenken, was ihm freilich völlig misslang, aber doch zeitraubende Auseinandersetzungen zur Folge hatte.'²⁰⁹ Furthermore, Gebhard complained about the planned size and facilities of Bremen's free port area, which, in his eyes, was too large in comparison to Bremerhaven's free port area. However,

²⁰⁶ StaB 2-Ss.4.e.1. Bd. 3, Gildemeister, Berlin. 26. Juni 1884, Hochgeehrter Herr College.

²⁰⁷ StaB 2-Ss.4.e.1. Bd. 3, Christoph Papendiek, in: No. 21. Verhandlungen der Bürgerschaft, Sitzung vom 17. September 1884.

²⁰⁸ StaB 2-Ss.4.e.1. Bd. 3, Gildemeister to Krüger, Bremen 27/10. 84.

²⁰⁹ StaB 2-Ss.4.e.1. Bd. 3, Gildemeister, Berlin. 11. Febr. 1885. Hochgeehrter Herr Präsident.

the committee turned down Gebhard's objections, as it was only instructed to accept or reject Bremen's motion and not to make any modifications. Hence, this incident demonstrates that there were temporary tensions between Bremen and its outpost on the Weser estuary. However, Bremerhaven was not capable of standing up to Bremen. This circumstance legitimises the traditional perspective of German politics and historiography to regard Bremerhaven as a kind of outlying district of Bremen.

When Bremen's motion was resolved in the Reichstag at the end of February 1885, Gildemeister noticed that [a]uf der Journalistentribüne scheint man den Vorgang kaum beachtet zu haben; wenigstens finde ich in der Nationalzeitung nur die dürre Notiz, daß die Vorlage angenommen wurde.²¹⁰ So, while Bremen's position as a free port had led to fierce debates during the 1870s, this had seemingly dwindled away by 1885. Hamburg's accession had already been determined and for Bremen it had only been a matter of time until it crossed its Rubicon as well. In March 1885, the Empire's subsidy was then made public in the *Reichsgesetzblatt* and in September that year Bremen's accession to the customs union was also publicly announced.²¹¹ The plan was to finish construction works until October 1888, when Hamburg intended to enter the Empire's customs union.

It is astonishing that with the completion of the new free port area in Bremen, there was also a turnaround in the attitude towards the accession. While the Chamber of Commerce had been a decisive opponent to an accession to the customs union, it was also quick to adapt to the new situation. In June 1888, the Chamber's president, Gustav Pagenstecher, praised the Imperial and Prussian governments. He enthused:

Sie möchte aber schon heute ihre hohe Befriedigung darüber aussprechen, daß seitens der Reichsregierung und der preußischen Regierung dem Wettbewerb der deutschen Nordseehäfen gegen die Rhein- und Scheldelhäfen in neuerer Zeit ein weit größeres Interesse und Wohlwollen gezeigt wird als früher, das insbesondere auf dem Gebiete der Eisenbahnpolitik in Gewährung von Frachtermäßigungen für den Import,

²¹⁰ StaB 2-Ss.4.e.1. Bd. 3, Auszug aus dem Schreiben d. H. Bgmstr. Gildemeister an H. Bürgermeister Buff d. d. Berlin, den 22. Februar 1885.

²¹¹ StaB 2-Ss.4.e.1. Bd. 3, Reichs-Gesetzblatt. No. 11. Gesetz, betreffend den Beitrag des Reichs zu den Kosten des Zollanschlusses von Bremen, vom 31. März 1885.

wie für den Export seinen Ausdruck gefunden und durch dieselben bereits erhebliche Erfolge zu Gunsten der deutschen Häfen errungen hat.²¹²

After all, the ports on the Rhine and Scheldt had been able to maintain their importance to the German goods and passenger traffic from the days of the Holy Roman Empire.²¹³ The building of the railway, the foundation of the German Empire and the accession of the Hanseatic Cities – and later on the *Mittellandkanal* – then led to a shift from the Rhine and Scheldt to the ports of the North Sea Coast. Thereafter, Pagenstecher suggested inviting Emperor Wilhelm II to the opening ceremony of the new free port area in October. Pagenstecher was sure that ‘die bremische Bevölkerung aber wird ihren Kaiser in den Mauern unserer alten Hansestadt jubelnd begrüßen.’²¹⁴ Thus, by 1888, opposition towards Bremen’s accession in the *Handelskammer* had transformed to enthusiasm for the German Empire and its Emperor. Unfortunately for Bremen, Wilhelm II preferred to pay a visit to Hamburg’s opening ceremony in October 1888.

Summing up, examining the process of Bremen’s accession to the Empire’s customs union has produced significant conclusions about Bremen’s role within the German Empire before 1888. If it is argued that the *Zollverein* led to economic integration and at least supported the nation building process, then the case of Bremen proves that remaining outside the German customs union did not have the opposite effect, but it certainly helped to cement the idea of an exceptional status. In line with this argument, Bremen’s political and cultural integration into the German Empire was not completed before the accession. This is a point that was also emphasised by Bismarck. Hamburg and Bremen were not for nothing seen as ‘Brückenköpfe des Ausland auf deutschem Boden’.²¹⁵ From Bremen’s point of view, it is understandable not to have felt entirely as part of the German Empire prior to 1888. Bismarck led the debate that broke out following Wentzel’s enquiry in May 1879 in a rigorous and even condescending manner. Despite, or perhaps just because of this, Bremen was forced into the Empire’s customs union, but it quickly

²¹² StaB 2-Ss.4.e.2.b., Acta betreffend die Einweihung des Freibezirks am 21. Oct. 1888. Handelskammer Bremen, Bremen, den 30. Juni 1888

²¹³ See, for example: James Boyd, *An Investigation*

²¹⁴ StaB 2-Ss.4.e.2.b., Acta betreffend die Einweihung des Freibezirks am 21. Oct. 1888. Handelskammer Bremen, Bremen, den 30. Juni 1888

²¹⁵ Cited in Pflanze, *Bismarck: Der Reichskanzler*, p. 254

found a way to adapt to the situation. By 1888, the era of independence was left behind and even Bremen's Chamber of Commerce rejoiced about advantages of the accession.

e. Bremen and Germany's colonial adventure

During the 1880s, another crucial process took place in the German Empire: the beginning of German imperialism. Therefore, it will be necessary to look at Bremen's involvement with the colonies and possible links between Bremen's accession and the beginning of imperialism. This section is concerned with the process that led to the establishment of Germany's colonial empire and with the way Bremen's mercantile community interacted with the colonies thereafter. First of all, it has to be noted that Bremen promoted the acquisition of overseas territory right from the beginnings of the German Empire. In a petition to the Reichstag of the *Norddeutscher Bund* dated November 26 1870, it was recommended to acquire the port of Saigon from the French after the Franco-Prussian War. Yet, the petition was careful not to link this request with a demand for colonial ventures. It was argued that a naval base in Saigon was '[w]eit entfernt, Deutschland in die Verwickelungen einer Kolonialpolitik zu treiben [...]'²¹⁶ Instead, the German naval base would simply provide for the protection of German shipping and trading interests in Asia. These interests were in danger every time there was an upcoming war in which the French were involved, as they were able to lay an embargo on Asian and Japanese ports.

In total, 42 petitioners signed the document. Out of these, 37 were based in either Bremen or Bremerhaven. Amongst them were famous members of Bremen's elite, such as Alexander Georg Mosle, who became part of the first Reichstag in 1871, D. H. Wätjen & Co., the largest private sailing ship company in the world, and a number of presidents of Bremen's Chamber of Commerce. At the same time as Bremen's elite supported the idea, in Hamburg, there was strong protest against

²¹⁶ AdHB, Hp II 90, Dem hohen Reichstage des Norddeutschen Bundes, Berlin, den 26. November 1870. On this topic, see also Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Bismarck und der Imperialismus* (Frankfurt, 1984), pp. 201–204

this projected venture, as pointed out by Wehler.²¹⁷ In any case, the petition was brought before the Reichstag.

In the discussion that followed, Hermann Henrich Meier, founder of the *Norddeutscher Lloyd* and member of the Reichstag, describes his stance on the petition. In his line of argument, it becomes clear that he was against acquiring Saigon based on colonial political motives. In fact, Meier believed 'daß die Kolonialpolitik ein überwundener Standpunkt ist [...]'²¹⁸ However, at the same time, Meier also pointed out: 'Könnten wir es ohne Opfer bekommen, [...] könnten wir allein Saigon behalten, so glaube ich, daß es für uns im Laufe der Zeit doch recht nützlich sein könnte und sein würde.'²¹⁹ Therefore, in Meier's eyes, it was significant to acquire Saigon in order to be able to protect German mercantile interests in Asia. Thus, while overseas territories were not reconcilable with the belief in free trade, Bremen's merchants approved of them as protective measures. In the end, Leopold Freiherr von Hoverbeck, leader of the *Deutsche Fortschrittspartei*, made a request to reject the petition, as he believed that it was 'nicht passend, sich überhaupt im Reichstag darüber den Kopf zu zerbrechen.'²²⁰ The Reichstag came to the decision not to forward the petition to the Reich Chancellor, which meant that it had been killed off.²²¹

A decade later, the attitude in Bremen towards overseas territories was different. In 1880, the *Reichstag* of the German Empire became involved in colonial issues for the first time, and the reason for this was the *Samoa-Vorlage*. In 1876, on the basis of intensifying trading relations between the German Empire and Samoa, an initial friendship and trading agreement was made between Germany and a number of Samoan chiefs. These were renewed in 1879. In December 1879, the Samoan Islands were then also formally put under the collective protectorate of the United States, Great Britain and Germany. In the trade with Samoa and other

²¹⁷ Wehler, *Bismarck*, p. 202

²¹⁸ 1867/70, 15. Petition, betr. die Erwerbung der Flottenstation Saigon, Verhandlungen des Deutschen Reichstags, Reichstagsprotokolle: http://www.reichstagsprotokolle.de/Blatt3_nb_bsb00018316_00064.html. Accessed 12/03/2016

²¹⁹ Ibid..

²²⁰ 1867/70, 15. Petition, betr. die Erwerbung der Flottenstation Saigon, Verhandlungen des Deutschen Reichstags, Reichstagsprotokolle: http://www.reichstagsprotokolle.de/Blatt3_nb_bsb00018316_00065.html. Accessed 12/03/2016

²²¹ See also: Wehler, *Bismarck*, p. 203

islands in the Pacific Ocean, the trading firm *Johann Cesar Godeffroy & Sohn* from Hamburg almost possessed a monopoly position. In 1879, the firm employed 1,210 workers on plantations which covered 4,337 acres of land.²²² Yet, in 1879, the firm found itself in financial problems due to unwise speculations. *Johann Cesar Godeffroy & Sohn* became indebted to British banks, which meant that the firm's possessions were pledged to the British creditors. Henceforth, business was carried out by the *Deutsche Handels- und Plantagengesellschaft*, which was established in 1878. Since the German Navy had also built a naval base on Samoa, the bankruptcy of the firm was seen as one of national importance. Consequently, it was brought before the German government.

The *Samoa-Vorlage* projected that the German state should furnish dividend guarantees for a new company in order to cover the possibility that the company did not make enough profit independently. It was intended that this newly founded company, by the name of *Deutsche Seehandels-Gesellschaft*, would take over the *Deutsche Handels- und Plantagengesellschaft*. The Empire's dividend guarantee was supposed to increase the provision of private capital. Advocates of state financial intervention also had *Reichskanzler* Bismarck on their side. Generally, Bismarck is not regarded as a great supporter of colonial acquisitions. For example, in 1881, he still declared that 'for as long as I remain Chancellor, we will not become involved in colonialism.'²²³ Hence, it is important to emphasise that the plan did not envisage direct German rule of any colonial acquisitions but only financial aid for the overseas ventures of the *Deutsche Seehandels-Gesellschaft*.

Regarding the reasons for this move by Bismarck, Francesca Schinzinger has argued that it 'ist zu vermuten, daß Bismarck die Hansestädte stärker an das Reich binden wollte, indem er ihnen hier entgegen kam.'²²⁴ According to Schinzinger, this was necessary, since the Hanseatic Cities remained outside the Empire's customs union and 'sie traditionell ökonomisch und politisch anders ausgerichtet waren als das kontinentale Brandenburg-Preußen.'²²⁵ Considering that Bremen was informed that the *Samoa-Vorlage* was brought before the Federal

²²² Horst Gründer, *Geschichte der deutschen Kolonien* (Paderborn, 1995), p. 90. For the whole process see also: Hoffmann, *Das Haus*, pp. 403–414

²²³ Sebastian Conrad, *German Colonialism: A Short History* (Cambridge, 2012), p. 21

²²⁴ Francesca Schinzinger, *Die Kolonien und das Deutsche Reich: Die wirtschaftliche Bedeutung der deutschen Besitzungen in Übersee* (Stuttgart, 1984), p. 17

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 17

Assembly and the Reichstag in January 1880, it makes sense to argue that Bismarck regarded the motion as an offer to Bremen to make it compliant. While Hamburg had already given a negative response to Wentzel's request regarding an accession from May 1879, the problem was still shelved in Bremen. Certainly, it is still entirely possible that Bismarck attempted to expand support for an accession in both cities.

If this was the Reich Chancellor's intention, he must have been more than disappointed with the result. In April 1880, very shortly before the motion was put to the vote in the Federal Assembly, Gildemeister asked Minister Resident Krüger for his opinion on the matter. Krüger underlined that most states agreed to the motion and warned Bremen to take a 'prinzipielle Stellung zu dem Antrage'.²²⁶ He admitted that it 'ist ja richtig, daß die Subventionierung eines privaten Unternehmens aus öffentlichen Mitteln den von uns bisher vertretenen Grundsätzen widerspricht.'²²⁷ At the same time, Krüger pointed out that a rejection of this motion could potentially ruin Bremen's future, for example with respect to the competition of subsidised shipping lines in Great Britain, Belgium, the Netherlands and other countries. Since the Reich Chancellor himself stood up for the *Samoa-Vorlage*, a rejection by Bremen would make the city fall out of Bismarck's favour. Krüger argued:

Er wird vielmehr über Kurzsichtigkeit und Undank der Handelskreise klagen, die ihn im Stiche gelassen, er wird darin unsererseits einen kleinlichen Revancheact für seine Zollpolitik erblicken und damit zu dem Entschlusse kommen, für die Handels-Interessen keinen Finger mehr zu rühren. Der entgegengesetzten Besorgniß, daß er ermuthigt werden könnte, ein zweites Samoa zu gründen, wird schon der Reichstag vorzubringen wissen.²²⁸

Thus, for Krüger, the only option for Bremen was not to oppose the motion. In case there was a formal vote, he advised Gildemeister either to abstain from voting or to approve of the motion. Since all states approved of the *Samoa-Vorlage* in the

²²⁶ StaB 3-R.1.a No. 160, Hanseatische Gesandtschaft. Berlin, den 11ten April 1880. Lieber Gildemeister.

²²⁷ Ibid..

²²⁸ Ibid..

Federal Assembly, Bremen also decided to vote in favour of it. Still, Bremen did not fail to make it clear in the protocol that ‘Bremen Angesichts der Stellung, welche die Reichsregierung und der Herr Reichskanzler persönlich zu dem bereits begründeten Unternehmen eingenommen, seine Bedenken zurückhalte und dem Antrage nicht entgegentreten wolle.’²²⁹ In contrast, general opinion in Bremen was less diplomatic. On January 18 1880, the *Weser-Zeitung* published a detailed article on the *Samoa-Vorlage*.²³⁰ In this article, the newspaper criticised the plan to subsidise a private firm. The curious fact about the motion was that it was not directed at ‘Gewinnsucht, sondern an den Patriotismus des Publikums [...] und von vornherein mit annerkennenswerter Aufrichtigkeit zu verstehen giebt, daß den Zeichnern ein gutes Geschäft nicht in Aussicht gestellt werden könne.’²³¹ Consequently, it was wondered whether it was not also in the national interest for ‘opferfreudige Patrioten’ to invest in ventures that were more likely to be profitable.²³² In the *Courier*, on the other hand, coverage of the *Samoa-Vorlage* was less hostile. The newspaper itself remained neutral in its reporting on the motion. Instead, the *Courier* quoted the *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* when reporting about news regarding the motion. For example, in late April, the *Courier* emphasised, in reference to the *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, that the Reich Chancellor supported the *Samoa-Vorlage* and that it was in the ‘Interesse der deutschen Schifffahrt und der Erhaltung ihres Besitzstandes in der Südsee [...]’.²³³

In the end, after having been approved in the Federal Assembly, the motion was submitted to the Reichstag. On April 27 1880, the Reichstag then rejected the *Samoa-Vorlage* by 128 to 112 votes. Interestingly, Mosle, Bremen’s member of the Reichstag, voted for the motion. In line with the position the *Weser-Zeitung* had assumed, the *Bremer Nachrichten* reported after the Reichstag vote: ‘Die Samoa-Vorlage ist gefallen, der „doctrinäre Sieg“ ist errungen und Herr Mosle hat sich also

²²⁹ StaB 3-R.1.a No. 160, Auszug aus dem Protokoll der neunzehnten Sitzung des Bundesraths vom 14. April 1880. Gesetz-Entwurf wegen Unterstützung der deutschen Seehandelsgesellschaft. S. 253

²³⁰ StaB FB359, *Weser-Zeitung*, 1.10.1879-14.2.1880. No. 11862 Bremen, Sonntag, 18. Januar 1880. Morgen-Ausgabe

²³¹ Ibid..

²³² Ibid..

²³³ See StaB FB 1200, *Courier*, 1.1.1880-30.6.1880. In particular: *Courier*, No. 117. Bremen. Dienstag, 27. April 1880. Mittags-Ausgabe and *Courier*, No. 118. Bremen. Mittwoch, 28. April 1880. Morgen-Ausgabe

einmal mit dem Reichskanzler geirrt [...].'²³⁴ As already mentioned, Mosle had already affiliated himself to Bismarck's policies during the debate on protectionist measures. On the other hand, there is Hermann Henrich Meier. The Bremish businessman and member of the *Nationalliberale Partei*, who represented Schaumburg-Lippe in the Reichstag, voted against the motion. Overall, members of the right wing of the National Liberals and the Conservatives voted in favour, while progressive liberalists and members of the Centre Party rejected it.²³⁵ In the end, the *Deutsche Handels- und Plantagengesellschaft* could be saved from a British take-over by a group of financiers. Thus, in 1880, there was still a large opposition to any colonial undertakings in the Reichstag. This is due to the fact that, as Gründer argues, 'die Anhänger des Wirtschaftsliberalismus in der „Samoa-Vorlage“ nur den Auftakt für erste koloniale Experimente sahen.'²³⁶

As we have seen in the context of the *Zollanschlussfrage*, Bismarck deplored Bremen's dismissive attitude towards the *Samoa-Vorlage*. If the Reich Chancellor's intention was to bind the Hanseatic Cities to the German Empire, as Schinzinger has suggested, then this was a complete and utter failure. In her book, Schinzinger goes on to argue that her argument is also supported by another incident: Bismarck's enquiry of the Hanseatic Cities about necessary steps by the German Empire in order to secure the Hanseatic trade with Africa in August 1883.²³⁷ Yet, if we look at the chronology of Bremen's accession to the Empire's customs union, Schinzinger's argument falls apart. By 1883, Bismarck had already received an official request by Bremen to open negotiations about its accession. Bismarck ignored this request throughout 1883. Thus, there would have been much simpler ways for the Chancellor to integrate Bremen into the German Empire than to offer colonies. It follows from this that we need to look again at the origins and mechanics of German colonialism.

First of all, contrary to Schinzinger's depiction, Bremen was contacted by the Prussian envoy, Otto von Wentzel, on April 16 1883 rather than in August 1883.²³⁸ The reason for Wentzel's approach was an agreement regarding the

²³⁴ StaB FB 605, Bremer Nachrichten. No. 117. Zweites Blatt. Mittwoch, 28. April 1880

²³⁵ Gründer, *Geschichte der deutschen Kolonien*, p. 91

²³⁶ Ibid., p. 91

²³⁷ Schinzinger, *Die Kolonien*, p. 17

²³⁸ StaB 3-A.3.A.2. No. 45, Königlich Preußische Gesandtschaft in Mecklenburg und den Hansestädten, Hamburg, 16. April 1883. Wentzel

demarcation of colonial territories on the African West Coast, in particular Sierra Leone, between France and Great Britain, which was signed in June 1882. Furthermore, the agreement also ensured equal financial treatment of both countries in their territories in Western Africa. As a result, Wentzel asked about any grievances or wishes amongst the Bremish mercantile community, that it would want the German government to address to the French and British.²³⁹ In its response, Bremen's Senate made it obvious that 'geschäftliche Beziehungen zwischen bremischen Handlungshäusern und jenem Bezirke an der Westküste von Afrika zur Zeit nicht bestehen.'²⁴⁰ In other words, the Senate could not find any relevant material regarding the impact of Anglo-French agreement on Bremen's trade. Bremen's lack of interest in colonial matters was thus still as noticeable as it had been in the days of the *Samoa-Vorlage* in 1880.

However, Wentzel remained determined. In a second letter to Bremen's Senate, he highlighted that his enquiry related to the entire African West Coast and was not limited to only Sierra Leone.²⁴¹ The matter was forwarded to Bremen's Chamber of Commerce. In the report given by the Chamber of Commerce, it is stressed that there were no problems at all between Bremish mercantile interests and colonial administration in British territories. On the other hand, in those territories not claimed by any colonial power, more precisely between modern-day Aného (Togo) and Grand-Popo (Benin), German factories experienced troubles that 'zum nicht geringen Theile auf Intrigen der französischen Händler zurückzuführen sind, welche die Concurenz der deutschen Häuser durch Aufwiegelung der einheimischen Häuptlinge wirksamer zu begegnen hoffen.'²⁴² For the purpose of protection of these mercantile interests, a number of German factories had already issued a petition to the Empire's Foreign Office. In this, the factories demanded the presence of a naval vessel in the area in order to show Germany's military power. In this way, the German vessel would be able 'mit

²³⁹ Ibid..

²⁴⁰ StaB 3-A.3.A.2. No. 45, Bremen, 22. Juni 1883. Gildemeister. Ew. Excellenz.

²⁴¹ StaB 3-A.3.A.2. No. 45, Königlich Preußische Gesandtschaft in Mecklenburg und den Hansestädten. Hamburg, 27. Juni 1883. Wentzel

²⁴² StaB 3-A.3.A.2. No. 45, Die Handelskammer. An die Comm. f. Reichs u. Ausw. Ang. Bremen, 6. Juli 1883

dortigen Häuptlingen auch eine Art Vertrag zur Verhinderung willkürlicher Störungen des deutschen Handels zu schließen.’²⁴³

Additionally, the *Handelskammer* did not fail to mention another overseas enterprise by a Bremish merchant, Adolf Lüderitz. He possessed territory in the bay of Angra Pequena, later named Lüderitzbucht, in South West Africa. On May 1 1883, this territory was bought for him by Heinrich Vogelsang, another merchant from Bremen, from Josef Fredrik, a chief of the Nama people. According to the Chamber of Commerce, the ‘Hauptreichthum jener Gegend bilden Vieh, Strauße und angeblich leicht zu förderndes Kupfer.’²⁴⁴ It was pointed out that the company was still in the start-up phase and that a factory was under construction. Since the company was being financed privately, the Chamber of Commerce asked merely for political protection. In his response to the report of the *Handelskammer*, Wentzel informed Bremen’s Senate that it was planned to establish a consular representation in South West Africa as well as the permanent deployment of naval vessels in the area.²⁴⁵ One of the consul’s future roles would then be to ‘[d]er von dem Hanseatischen Handelsstande beantragte Abschluß von Verträgen mit anderen unabhängigen Negerstaaten [...]’²⁴⁶ For the moment, the *S.M.S. Sophie* intended to pay a visit to South West Africa in order to protect German interests in the area.

Eventually, Lüderitz himself requested official “protection” for his territorial acquisitions from the *Auswärtiges Amt* in April 1884. On April 24 1884, Bismarck officially put Lüderitz’ acquisitions under the “protection” of the German Empire. In order to gain international recognition for this, especially from Great Britain, Germany sent out warships to South West Africa. With the hoisting of the German Imperial flag in the bay of Angra Pequena in August 1883, Germany began to establish itself as a colonial power.²⁴⁷ In October 1883, German territorial claims were also consolidated by an official “protection” agreement between the German Empire and Josef Fredriks. Lüderitz’s overseas ventures promptly ended with his death, probably by drowning in the Orange River, in 1886. Already before his

²⁴³ Ibid..

²⁴⁴ Ibid..

²⁴⁵ StaB 3-A.3.A.2. No. 45, Königlich Preußische Gesandtschaft in Mecklenburg und den Hansestädten. Hamburg, den 26. December 1883. Wentzel

²⁴⁶ Ibid..

²⁴⁷ Wilfried Westphal, *Geschichte der deutschen Kolonien* (München, 1984), pp. 20–35

death, in 1885, Lüderitz had to sell his overseas possessions to the *Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft für Südwestafrika*, which was founded, with the involvement of Bismarck, in order to avoid an early colonial embarrassment. Otherwise, Lüderitz would probably have sold his overseas possessions to potential British buyers.²⁴⁸ However, since the company did not want to assume any sovereign rights, the German Empire had to send out an Imperial Commissioner, Dr Ernst Göring, the father of Hermann Göring, to South West Africa. From that point onwards, the German Empire was also formally a colonial power.

Hence, it was shown that Germany's opening colonial venture could not have been intended as a way to integrate Bremen into the German Empire. When Bismarck enquired about Bremen's mercantile activities in Africa, the *Zollanschlussfrage* was still not resolved. This was because Bismarck did not want to resolve it, even though he could have. Neither did Bremen's Senate express any real interest in the matter. Instead, it was the Chamber of Commerce that engaged in the question. Rather than concerning all of Bremen's mercantile community, only a small group of merchants that was actually affected by this matter. However, this small group was particularly active in looking for support from the German government.

This point is also supported by Wehler's analysis of Lüderitz' promotion of his colonial venture in Berlin.²⁴⁹ Wehler reveals that, prior to Wentzel's enquiry regarding Bremen's interest on the West African coast, Lüderitz had already approached the *Auswärtige Amt*. In January 1883, Lüderitz asked for protection of his business from the German consul in Cape Town and, if possible, a German naval vessel. In fact, the *Auswärtige Amt* had already started to gather information on Lüderitz after he had requested official protection for his planned factory in November 1882. For the *Auswärtige Amt*, Lüderitz was judged by the Prussian consul general in Bremen, 'der den »eigenartigen« und in der Hansestadt nicht sonderlich gelittenen Kaufmann ziemlich wohlwollend beurteilte [...]'²⁵⁰ At least Lüderitz was able to receive '»eine allgemein gehaltene mündliche Zusage«' from

²⁴⁸ In February 1885, when Lüderitz threatened to sell his overseas possession to British buyers, Bismarck got involved. As Wehler pointed out: 'Zu diesem Zeitpunkt schaltete sich Bismarck mit dem Auswärtigen Amt ein, um die soeben inaugurierte »deutsche Kolonialpolitik gegen Kompromittierung« zu schützen. See Wehler, *Bismarck*, pp. 283–284

²⁴⁹ For an examination of Lüderitz' ventures in South-West Africa see Wehler, *Bismarck*, pp. 263–292

²⁵⁰ Wehler, *Bismarck*, p. 266

State Secretary Paul von Hatzfeldt, which was confirmed by Bismarck.²⁵¹ However, despite being a small group, those merchants pressing for colonial commitment of the German Empire eventually succeeded.

f. Bremen's memory of Bismarck – the Bismarck monument

Bremen's relationship with Bismarck was extremely difficult during the lead-up to the city's accession to the customs union. Prior to the *Zollanschlussfrage*, after the Franco-Prussian War, Bremen had already made Bismarck an honorary citizen for its service to the German nation – just like Bismarck was an honorary citizen of Hamburg, Lübeck and many other German cities. However, during the *Zollanschlussfrage*, Bismarck simply ignored Bremen's wish to become part of the Empire's customs union for a long time. Even worse, the Reich Chancellor was not shy to insult Bremen's pride by stating that it 'eigentlich keine Seestadt sei, sondern erst werden wolle [...]'²⁵²

Therefore, it is worth looking at how Bismarck was commemorated in Bremen after his death on July 30 1898. Looking at how Bismarck was remembered also gives insight into the way the people of Bremen thought about the city's accession ten years after it had been finalised. After all, Bismarck had been the driving force behind this process. Certainly, a monument dedicated to the former Reich Chancellor was not at all unique in the German Empire. Bismarck's death was one of a couple of events that led to an upsurge in the construction of Bismarck monuments throughout Germany. Other events included the *Reichsgründung*, the dismissal of Bismarck on March 20 1890, and his 80th birthday on April 1 1895. In particular, Bismarck's dismissal was a starting point for an impressive cult of worshipping for the Reich Chancellor. Overall, as highlighted in Alings' study, '217 Standorte figürlicher oder architektonischer Denkmäler konnten erfaßt werden.'²⁵³ However, while the *Kriegerdenkmal* in the 1870s was a way of illustrating Bremen's independence and the national unification in a unique fashion, the expression of national belonging had changed in Bremen by the 1890s. This fact is proven by Bremen's *Bismarckdenkmal*.

²⁵¹ Ibid., p. 266

²⁵² StaB 2-Ss.4.e.1. Bd. 3, Gildemeister, Berlin 17/6. 84. Geehrter Herr College.

²⁵³ Alings, *Monument und Nation*, p. 130. For a discussion on the Bismarck monuments see: Alings, *Monument und Nation*, pp. 128–142.

Soon after Bismarck's death, in August 1898, Burgomaster Alfred Dominicus Pauli and Franz Ernst Schütte, a Bremish merchant, took charge of the erection of a monument dedicated to Bismarck. In a first meeting on August 23 1898, during which a committee was set up, it was highlighted that '[j]eder patriotisch fühlende Einwohner Bremens werde dem Gedanken der Errichtung des Denkmals für den großen Todten freudig zustimmen.'²⁵⁴ The monument was to be financed by contributions from the Bremish population. Progress seems to have been made quickly: the committee's account book shows that by the end of 1898, more than 150, 000 Marks of the 200, 000 Marks required for the monument had been collected. For this reason, the *Bremer Courier* proudly exclaimed that the people of Bremen were able to tolerate small mistakes for the bigger picture: 'Bismarcks Schwächen treten zurück, auch da, wo wir selbst darunter zu leiden hatten, und vor unserem geistigen Auge erhebt sich die durch den Tod verklärte Heldengestalt des Einigers unseres Vaterlandes.'²⁵⁵

Even though the committee was able to rapidly collect the money for the planned monument, the construction was delayed. One of the main reasons for this was the question of where the monument should be placed. It was decided that only the best place was good enough for the erection of a monument dedicated to the former Reich Chancellor. Inevitably, this took some time. After September 1898, it was not until February 1902 that the committee next met, '[a]ngeregt durch den höchst bedeutungsvollen Wettbewerb um das Denkmal des Fürsten Bismarck, das Hamburg zu errichten beabsichtigt.'²⁵⁶ Amongst a number of possible locations, the argument against placing the monument next to the River Weser, on the *Altmannshöhe*, was rejected, as it was similar to the place, 'den Hamburg für sein Denkmal bestimmt hat, und würde mit ihrem Denkmal vielleicht als eine verkleinerte Nachahmung des Hamburg Werkes erscheinen.'²⁵⁷ Eventually, a decision was not made until 1904, when a group of artists and experts visited Bremen. Adolf Hildebrand, a famous sculptor at the time, recommended positioning the monument at the foot of Bremen's cathedral. Additionally,

²⁵⁴ StaB 3-B.13.No. 1a. 7, Auszug aus dem Bremer Courier vom Dienstag, den 23. August 1898. No. 231. Morgen Ausgabe, 1. Blatt.

²⁵⁵ StaB 3-B.13.No. 1a. 7, Auszug aus dem Bremer Courier vom Sonntag, den 9. Oktober 1898. No 278. Drittes Blatt. 53. Jahrg.

²⁵⁶ StaB 3-B.13.No. 1a. 2, Denkmal des Fürsten Bismarck, Bericht der Commission der Sachverständigen an das geschäftsführende Comité, Bremen, 5. Februar 1902.

²⁵⁷ Ibid..

Hildebrand proposed an equestrian statue, which had hitherto been disapproved of on the grounds that, in Prussia, only rulers received an equestrian statue.²⁵⁸ Bremen's inhabitants did not unanimously support this envisaged location but, in the end, they did not get a say in the matter.²⁵⁹

A second reason for the delay in construction was the fact that the collected money was misappropriated. In 1904, the firm *St. Lürman & Sohn*, which was administering the total sum of more than 200,000 Marks for the Bismarck monument, filed for insolvency. Lürman simply fled abroad with the entire fund. Thereupon, the committee, in particular Franz Schütte, was quick to find new donors amongst Bremen's notable citizens in order to avoid public embarrassment. Franz Schütte and Hermann Melchers, a member of a famous Bremish merchant family, together donated 60,000 Marks.²⁶⁰

Thanks mainly to Franz Schütte's effort, the committee was able to commission Adolf Hildebrand to build the Bismarck monument. This, again, took so much time that Bremen was only able to present the *Bismarckdenkmal* to the public in 1910. On July 9 1910, the statue was solemnly uncovered. In the face of the monument, the *Hamburgische Correspondent* enthused Hildebrand 'braucht [...] den Vergleich mit den besten Reiterstandbildern nicht zu scheuen, selbst wenn man den Colleoni in Venedig oder Marc Aurel in Rom zum Vergleich nimmt.'²⁶¹

All in all, Bremen was certainly not a special case with respect to its commemoration of Bismarck's achievements after his death. Bremen already acknowledged the Reich Chancellor's involvement in the unification process in 1871 by naming him honorary citizen of Bremen. Still, if a line of comparison is drawn between the *Kriegerdenkmal* and the *Bismarckdenkmal*, it becomes apparent that the way the German nation was perceived and celebrated changed

²⁵⁸ StaB 3-B.13.No. 1a. 7, Auszug aus der „Weser Zeitung“ vom Donnerstag, den 24. März 1904. No. 20612, 1. Beil. zur 2. Morg.-Ausg.

²⁵⁹ In an article in the *Bremer Nachrichten*, entitled 'Das Bismarckdenkmal und die Volksstimme', the decision to erect the monument next to Bremen's cathedral was heavily criticised. The author pointed out: 'Nun soll das Bismarckdenkmal an der Nordseite des Doms aufgestellt werden und was das Volk dazu sagt, ist ganz gleichgültig, obgleich es zu dem jetzt bei der Bremer Bank wohlverwahrten Fonds beigesteuert hat. [...] Hoffentlich versagt in erster Linie der Dom seine Zustimmung – wenn man Luther dort aufgestellt hätte, würde es seine Berechtigung haben, aber Bismarck am Dom will uns – absolut nicht gefallen [...]' See StaB 3-B.13.No. 1a. 7, Auszug aus den „Bremer Nachrichten“ vom Dienstag, den 29. März 1904. 2 Blatt, 162. Jahrg., No. 89

²⁶⁰ For more information see StaB 2-P.2.m1.k.

²⁶¹ StaB 9, S 0 – 1294, Hamb. Correspondent. No. 361 Abend-Ausg. vom 19. Juli 1910.

dramatically between the 1870s and the early 1900s. Bismarck was unanimously regarded as the unifier of the German nation. Therefore, worshipping Bismarck in this manner, such as racing to become the first Hanseatic City before Hamburg and Lübeck to erect a monument, cannot be separated from a celebration of the German nation. The way Bismarck was regarded in Bremen after his death, despite the many problems the city had with the Reich Chancellor, sheds light on the attitude towards the German nation around the turn of the century. In comparison to the *Kriegerdenkmal*, Bremen's population was now overwhelmed by t patriotic and nationalistic feelings. In this regard, Reinhard Alings has pointed out: 'Das Politikum, daß ihm erstmals im Reich ein Reiterstandbild gewidmet ist, unterstreicht diese mehr ins allgemeinere gehende, abgehobenere Ehrung des nationalen Helden.'²⁶² At the same time, the fact that an equestrian statue was dedicated to Bismarck means that the Iron Chancellor was 'als Politiker und nationale Integrationsfigur auf eine Stufe mit dem Monarchen gesetzt.'²⁶³ As we have seen, this process of national integration and national enthusiasm began with Bremen's accession to the Empire's customs union in 1888.

g. Bremen's trading partners

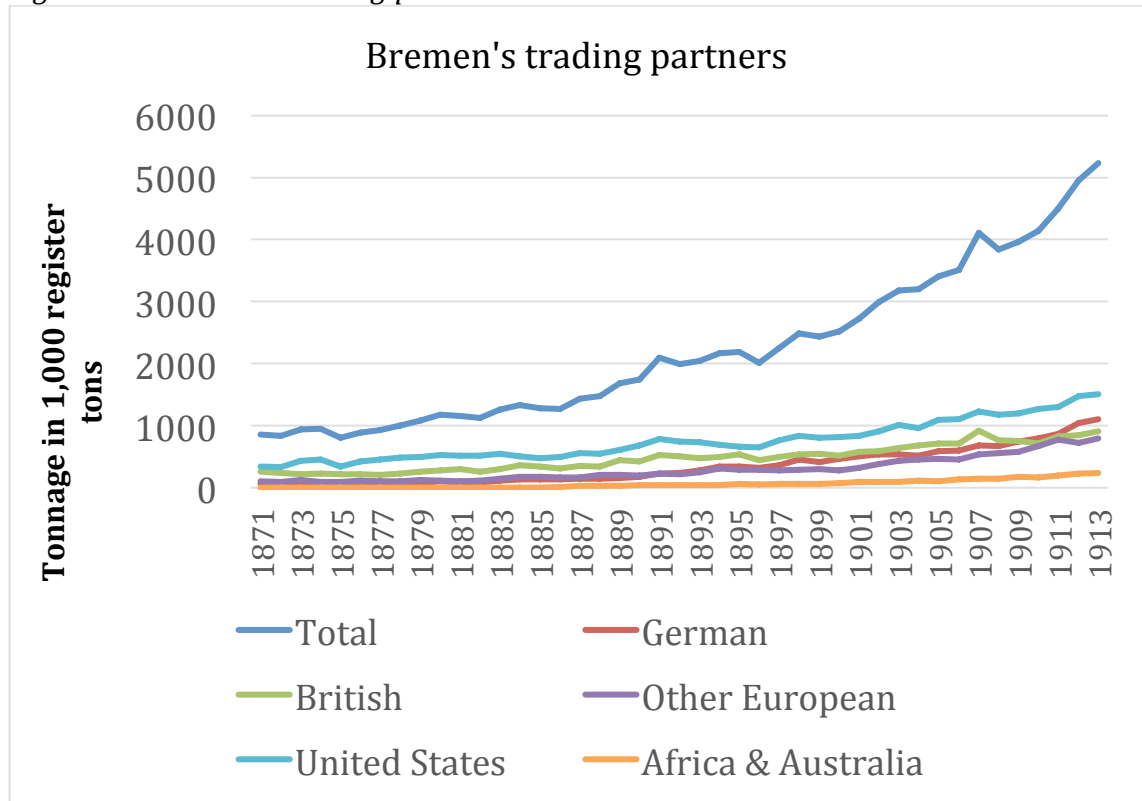
After having examined the process of Bremen's economic and cultural integration into the *Kaiserreich*, it will be significant to also look at changes and continuities in Bremen's trade statistics, in particular Bremen's trading partners. From October 1888, Bremen was part of the Empire's customs union. However, to what extent did this mean that Bremen also became integrated closer into the Empire's economy? For this, we will look at Bremen's sea trade and also at Bremen's overall trade, meaning overland trade and river trade. It has to be noted that the statistics below include the port of Bremerhaven. However, due to the fact that Bremerhaven's docks remained outside the Empire's customs union, any noticeable changes to Bremen's trading structure must have been caused by Bremen's accession. In fact, the channelisation of the Lower Weser, which began in the 1880s, would have compounded the effect of Bremen's accession on the city's

²⁶² Alings, *Monument und Nation*, p. 462

²⁶³ Ibid., p. 462

trade statistics. Therefore, since the status of Bremerhaven's port did not change after 1888, Bremerhaven's share in the trade statistics can be treated as constant.

Figure 2.4: Bremen's trading partners



Source: Jahrbuch für Bremische Statistik, II. Heft: Zur allgemeinen Statistik des Jahres 1875-1914 (Bremen, 1876-1915)

The graph above illustrates Bremen's overall incoming and outgoing tonnage between 1871 and 1913. Additionally, it also depicts the share of certain trading partners. One fact is immediately obvious and that is the importance to Bremen of its trade with the United States and with Great Britain. For example, in 1872, both countries made up around 70% of Bremen's total incoming and outgoing trade, which may be why Bismarck viewed Bremen as a bridgehead of foreign countries. Even a decade later, in 1882, this figure remained stable. The main reason for this was that trade with the United States increased, so that it made up about 46% of Bremen's total incoming and outgoing trade. Furthermore, it can also be gathered from the graph that the share of the German Empire in Bremen's total trade increased over the years. At the same time, trade with Great Britain and the United States gradually declined. This was primarily caused by Great Britain's diminishing role in Bremen's total trade.

If Bismarck saw the *Zollanschluss* as a necessary step in order to integrate Bremen into the Empire's economy, then we would have to expect some sort of change in the trading pattern. In the case that Bremen had not dealt in the "national interest" prior to the *Zollanschluss*, the choice of trading partners would have changed so that Bremen was providing what was needed in the Empire. Comparing the share of Bremen's trading partners in 1872, 1898 and 1913 results in the following:

Figure 2.5: Share of Bremen's trading partners

| | Germany | Great Britain | Rest of Europe | USA | Africa/Australia |
|------|---------|---------------|----------------|-------|------------------|
| 1872 | 9.2% | 29.0% | 10.9% | 40.0% | 0.6% |
| 1898 | 18.5% | 21.5% | 11.8% | 33.8% | 2.6% |
| 1913 | 21.1% | 17.3% | 15.2% | 28.9% | 4.5% |

Source: Jahrbuch für Bremische Statistik, I. Heft: Zur Statistik des Schiffs- und Waarenverkehrs 1875, 1898 and 1913 (Bremen, 1876, 1899 and 1914); the percentage figures were calculated by the author

The table above reveals that sea trade with other German port cities actually increased as a result of Bremen's accession. This would support the argument that Bremen's accession was essential for the whole of Germany. On the other hand, trade with Great Britain decreased significantly from 1872. Since the table above also includes unloaded vessels, Great Britain's share of Bremen's overall traded tonnage is even lower. In 1913, vessels with a total tonnage of 1,376,148 register tons left for Great Britain from Bremen. Yet, of this total, 977,783 register tons were not loaded.

In addition, with respect to Bremen's trade with the rest of Germany, it also has to be considered that the majority of trade was conducted with Hamburg. In 1872, out of a total 152,852 register tons directed to and from Germany, around 40 % were going to and coming from Hamburg. In 1898, more than two thirds of Germany's trade was with the Hanseatic City on the River Elbe. Of these two thirds, 25% were unloaded vessels; just as large proportions of vessels going to European destinations were unloaded. At the same time, in comparison to 1872 and 1882, trade with Great Britain and the United States certainly decreased in total. Hence, with respect to sea trade, it has to be concluded that Bremen's accession to the Empire's customs union did not lead to a distinctive change in the city's trade statistics.

Yet, simply analysing Bremen's sea trade with the rest of Germany would be missing the point. In addition to sea trade, it is important to examine Bremen's overall trade with the rest of Germany.

Figure 2.6: Total Value of Imports in Marks (on average per year)

| | 1867–1871 | 1877–1881 | 1892–1896 | 1907–1911 |
|---------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|
| Total | 352,796,268 | 493,577,318 | 753,062,020 | 1,861,913,999 |
| Sea | 231,057,431 | 346,009,810 | 502,583,449 | 1,276,316,075 |
| Land | 118,379,680 | 145,429,449 | 238,536,886 | 552,781,166 |
| Land & River | 121,738,837 | 147,567,508 | 250,478,571 | 585,597,924 |
| Germany | 118,879,225 | 142,614,653 | 264,312,197 | 646,819,631 |
| Great Britain | 52,634,079 | 58,555,073 | 48,165,820 | 70,822,649 |
| Europe | 28,466,275 | 40,656,517 | 60,952,922 | 164,443,346 |
| USA | 92,421,160 | 166,699,722 | 213,169,879 | 648,091,489 |
| Africa | 2,087,020 | 4,313,023 | 12,000,905 | 27,589,341 |
| Australia & Islands | 696,710 | 445,795 | 19,901,437 | 93,513,548 |

Source: Jahrbuch für Bremische Statistik, I. Heft: Zur Statistik des Schiffs- und Waarenverkehrs im Jahre 1898 (Bremen, 1899), p. 129; Jahrbuch für Bremische Statistik, I. Heft: Zur Statistik des Schiffs- und Waarenverkehrs im Jahre 1914 (Bremen, 1915), p. 50

Figure 2.7: Total Value of Exports in Marks (on average per year)

| | 1867–1871 | 1877–1881 | 1892–1896 | 1907–1911 |
|---------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|
| Total | 330,326,472 | 473,870,721 | 721,573,422 | 1,796,283,536 |
| -Sea | 139,584,356 | 161,907,075 | 328,728,444 | 874,113,078 |
| Land | 181,562,258 | 303,029,848 | 376,218,126 | 872,586,451 |
| Land & River | 311,963,646 | 311,963,646 | 392,844,978 | 922,170,458 |
| Germany | 165,409,933 | 271,855,729 | 410,915,135 | 914,157,185 |
| Great Britain | 16,551,139 | 26,288,422 | 29,826,447 | 145,351,586 |
| Europe | 65,400,026 | 87,439,723 | 103,202,378 | 349,345,527 |
| USA | 69,924,756 | 71,291,252 | 117,420,535 | 198,355,301 |
| Africa | 460,372 | 686,633 | 1,088,573 | 5,208,654 |
| Australia & Islands | 672,868 | 1,030,707 | 9,132,407 | 34,605,034 |

Source: Jahrbuch für Bremische Statistik, I. Heft: Zur Statistik des Schiffs- und Waarenverkehrs im Jahre 1898 (Bremen, 1899), S. 278; Jahrbuch für Bremische Statistik, I. Heft: Zur Statistik des Schiffs- und Waarenverkehrs im Jahre 1914 (Bremen, 1915), p. 179

Both tables present interesting results. While the majority of imports came to Bremen via the sea route, Bremen's landwards exports were higher than its seawards exports in all four periods. Not unsurprisingly, imports to Bremen from the United States of America were high throughout all periods, averaging at least a quarter of total import values. However, what is surprising, particularly in the light of discussions about Bremen's role, is that Bremen's trade with the rest of the German Empire remained significant during the whole time, from 1867 to 1911. Even prior to Bremen's accession, from 1877 to 1881, the city's exports to Germany amounted to more than 57%. During the same period, imports to Bremen from Germany were worth around 41% of total imports. Hence, Bremen's economic links to the rest of Germany were already consolidated, even though the city was not yet part of the Empire's customs union. In fact, there is not even a drastic change in Bremen's trade statistics between before and after Bremen's accession.

h. Bremen's role in the German Empire

In summary, this chapter set out to analyse Bremen's role in the German Empire. It is undeniable that during the 1870s and the early 1880s, Bremen's elite – political and economical – was still focused on its particularistic role outside the Empire's customs union. Not without reason did Arnold Duckwitz, a Bremish merchant and Burgomaster, point out in 1842: 'Ein Kaufmann macht keine Geschäfte aus Patriotismus, sondern er sie nur dann, wenn er glaubt, dabei Vortheil zu haben.'²⁶⁴ Duckwitz's view did not change until the 1870s, when he expressed:

Ein kleiner Staat wie Bremen muß die öffentliche Meinung für sich heben. Er darf nie als ein Hinderniß des Wohlergehens der Gesammtheit erscheinen. Vielmehr soll er seine Stellung in solcher Weise nehmen, daß seine Selbständigkeit als ein Glück für das Ganze, seine Existenz als eine Nothwendigkeit angesehen wird. Darin liegt die sicherste Bürgschaft seinen Bestehens.²⁶⁵

²⁶⁴ Rolf Engelsing, *Bremen als Auswandererhafen, 1683-1880* (PhD, Göttingen, 1954), p. 218

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 219

It is important to highlight that particularistic views in Bremen during this time did not mean that Bremen's inhabitants were distinctively unpatriotic. On the contrary, there was certainly a bond to the unified German nation and the fact that Bismarck became an honorary citizen proves this. Bremen did not want to be excluded from the rest of the German nation. Yet, the example of the *Kriegerdenkmal* also emphasises that Bremish people felt at least just as strongly for their Hanseatic City as for the German nation. Thus, from a cultural perspective, it cannot be argued that Bremen was already fully integrated into the German Empire. Ideas, such as those represented by Theodor Barth, were still going strong in Bremen of the 1870s and early 1880s.

Ironically, Bremen was already well integrated into the economy of the German Empire, as a look at Bremen's trade statistics reveals. In view of this fact, Bremen's accession to the Empire's customs union was no more than a symbolic act. When Bismarck had conceived to make Hamburg and Bremen join the customs union, Bremen first reaction was one of reservation. In the end, it was this reservation that led to a difficult period with the Reich Chancellor. Once Hamburg had joined, Bismarck must have realised that it was inevitable for Bremen to also become part of the customs union. It took Bremen about four more years to come to terms with the Imperial government regarding its accession. In terms of Bismarck's unexpected approval of Bremen's accession in 1884, it may well be argued that the Reich Chancellor regarded this issue as thwarting his plans for colonial ventures. There was a group of definite supporters of colonial ventures in Bremen. Bismarck could have used these in order to pursue foreign policy goals that were achieved by giving official "protection" to the overseas acquisitions of Hanseatic merchants. Eventually, in 1888, the last step of Bremen's official economic integration was made with Bremen's official joining of the Imperial customs union.

As a result of this, it was not Bremen's trade statistics that changed but rather the cultural and political discourse. Bremen's prospects as part of the Empire's economy were praised, and Bismarck, the person who had caused so many problems in Bremen, was celebrated as a national hero. As soon as Bremen's economic integration into the *Kaiserreich* was also symbolically executed, patriotism and nationalism seemed to be on the rise. This was certainly also supported by Bremen's pioneering role in Germany's colonial venture, which gave

Bremen the important task of opening up the colonial markets.²⁶⁶ While promoting colonial ventures of the German Empire was at first only practised by a particular group of merchants, the colonial community of interest grew significantly until the First World War.

²⁶⁶ There were, for example, two firms in Bremen that dealt with the economic development of the colonies in the South Seas. These two firms were the *Bremer Südsee-Gesellschaft m.b.H.* and the *Deutsche Südseephosphat-Aktiengesellschaft*. The latter was a syndicate with the participation of the *Norddeutscher Lloyd*, which was founded in 1907. The syndicate's aim was to find and exploit phosphate sources in the South Seas, which were found on the island Angaur, the most southern of the island group of Palau. See Anneliese Scharpenberg, 'Die Deutsche Südseephosphat-Aktiengesellschaft Bremen', in *Bremisches Jahrbuch* 55 (1977), pp. 127–219. However, Bremen's merchants were also active in Germany's African colonies. Bremen's merchants sought to support financially existing ventures, and secondly to expand Bremen's role in the overall cotton trade. In particular, the *Bremer Baumwollbörse* financially supported the promotion of the cotton cultivation in the colonies, which was led by the *Kolonial-Wirtschaftliches Komitee*. The *Bremer Baumwollbörse* had come into existence in 1872 as the *Comité für den Bremer Baumwollhandel*, which it was called until 1877. Overall, the *Baumwollbörse* had a crucial importance not only for Bremen's cotton trade but also for the entire German textile industry. The *Baumwollbörse* began to regularly subsidise the projects for the cultivation of cotton in the colonies in 1904 and continued to do so until the First World War. Until then, the *Baumwollbörse* had committed itself to pay yearly subsidies in the total amount of 104,000 Marks. The *Kolonial-Wirtschaftliches Komitee* used these subsidies to, for example, operate experimental cotton enterprises in Togo and German East Africa, which were launched in 1901. See, for example, Karl-Heinz Schildknecht, *Bremen und Baumwolle im Wandel der Zeiten* (Bremen, 1999), p. 19

III. Emden

The Prussian annexation of the Hanoverian Kingdom in 1866 was well received in Emden. Hanoverian rule had been short-lived, from 1815 to 1866, and it was perceived as a period of economic stagnation. There was therefore a lot of hope for an economic upturn connected with the Prussian annexation. As we shall see in this chapter, this hope was not entirely unjustified. Emden did indeed manage to improve its size and status, growing from a small port city on the western-most fringes of Germany to a competitive port on the North Sea Coast. After the turn of the century, Emden even attempted to challenge Bremen and Hamburg in their traditional emigration business. In the end, this undertaking failed, with Hamburg and Bremen able to consolidate their position. However, overall Emden was able to make use of its geographically valuable position. After all, the River Ems directly connected Emden to Westphalia. While the port city's trade and shipping in 1871 was not worth mentioning, Emden managed to put itself back on the map by 1914. Thus, in 1909, with regard to total loaded tonnage, Emden was the third most frequented port city on the North Sea coast, behind Hamburg and Bremen (including Bremerhaven). Emden's share of the total 41.3 million register tons traded was at 2.7%.¹ This chapter focuses on Emden's comeback after a period of stagnation of several centuries.

a. Emden's return to Prussian rule

On October 3 1866, King Wilhelm I of Prussia made public that Prussia would annex all parts of the former Kingdom of Hanover. This also included the Principality of East Friesland and, therefore, Emden. In June 1866, the Austro-Prussian War had led to Hanoverian defeat. In the face of this defeat, the East Frisian province sent an address to King Wilhelm. In this note, it was pointed out that '[d]ie Trennung von der Krone Preußens [in 1815] geschah wahrlich nicht

¹ Oppel, *Die deutschen Seestädte*, pp. 90–91

nach dem Wunsche der Provinz.’² Certainly, this might be regarded as a purely opportunist move by the East Frisians. However, in the process that followed, the Hanoverian defeat and the upcoming Prussian annexation, it became obvious that, particularly in Emden, the annexation was accepted with relief.

In August 1866, prior to this official proclamation of the Prussian annexation, it was already being discussed in Emden’s *Bürgervorsteherkollegium*, the city assembly, how to react to the likely annexation. The *Bürgervorsteherkollegium* requested from Emden’s *Magistrat*, the city council, ‘daß derselben baldthunlichst und bei erster Gelegenheit die Möglichkeit gewährt werde, diesen Sympathien durch Aushängen von Flaggen öffentlichen Ausdruck zu verleihen.’³ The fact that the upcoming Prussian annexation led to high spirits among Emden’s elites was not a secret. For example, the head of Emden’s Chamber of Commerce, Carl Dantziger, asked the city council and the city assembly to organise a ball in Emden’s town hall after the proclamation of the annexation.⁴ Eventually, the city council rejected this proposal and ceded this undertaking to private initiatives. While the hoisting of Prussian flags was encouraged only after the official proclamation, the city council additionally agreed to send a deputation to Berlin in order to express ‘den Dank der Stadt für die freudig begrüßte Wiedervereinigung Ostfrieslands mit dem Preußischen Königreiche.’⁵

On September 29 1866, Emden’s mayor, Ernst Hantelmann, and other members of the city council and city assembly were received by the Prussian King. In this, Hantelmann pointed out to the King:

Aber nach der Weise des Volksstammes, von welchem die Provinz bewohnt wird, der einmal Erfasstes und Liebgewonnenes im Herzen fort und fort hegt und pflegt, wirkte die alte Anhänglichkeit, von Vater auf Sohn und Enkel übertragen, kräftiglich weiter.

Und so konnte es denn geschehen, daß jüngst schon die Eröffnung einer Aussicht auf Wiedervereinigung, auf Wiederanknüpfung der alten Bande die

² StE IV 174, Allerdurchlauchtigster, Großmächtigster König! Allernädigster König und Herr! Emden, Leer u.s.w. im Juli 1866.

³ StE IV 174, An Einen Wohlloblichen Magistrat hieselbst, 24.8.66.

⁴ StE IV 174, Emden, den 30. August 1866

⁵ StE IV 174, An Einen Wohlloblichen Magistrat hieselbst, 24.8.66. See also StE IV 174, Auszug aus dem Plenar-Protokoll des Magistrats und Bürger-Vorsteher vom 31. August 1866

ganze Provinz in die froheste Aufregung versetzte und die Freude in heller und unmißverständlicher Weise sich bethätigte, als jene Aussicht durch unerhörte wunderbare Thaten sich zur Gewißheit gestaltete.⁶

The reference to the 'Wiedervereinigung' is worth highlighting in this context. First and foremost, Emden was celebrating the re-unification with the Prussian Kingdom and not, for example, the foundation of the North German Confederation. Naturally, the Prussian King replied to this extravagantly loyal address by highlighting that '[a]ber auch Seinem seligen Vater sei es sehr schwer geworden, in diese Trennung einzuwilligen.'⁷ Additionally, he pointed out that it had never been his intention to annex the Kingdom of Hanover. However, his cousin, Georg V of Hanover, focussed so much on the South, which did not allow anything but his abdication. Overall, the result of the deputation's trip to Berlin, including meeting with Prussian ministers, was regarded with satisfaction in Emden. Thus, it is hard to imagine a Prussian annexation that was more yearned for than that of Emden. It is therefore important to look at the reasons why people like Dantziger favoured a Prussian annexation and how the people of Emden approached the idea of a German nation.

Certainly, there was already a noticeable upsurge of liberal-national feelings during the revolution of 1848–49. This upsurge, however, ended rapidly after the repression of the revolution.⁸ A quote from a regional newspaper, the *Ostfriesische Zeitung*, put this in a nutshell: 'Sieht der Ostfrieser im allgemeinen Leben Deutschland auch als ein fremdes Land an, so ist er doch in der Stunde der Bewegung und Gefahr immer für Deutschland an seinem Platz.'⁹ Certainly, national-liberal feelings still existed in East Friesland after the revolution of 1848–49 but they remained below the surface for most of the time. Instead, Emden envied Prussia's economic achievements. In line with this, the wish for a return to Prussia was based on the hope of economic recovery. Economic and social progress had ground to a halt in Emden, with the number of inhabitants actually decreasing from 12, 500 to 12, 050 between 1852 and 1864. Neither Hanover's

⁶ StE IV 174, *Ostfriesische Zeitung*, Emden, Donnerstag, 11. Oktober 1866. S. 3

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Heinrich Schmidt has already analysed Emden's relationship to the Hanoverian and Prussian Kingdom in his publication on the *Politische Geschichte Ostfrieslands*. See: Schmidt, *Politische Geschichte*

⁹ Ibid., pp. 424–425

accession to the *Zollverein* in 1851 nor Emden's connection to the railway system, the *Westbahn*, were able to produce relief.¹⁰ Schmidt argues that 'Hafen der kräftig aufsteigenden westdeutsch-preußischen Industrie zu werden, war ein Wunsch, in dem sich das Emden Geschäftsbedürfnis national rechtfertigen konnte.'¹¹ In the Hanoverian Kingdom, Emden was situated as far removed from the Kingdom's industry as was possible without falling off the edge of the Hanoverian world. At the same time, the industrial heartland of the Prussian Kingdom – the Ruhr area – lay tantalisingly close to Emden.

As a result of this, Prussia's rule over Emden in the eighteenth century became glorified. However, Schmidt is certainly right in highlighting that it was not simply the memory of Prussian rule that was decisive but rather 'die aktuelle, preußisch-national gerichtete, liberale Zutsimmung zur preußischen Wirtschaftspolitik [...]'.¹² Being in agreement with contemporary Prussian politics, the East Frisians found a way of expressing their hopes put in Prussia by referring to their joint history. Still, Emden was definitely a stronghold of Prussian sympathisers, compared to other East Frisian cities, such as Leer. As a result, in 1863, Georg Bacmeister, Hanoverian *Landdrost* in East Friesland, was able to emphasise that the province was 'zu keiner Zeit besser Hannöversisch gewesen'.¹³ Two years later, East Friesland even celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of belonging to the Hanoverian Kingdom. However, despite all this, the East Frisians' sympathy for Prussia was again omnipresent in 1866. Hence, it is not surprising that Emden's *Nationalverein* demanded on June 19 1866: 'Sobald daher für das nordwestliche Deutschland Parteinahme geboten erscheint, darf diese nur für, niemals gegen Preußen erfolgen.'¹⁴ As correctly pointed out by Schmidt, this view was based as much on a national-liberal stance as it was on a desire for economic recovery in Emden. Furthermore, siding with Prussia in the Austro-Prussian War also gave 'Abneigung gegen Hannover einen positiven Gefühlswert.'¹⁵ Therefore, in view of these aspects of antipathy against Hanover and sympathy for Prussia, the aforementioned euphoria in light of the Prussian annexation was expected. In

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 428–429

¹¹ Ibid., p. 428

¹² Ibid., p. 429

¹³ Ibid., p. 431

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 431

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 432

Emden, Prussian rule was closely tied to expectations of economic recovery. Whether these expectations were justified will be discussed later. The glorification of Prussian rule certainly persisted in Emden.

In 1891, solemnities for the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Prussian annexation were organised in Emden. Carl Dantziger and others, who had already been pushing for festivities in Emden in 1866, proposed that the city council should organise these solemnities in an official manner.¹⁶ However, once again, the city council rejected the idea. Even worse, Emden's city council also declined Dantziger's request for a financial contribution to the solemnities amounting to 100 Marks.¹⁷ Emden's local newspapers, the *Emder Zeitung* and the *Ostfriesische Zeitung*, wrote with full of joy about the anniversary.¹⁸ The *Emder Zeitung*, for example, noted that it was

nicht zu verwundern, wenn der heutige Tag von jedem königstreuen Ostfriesen, von allen, deren Herzen für des Vaterlandes Größe und Herrlichkeit schlagen, festlich begangen wird, wenn dem Dank an den Allmächtigen, der Preußens und Deutschlands Geschicke so gnädig gelenkt hat, jubelnde Freude folgt, die sich in patriotischen Kundgebungen äußert.¹⁹

Even after the foundation of the German Empire, the Prussian "reacquisition" of Emden in 1866 was still of paramount importance to the people of Emden. The Prussian Kingdom – not the German Empire – remained the point of reference in Emden. In the end, the group around Dantziger managed to organise 'eine würdige Feier [...], die in einem Festcommers ihren Abschluß fand.'²⁰ Even Wilhelm II did not fail to send a telegram to Emden. Similar to his grandfather in 1866, Wilhelm expressed his appreciation of Emden's memory of its Prussian past and 'daß das Gedenken an große gemeinsam verlebte Zeiten sich vereinigt mit dem Ausdruck der Befriedigung über die vor 25 Jahren neubegründete enge Verbindung.'²¹ After

¹⁶ StE IV 201, An den Wohllöblichen Magistrat hier. Emden d. 29. August 1891

¹⁷ StE IV 201, An den Wohllöblichen Magistrat hier. Emden d. 26. Septbr. 1891

¹⁸ See StE Ostfriesische Zeitung, No. 232, Emden, Sonnabend, den 3. October 1891 and Emder Zeitung, Nr. 232, Sonnabend, den 3. October 1891

¹⁹ StE Emder Zeitung, Nr. 232, Sonnabend, den 3. October 1891

²⁰ StE IV 201, Deutscher Reichs-Anzeiger und Königlich Preußischer Staats-Anzeiger. Berlin, Donnerstag, den 8. Oktober. Abends. 1891. S. 1

²¹ StE IV 201, Telegraphie des Deutschen Reiches. Amt Emden. 4/10 1891. i.a.v. Moltke Flügel Adjutant vom Dienst.

all, not all parts of the former Hanoverian Kingdom were as enthusiastic about the Prussian annexation. This is demonstrated by the electoral behaviour in favour of the Guelph opposition to Prussian rule.²²

However, even though there was much euphoria about the Prussian annexation of 1866, Emden took its time with erecting monuments dedicated to the newly founded nation or the victorious Franco-Prussian War, unlike Bremen's *Kriegerdenkmal*. In fact, it was not until September 1874 that the city council established a commission to discuss the erection of a monument in honour of the fallen soldiers of 1870–71. The council decided to use parts of the reparation payments that Emden would receive for its service during the Franco-Prussian War. In the end, the city council and city assembly decided to safely invest the total amount of 17, 000 Thaler, rather than budgeting parts of this for the projected monument. At this point, the commission was still busy with contacting different artists. One of these artists was Ludwig Brunow of Berlin, who was also engaged with completing the first monument for Helmuth von Moltke in the general's birthplace Parchim. However, the commission eventually refrained from the idea of erecting a monument in memory of the Franco-Prussian War. Instead, it was decided to plan a monument dedicated to Wilhelm I made of bronze. While in Bremen there was a monument dedicated to the fallen sons of the city, Emden planned to erect a monument in honour of its Prussian sovereign. So, in both cities national aspects of the monument, such as the German Empire, played a subordinate role. For this matter, the commission even received an estimation of costs from Ludwig Brunow. The costs amounted to 20, 500 Thaler plus transportation costs and costs for a fence surrounding the monument. Yet, Brunow's offer appears to have deterred the commission, as there was no further planning in this direction.

Still, the project of a monument in Emden was not entirely buried just yet. A year later, in 1876, plans were made for celebrating the tenth anniversary of the 78th East Frisian Infantry Regiment. This anniversary was celebrated on November 10 1876. It was also thought to be a fitting event for laying the foundation stone for the new monument. Once again, artists were asked to submit plans for a monument dedicated either to the fallen soldiers or to Wilhelm. In addition, the

²² See, for example: Ernst Gottfried Mahrenholz, *Ein Königreich wird Provinz: Über Hannovers Schicksalsjahr 1866* (Göttingen, 2012), pp. 84–88

commission also left open the possibility of a joint monument to the fallen soldiers as well as Wilhelm I. Ultimately, this whole plan led to nothing, as Emden was informed that official anniversary celebrations were not common in the Prussian army.

Thereafter, the project once again ground to a halt. This was caused by a number of reasons, such as 'wichtige Verhandlungen über die Hafenfrage, die Invasion der Rinderpest, die drohende Verlegung der Garnison, die Sturmfluth des Jahres 1877, der Untergang des Lootsenschooners Ems [...]'²³ Consequently, 'weder Muße noch Stimmung' were available for planning a monument in Emden.²⁴ Still, contact with two artists was maintained. When one of them, Heinz Hoffmeister, was able to make an affordable offer for a statue of Wilhelm I, the matter was handed over to the local *Gesellschaft für bildende Kunst und vaterländische Altertümer zu Emden* in order to speed up the process. In this way, it was believed that the project could gain 'einen weniger lokalen, sondern ostfrisisch-patriotischen Charakter [...]'.²⁵ Since Wilhelm I and his wife Augusta were celebrating their golden wedding anniversary, this was seen as another fitting opportunity to erect a statue dedicated to the Emperor. Meanwhile, the erection of a monument was regarded as constituting 'eine Ehrenschild der Stadt Emden [...], deren Abtragung nunmehr nicht länger verzögert werden darf [...]'; especially since other East Frisian cities, such as Aurich, Norden and Leer, had already carried out this duty.²⁶

Subsequently, the commission, which was informed of the whole process, requested from Emden's city council and city assembly to resume control of erecting the monument. Rather than leaving it to private initiatives, the city simply took over from the *Gesellschaft für bildende Kunst*. At first, there were discussions to finance the monument through donations. This plan was discarded by the city council, due to the fact that the matter was supposed to only concern Emden and not the whole of East Friesland, as envisaged by the *Gesellschaft für bildende Kunst*. Instead, the contract sum of 9, 000 Marks plus additional costs of up to 3, 000 Marks were made available from the city's reparation fund.²⁷ Thus, a new

²³ StE IV 193, Bericht, Emden, den 26. April 1879, p. 3

²⁴ Ibid., p. 3

²⁵ Ibid., p. 4

²⁶ Ibid., p. 4

²⁷ StE IV 193, Geschehen Emden, in der Magistrats-Sitzung am 28. April 1879.

agreement between Emden and Hoffmeister was concluded, provided that the Emperor graciously permitted erecting a statue of himself in Emden.

Accordingly a letter was sent to the Palace in distant Berlin. It was highlighted that the people of Emden adored Wilhelm I as 'den König und Helden [...], der durch sein starkes Schwert uns wieder mit dem Vaterlande vereinigt hat [...].'²⁸ A statue of the Emperor in Emden, situated in the North West corner of Prussia, was advertised as an embodiment of the Hohenzollern phrase: 'Vom Fels zum Meer.'²⁹ However, the response Emden's representatives received from the *Ministerium der geistlichen, Unterrichts- und Medicinal-Angelegenheiten*, the Prussian ministry of culture, must have been highly disappointing. The Prussian ministry of culture informed Emden's representative: 'Seine Majestät haben den Grundsatz, nicht zu gestatten, daß während Allerhöchsteren Lebenszeit eine in voller Plastik hergestellte Statue Allerhöchstihrer Person hergestellt werde [...].'³⁰ Only once had an exception had been allowed: an equestrian statue of Wilhelm I in Cologne. This statue had been permitted because there was already an equestrian statue of Friedrich Wilhelm IV.

Thus, there was nothing left to do for Emden other than to cancel its plans for a Wilhelm monument in Emden. The contract with Hoffmeister was cancelled and the artist received a compensation of 150 Marks for his preliminary studies. In return, Emden wanted to keep Hoffmeister's model of the planned monument. There were considerations to display this model in Emden's city hall but objections against this were raised as this would have been a public display of the monument for Wilhelm I.³¹ In the end, there was no agreement on a suitable place for the model. Hoffmeister was eventually asked to take back his model. In early 1880, the model was returned with a remark that 'man die Idee wegen späterer Errichtung eines Kaiser Denkmals definitiv aufgeben habe.'³² This turned out not to be entirely true. After Wilhelm's death in 1888, the plan to erect a monument dedicated to the first Emperor came up again. And this time, they were actually put into practice.

²⁸ StE IV 193, Allerdurchlauchtigster Großmächtigster Kaiser, Allernädigster Kaiser, König und Herr! 11. Mai. 1879.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ StE IV 193, Ministerium der geistlichen, Unterrichts- und Medicinal-Angelegenheiten, Berlin, den 29. Mai 1879

³¹ StE IV 193, Geschehen Emden, in der Magistrats-Sitzung am 20. October 1879.

³² StE IV 193, Emden, in der Magistrats-Sitzung am 26. Januar 1880

Still, more interesting than the fact that Emden eventually received a Wilhelm monument is the fact that Emden did not erect a monument to the fallen soldiers of the Franco-Prussian War. This circumstance sheds light on patriotic and nationalistic feelings prevalent in Emden at the time of the foundation of the *Norddeutscher Bund* and the *Kaiserreich*. It is telling that, even though there were plans for a monument to the fallen soldiers, Emden did not erect a war memorial to the Franco-Prussian War, the war that unified Germany. Instead of celebrating the unification of the German nation, the people of Emden glorified Wilhelm I for absorbing Emden into the industrialised Prussian state. Thus, Emden's allegiance was less with the German nation than with the Prussian state, which promised economic recovery. With this in mind, it will be particularly interesting to see if the expectations of economic recovery actually materialised.

b. The state of Emden's port prior to 1875

Indeed, looking at Emden's trade around the time of the *Reichsgründung*, it is easy to understand why the Prussian annexation raised so much hope. During the period of the Hanoverian rule, Emden had hardly made any progress regarding its shipping traffic. The table below shows the loading capacity of sea vessels coming and going out of Emden between 1850 and 1870:

Figure 3.1: Emden's trade before the German Empire

| | Arrivals (capacity in 1000t) | Departures (capacity in 1000t) |
|------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1850 | 27.4 | 27.4 |
| 1860 | 22.1 | 24.0 |
| 1870 | 36.1 | 35.0 |

Source: Kunz, Scholl, *Deutsche Seeschifffahrt*, pp. 154, 160

Even though Emden was able to increase its trade in the 20-year-period between 1850 and 1870, this increase was only marginal. Compare this with the capacity of sea vessels going into Bremen which increased from 307, 800 tons in 1850 to 710, 000 tons in 1870. During the same period, the capacity of departing vessels rose

from 311, 600 tons to 697, 700 tons.³³ Thus, Emden's port had fallen far behind its competitor on the River Weser by the time of the foundation of the German Empire.

Naturally, Emden's mercantile community was not unaware of this. Soon after the Prussian annexation, voices of displeasure became louder in Emden. In 1868, Emden's Chamber of Commerce published a memorandum on the situation of Emden's port, entitled *Denkschrift betreffend die Anlage eines den Anforderungen großer Seeschiffe genügenden Hafens an der Unter-Ems*.³⁴ In this memorandum, it is described that most port cities, particularly those with a railway connection, experienced an upswing of trade after the introduction of steam vessels. On the other hand, Emden, which had had a railway connection since 1855, did not benefit in the same way as port cities like Bremen or Stettin, for example. Amongst the manifold reasons for this deplorable state of affairs, Emden's Carl Dantziger, president of the Chamber and member of Emden's Senate, argued that the railway was built too late. However, even more importantly, Dantziger pointed out that Emden's port did not meet the standards of other leading international port cities.³⁵

It is hardly surprising that Emden's position in competition with port cities on the rivers Weser and Elbe was poor. The memorandum explains that 'daß jetzt alle größeren Seeschiffe die Ems so viel als möglich meiden und dieselbe ferner meiden werden, so lange es hier an einem für die große Seeschiffahrt berechneten Hafen mangelt.'³⁶ In fact, the report claims that '[g]rößere Schiffe aber finden an der Ems zur Zeit keinen preußischen Hafen, der ihnen gestattet, mit voller Ladung einzulaufen.'³⁷ While Emden's location on the River Ems and its proximity to the Ruhr area was beneficial, this advantage was undone by the fact that traders and shippers also had to pay high costs for lighters.

The effect of the poor state of Emden's port on actual trade is shown using the example of Emden's wood trade. Since the Province of Westphalia, with its significant industry, was not able to satisfy its demand with wood from Southern

³³ Kunz, Scholl, *Deutsche Seeschiffahrt*, pp. 232, 238

³⁴ StE IV 1450, Handelskammer Emden, *Denkschrift betreffend die Anlage eines den Anforderungen großer Seeschiffe genügenden Hafens an der Unter-Ems*, 1868

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 12

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 12

Germany, it had to start importing from Scandinavia, Russia and Prussian provinces on the Baltic Sea. Most of this trade was carried out with the help of traders on the rivers Weser and Ems. Still, it is surprising that Emden's traders played a small role compared to traders on the River Weser, particularly with regard to Emden's proximity to Westphalia. The reason for this was that prior to the Prussian annexation of East Friesland, freight rates from Emden to the Ruhr area had not been competitive. In fact, even the area around Dortmund could be provided more cheaply with wood imported via Dutch ports than via Emden. After the annexation of East Friesland and a petition to the Prussian Ministry of Trade, freight rates to the Ruhr area were reduced. Emden's traders could thus extend their area of influence to Essen and Elberfeld, part of present-day Wuppertal. However, the problem remained that larger vessels 'verlangen nach der Ems höhere Frachten, wenn deren Capitaine bzw. Rheder überhaupt ihre Abneigung, nach der Ems zu segeln, soweit überwinden, daß sie zu einer Frachtforderung sich herbeilassen.'³⁸ This was due to the fact that larger vessels were not able to call at Emden's port.

Hence, even though there was the chance for Emden to compete with Dutch ports, such as Rotterdam, Amsterdam and Dordrecht, this possibility could not be exploited by Emden's mercantile community. Naturally, this also had adverse effects on the railway business. While vessels of normal size could transport wood equal to 115 wagonloads, those vessels that were able to call at Emden only carried between one eighth and one quarter of the normal load. Therefore, the expansion of Emden's port to the size of a seaport was essential not only for Emden's mercantile community but also for other business sectors, such as the railway. After all, Emden represented 'für den außerordentlich productiven Industrie-Rayon zwischen Hamm, Dortmund, Bochum, Essen und Witten, Hagen, Barmen, Elberfeld, wie für das Siegener Land [...] das natürliche Seethor.'³⁹ Since there had not been an adequate strategy to connect Emden with the Ruhr area, the railway distance from the Ruhr area to Emden was in most cases longer than to Rotterdam or Amsterdam. One of the few advantages for Emden was that the Netherlands was outside the customs union, which made certain clearing formalities necessary. The memorandum also did not fail to emphasise that with

³⁸ Ibid., p. 13

³⁹ Ibid., p. 14

respect to other German ports, like Bremerhaven or Heppens, part of present-day Wilhelmshaven, Emden was in a favourable geographical position due to its proximity to the industrial Ruhr area.

Consequently, Emden's Chamber of Commerce argued for the establishment of a seaport that was capable of competing with Rotterdam and Amsterdam's role as gateways to the Ruhr area. With reference to Emden's history it was emphasised 'daß namentlich unsere holländischen Nachbarn beim Aufkommen neuer Unternehmungen in Emden alsbald eine Concurrenz auf Tod und Leben begannen.'⁴⁰ After both sides had prevailed in this life-or-death struggle, it was said to be usual for both sides to agree on acceptable terms and not interfere in the other's business. However, for this to happen it was essential for Emden to first of all challenge its competitors. Besides purely economical reasons, such as the advantages for the Westphalian railway, Emden's *Handelskammer* also brought forward more emotional arguments for an expansion of Emden's port. One example for this is the following excerpt:

Diese in jeder Hinsicht unzurechtfertigende Vernachlässigung der Ems ist allein ein genügender Grund, die Sünden der Vergangenheit gegenüber Emden dadurch wieder gut zu machen, daß Preußen jetzt nicht ebenfalls als nur nach bürokratischen Ansichten handelnder Fiscus, sondern als eine über den Parteien und Interessen stehende Staatsregierung verfährt und dabei nach Rücksichten der Billigkeit und des moralischen Rechts ein solches Abkommen mit der Stadt Emden zu schließen sucht, das nicht am Ende die Stadt in neue Verlegenheit bringt, die ihrer Einwohnerschaft zum Druck und schließlich auch dem Staate selbst zum größten Nachtheil gereichen würde.⁴¹

Thus, according to the opinion of people in Emden, it was not only economically sensible to invest in its port but also morally imperative to financially support East Friesland. In fact, there was more to this than just Emden's fate as a port city. In the eyes of Emden's Chamber of Commerce, supporting Emden in its attempt to become a major seaport on the North Sea coast constituted as 'eine Förderung

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 16

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 27

hochwichtiger staats- und nationalöconomischer Interessen [...]’⁴² It was perfectly possible to supply the Ruhr area via Dutch ports. So, there was no direct need to import goods destined for the Ruhr area via Emden, which would have needed an expensive expansion. Hence, when talking about the interests of the state economy and the national economy, Emden’s Chamber of Commerce pointed to the importance of prioritising Prussian interests over Dutch interests. For Emden, which was in a geographically favourable position, it was unacceptable that Dutch port cities were benefitting from the Ruhr area’s industrial success – the Ruhr area was Prussian after all.

In light of Emden’s lack of ambition to celebrate the new nation in the form of a monument, this point of view is noticeable. From the beginning, Emden focussed on its role as a seaport within the Prussian state. This view seems to have prevailed after the foundation of the German Empire, as we have seen by looking at the debates regarding the erection of a monument. Prussia remained Emden’s focal point, yet, with regard to the condition of Emden’s port facilities, this is hardly surprising. Under Hanoverian rule, Emden’s port was neglected and other port cities became the focus, such as Harburg and Geestemünde. Seeing that Harburg is located on the River Elbe and Geestemünde on the River Weser, the decision to favour these two places was most likely based on economic reasoning. Now, after the annexation, there was the chance for Emden to take advantage of its proximity to the industrial Ruhr area. Furthermore, it is not surprising that in order to pursue this goal, Emden had to take on a less liberal stance than Bremen, for example, which had already established itself as a major seaport. There was simply no room for liberalism and enthusiasm for the new nation-state as long as Emden was struggling with its poor position as a port city on the North Sea Coast.

The actual condition of Emden’s port is best described by looking at some complaint letters. Carl Dantziger stands out as a critic of the situation and an active advocate for new port facilities in Emden. In a letter to the city council, Dantziger complained that ‘[l]eider sind wir im Gefühle der Zufriedenheit bereits auf eine so niedrige Stufe gelangt, daß mir z. B. das glückliche Einlaufen der Banadotte ohne das übliche Festsitzenbleiben sehr viel Freude bereitete.’⁴³ However, Dantziger’s relief was only short-lived. Before being able to enter the port of Emden, the

⁴² Ibid., p. 28

⁴³ StE IV 1450, Emden, den 30. März 1870, An Wohllöblichen Magistrat hierselbst.

Banadotte had to make use of lighters in order to have fewer draughts. This led to additional costs of 800 Thaler. In addition to this, the vessel's exposure time had to be extended, leading to even higher costs. Cause for complaint was given to Dantziger by the fact that Emden's port should have had a depth of at least 14.5 Hanoverian feet.⁴⁴ In another incident, the Russian vessel *Concordia* was lightered to 10.5 feet draught and still could not reach its designated quay. Here again, additional costs arose for Dantziger. These costs had to be paid by himself, as '[d]er Empfänger findet die Berechnung der Letzteren [Lichterkosten] lächerlich und verweigert die Erstattung.'⁴⁵ Thereupon, Dantziger was even advised to relocate his business to Papenburg, which is situated south from Emden on the River Ems, or to at least establish a local branch there. Dantziger points to the fact that competition from Papenburg was becoming overwhelming. So, instead of being able to challenge Dutch ports, or Hamburg and Bremen, in reality, Emden was struggling to fight off small ports in the region, such as Papenburg. Consequently, Dantziger was harsh in his criticism of the city council. He highlighted:

[...] andererseits ist hier ein Sparsystem eingerissen, das überall spart und selbst am unrechtsten Orte: an unserem Fahrwasser, der nährenden Hauptader, wenn Emden nicht etwa zur Ackerstadt herabsinken soll, welche lediglich aus der Ausbeutung der Production und Befriedigung der Consumtion der nächsten Umgegend ein unrühmliches Dasein fristet.⁴⁶

Apart from urging the city council to arrange a refurbishment of Emden's port, Dantziger also suggested the abolition of harbour dues. Only this way, it was argued, would Emden be able to withstand competition from other port cities.

It was not only Dantziger who had reason to complain about the state of Emden's port. In May 1870, one of Emden's harbour pilots, G. Dirks, was interviewed in the Chamber of Commerce due to the fact that it had been impossible for his colleague, B. H. Loop, to navigate the *Caesar* to the railway quay. Dirks declared that the *Caesar* had a draught of eleven feet. At high tide, the sea level rose by about 9.5 to 10 feet. Yet, the problem was that, when the tide was out, sludge protruded from the sea level by about 1.5 feet. Thus, vessels like the *Caesar*

⁴⁴ 14.5 Hanoverian feet are equal to around 4.2m

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

were not able to enter Emden's port. Even vessels with no more than 9.25 feet draught got stuck in the sludge. Dirks concluded: 'Der Zustand im Dock ist also miserabel.'⁴⁷ This list of complaints could be extended endlessly.

Overall, what all these examples make clear is that Emden's port was in a miserable state when the German Empire was founded. So, even though it had only been a short period of time, the Prussian annexation had not yet led to any improvement of the situation. Eventually, due to the amount of complaints, Emden's city council decided to get in contact with the Prussian Ministry of Trade in June 1870. This was done after the *Centralverein für Hebung der Deutschen Fluss- und Kanalschiffahrt* had already pointed out the bad state of Emden's port to the Ministry in March 1870.⁴⁸ In the city council's note to the Minister of Trade, it was explained that the city had commissioned a Dutch engineer to present a solution to the sanding up of Emden's port. Naturally, Emden's city council highlighted the seriousness of the situation by pointing out that 'wir jetzt von der tiefen Stromrille fast ganz abgeschnitten sind, und vollständig abgeschnitten werden, wenn nicht bald etwas Nachhaltiges geschieht.'⁴⁹ The plan suggested by the Dutch engineer envisaged embanking certain parts of land, which was not owned by Emden. Without going into further detail about the exact plan, the city council asked the Prussian Ministry to assign this land to Emden. When leaving the matter entirely up to the Prussian state, the city council was concerned 'daß noch eine mehr oder minder längere Zeit verstreichen werde, bevor zu ausführenden Thaten geschritten wird.'⁵⁰ However, it seems that due to the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War in July 1870, the plan to improve Emden's situation ultimately ran out of resources.

After the Franco-Prussian War, the Prussian government only pressed ahead with the matter slowly. In the meantime, the shipping channel had to be constantly dug mechanically. It was not clear who had to pay for these works, either the city or the state. In August 1871, Emden's city council was informed about the position that the Prussian Minister of Trade, Heinrich Friedrich von Itzenplitz, had taken in the matter. According to the *Landdrostei* in Aurich,

⁴⁷ StE IV 1450, Geschehen Emden, im Secretariate der Handelskammer am 18. Mai 1870.

⁴⁸ See StE IV 1450, Centralverein für Hebung der Deutschen Fluss- und Kanalschiffahrt, Berlin 17. März 1870.

⁴⁹ StE IV 1450, Magistrat zu Emden. Emden, d. 20. Juni 1870.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

Itzenplitz harboured some doubt about fundamental construction works on Emden's port facilities. Itzenplitz stated that 'nach dem jetzigen Stande der Ermittlungen über die Ausführbarkeit der Verbesserung des Emdener Fahrwasser auf ein gewagtes unzulässiges Experiment hinauslaufen.'⁵¹ While Emden had planned to deepen its port to 24 feet in order to accommodate larger vessels, the Minister of Trade regarded this as being too expensive to keep up. Itzenplitz came to the conclusion that no fundamental expansion works should take place in Emden until there was certainty about the success of such works. Here, Itzenplitz was referring to construction works that had been undertaken under Hanoverian rule in the 1840s. Evidently, these had not led to permanent relief for Emden's port. Still, it was regarded as necessary to produce at least a temporary improvement of the situation by carrying out excavation works.

However, the start of these works was again delayed. In January 1872, Emden's *Kaufmännische Deputation* notified the city council that the number of complaints about Emden's port had still not dissipated. In fact, it was emphasised that 'der Nothstand, der sie hervorruft, [ist] wohl auch noch nie auf der gegenwärtigen Höhe gewesen.'⁵² It was only possible for vessels with around 9 feet draught to enter the port of Emden. As a result of this, the deputation urged the city council to make sure that the planned works were carried out as soon as possible. Otherwise, Emden's future would look grim: 'Haben erst die Hafen-Verhältnisse ein überseeisches Geschäft für Emden unmöglich gemacht – und wir scheinen uns diesem Punkte jetzt mit Riesenschritten zu nähern – so wird es ungeheuer schwer fallen, das verlorene Feld wieder zu gewinnen.'⁵³

In this regard, the *Kaufmännische Deputation* also contacted the Minister of Trade. In a note to Itzenplitz, the deputation asked: 'Wie sollen überseeische Geschäfte möglich bleiben, wenn schon Schiffe von noch nicht 6 Fuß Tiefgange Lichterkosten erfordern.'⁵⁴ Due to the urgency of the matter, Itzenplitz was asked to take immediate action and telegraph the responsible authority in Emden. Indeed, this letter seems to have made an impact in Berlin. Itzenplitz responded that the royal authorities in Aurich had already been ordered to produce relief in

⁵¹ StE IV 1450, Abschrift, Aurich, d. 29. August, No. 1975

⁵² StE IV 1450, Emden, d. 17. Januar 1872, Kaufmännische Deputation, Betr. die Beschaffenheit der Ems vor der Mündung des hiesigen Fahrwassers

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ StE IV 1450, Kaufmännische Deputation, Emden, d. 15. Febr 1872.

Emden. In fact, it looks like the persistence of Emden's mercantile community and the added note of desperation finally paid off. In October, Emden's city council was informed about the extremely positive impact of the excavations works on Emden's port. Now, the deputation even went a step further and demanded that the city council press ahead with plans for the expansion of Emden's port facilities.⁵⁵ This request turned out to be overhasty and it came to nothing.

A year on, in September 1873, it was the city of Emden which seems to have neglected its duty to keep its part of the port in good condition. In order to illustrate the severity of the situation, the following example is given: 'Ein Dampfschiff hat einem festgerathenen Segelschiff das ganze Heck eingerammt [...].'⁵⁶ From these reports, one gets the impression that the situation in Emden at the time was chaotic. Not even after this bleak description of the port's state did the city council react and still the Hanoverian Kingdom was blamed for Emden's misery. Now that the city was under Prussian rule, it was expected that Prussia would take care of improving Emden's situation. However, since there seems to have been no comprehensive plan for Emden by the Prussian state to do this, Emden remained in an economic standstill. Without any official plans for the port's development, extensive investments by Emden's city council made little sense. In May 1874, the *Kaufmännische Deputation* sent another letter of complaint to the city council. Once again, it was emphasised that 'daß während der nun begonnenen eigentlichen Schlammbildungs-Periode ein förmlicher Nothstand, schlimmer als je zuvor, sich ausgestalten werde.'⁵⁷ In response to this, the city council argued that the situation was not as disastrous as pointed out by the mercantile deputation. According to Emden's city council, it was 'von sachverständiger Seite anerkannt, daß der Zustand erheblich besser ist, als zuvor.'⁵⁸ Due to a depth of 10.5 to 12 feet, even vessels of 11.5 feet draught were said to be capable of easily entering the port.

With regard to the quantity of reports about the severity of the situation, it has to be wondered to what extent the city council's depiction was truthful. Overall, what all these reports highlight is that by 1874 the Prussian state and Emden's city council had still not been able to find a solution to the problem

⁵⁵ StE IV 1450, Kaufmännische Deputation, Emden, d. 26. October 1872

⁵⁶ StE IV 1450, Kaufmännische Deputation, Emden, d. 4. Septbr. 1873

⁵⁷ StE IV 1450, Kaufmännische Deputation, Emden, d. 5. Mai 1874

⁵⁸ StE IV 1450, Der Magistrat, Emden, den 12. Mai 1874

concerning Emden's mercantile community, namely the state of Emden's port. Irrespective of which side had to be blamed for this, the status quo must have felt like a massive blow to Emden's merchants. The subsequent frustration with this situation is demonstrated by Carl Dantziger. In a letter, Dantziger let his emotions and thoughts run free. Dantziger signalled that it was simply impossible to maintain the intended depth of 14 feet in Emden's port. Dantziger blamed the Prussian state for not meeting its obligations: 'Eben so klar ist es, daß die Stadt den Faldern-Delft nicht reinhalten kann, wenn der Staat seine übernommenen Pflichten hinsichtlich Offenhaltung der Strecke von der Dockmündung bis zur sogenannten Netzbrücke ungenügend erfüllt.'⁵⁹ In addition to describing the deficiencies of the construction works in Emden's port, Dantziger also mentioned an extremely interesting fact. Dantziger admitted that 'unter solchen Umständen der Stadt nur das sogenannte Binnenspyten [übrigblieb].'⁶⁰ This means that Emden decided to flood its port with water from the inland thereby draining inland waterways. What consequences this decision would have had if it had been made public is illustrated by the following statement: 'Über diesen Act verzweifelter Selbsthülfe wird man allerdings schweigen müssen, wenn man nicht die üblen Folgen als indirecte durch die Unterlassungen der König. Verwaltung hinzustellen Willens ist.'⁶¹

This is the situation in which Emden found itself prior to 1875, when there was a significant change in the city's political scene. In 1875, Leo Fürbringer assumed the office of Mayor of Emden and was able to revive Emden's status as a port city. It was essential to look at the circumstances prior to Fürbringer's assumption of office in order to understand the impact that Fürbringer had on Emden. As we have seen, it had been almost nine years since the Prussian annexation and there was still no sign of permanent relief in Emden. Frustration with the way Emden's port was maintained was beginning to grow.

⁵⁹ StE IV 1450, Undated letter (probably written between May and August 1874), Die hiesigen Hafenanlagen...

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

c. Emden, quo vadis?

In spring 1875, Emden's *Oberbürgermeister*, Ernst Hantelmann, went into retirement. Hantelmann wanted to return to his home city Hanover, where he continued to work as a notary. Leo Fürbringer, who was at that point mayor of Weimar, applied for the vacant job as mayor of Emden. Fortunately for the city, Wilhelm I accepted Fürbringer's application, so that his long tenure of office could begin on July 18 1875. Before looking at how Fürbringer changed Emden's fate as a port city, it is worth mentioning that it was not just trade and shipping upon which Fürbringer focused. Instead, Fürbringer began early to set a comprehensive course for putting Emden back on the map. As Rolf Uphoff has shown, by centralising the city's administration on him, Fürbringer was able to make it more efficient. Furthermore, Fürbringer got involved with turning Emden into a centre for telegraphy. In 1879, after long negotiations with the imperial post, the post and telegraphy office made Emden the connecting point for overseas telegraphy. One reason for this was that Emden's new mayor lobbied intensively for the city. In order to realise his plans, Fürbringer befriended the State Secretary in the Imperial Post Office, Heinrich von Stephan, to whom he also dedicated a square in Emden.⁶² Not only that, Fürbringer's network included important figures in the Prussian government as well as Prussia's royal house. The mark that Fürbringer left on Emden is impressive and will be further examined below.

It should be noted, however, that Fürbringer did not start at zero. For example, plans for the construction of the *Ems-Jade-Kanal*, which was in line with developing Wilhelmshaven as the base for the Imperial Navy in the North Sea, were made in the early 1870s. In 1874, Emden was informed by the *Landdrostei* in Aurich that the Prussian Minister of Trade wanted to discuss 'den Plan zur Verbesserung der Emdener Hafenanstalten in Verbindung mit Umgestaltung des Treckfahrt-Canals zu einem Bestandtheile des zwischen Emden und Wilhelmshaven anzulegenden Schifffahrts-Kanals, wodurch eine gründliche Verbesserung der Abwässerungsverhältnisse im Emden'er Pegelverbande in

⁶² Ostfriesische Landschaft, Rolf Uphoff, 'Leo Fürbringer':

http://www.ostfriesischelandschaft.de/fileadmin/user_upload/BIBLIOTHEK/BLO/Fuerbringer.pdf

Accessed: 18/04/2016

Aussicht steht [...].⁶³ As pointed out by Uphoff, the *Ems-Jade-Kanal* was seen as a way to connect Wilhelmshaven indirectly to the Ruhr area.⁶⁴ Therefore, one has to be careful when construing the canal's construction as a Prussian plan to further Emden's connection to its hinterland or to even just fulfil the needs of Emden's mercantile community. Certainly, Emden benefitted from this situation, while the primary concern of these plans was Wilhelmshaven. Having said this, Fürbringer still emphatically pursued his own plan of improving the state of Emden's port.

However, even Leo Fürbringer could not work wonders. The road to improvement for Emden's port was a long one. Right from the beginning of Fürbringer's tenure, the *Kaufmännische Deputation* was pressing for a more active course of action with regard to Emden's port. In January 1876, the deputation requested of Emden's city council 'bei der königlichen Regierung [Discussion] beantragen [zu] wollen, daß die gänzliche Klarstellung des Emder Hafenprojektes nunmehr erfolge und seine Ausführung alsdann umgesäumt in Angriff genommen werde.'⁶⁵ Still, the Prussian Minister of Trade, Heinrich von Achenbach, was not convinced about the necessity of modernising Emden's port. In response to Emden's efforts, Achenbach informed the city that he needed more detailed information on the practicality of any works on the port of Emden, 'damit übersehen werden kann in welchem Verhältniß der beanspruchte bedeutende Aufwand zu den dadurch erreichenden Zwecken steht.'⁶⁶

In order to be able to convince Achenbach and to promote construction works on Emden's port, the municipal authorities of Emden produced a memorandum, signed by Fürbringer. It gives insight into the plan that was worked out in Emden. Being divided into two parts, the first part discussed the volume and importance of Emden's trade and shipping. The second part then dealt with the prerequisites that justified expectations about an upswing of trade and shipping in Emden after the expansion of its port facilities. From the beginning, it becomes apparent that the manner in which arguments were put had changed since Hantelmann's office. The memorandum was written in a decisive and determined

⁶³ StE IV 1431, Königliche Landdrostei, Aurich, den 7. April 1874

⁶⁴ Ostfriesische Landschaft, Rolf Uphoff, 'Leo Fürbringer':

http://www.ostfriesischelandschaft.de/fileadmin/user_upload/BIBLIOTHEK/BLO/Fuerbringer.pdf

Accessed: 18/04/2016

⁶⁵ StE IV 1450, Kaufmännische Deputation betr. die Hafenfrage, Emden, 13. Januar 1876

⁶⁶ StE IV 1450, Königliche Landdrostei Aurich, Aurich, den 19ten April 1876.

way. For example, it set out by asking if the Chamber of Commerce's annual reports had led Achenbach to believe 'entweder, daß die dieselben zu wenig über den Handel und die Schifffahrt Emden's enthielten, daß sie sachlich zu dürftig seien, oder aber, daß das Bild [...] es nicht rechtfertigen könne' to allow the expansion of Emden's port facilities.⁶⁷ For this reason, the memorandum once again explains the situation of Emden's port. Naturally, the picture that is given is not as disastrous as many of the complaints of the *Kaufmännische Deputation* suggest. Instead, it is pointed out:

daß der Schiffsverkehr im Hafen von Emden sich in aufsteigender Linie bewegt, daß namentlich der Verkehr mit außerdeutschen Häfen erheblich zugenommen hat, desgleichen, daß die Emder Kaufleute von Jahr zu Jahr mehr bestrebt sind, sich für ihren Seehandel die Vortheile größerer Fahrzeuge zuzueignen, soweit die Hafenverhältnisse dies überhaupt gestattet haben, daß endlich unserm Handel nicht blos die natürlichen und historischen Grundlagen, die Getreide- und Prodcuten-Ausfuhr treu geblieben, sondern sich auch im Holzhandel eine neue Branche des Eigenhandels herausgebildet hat, durch welche Emden schon jetzt im Welthandel eine ansehnliche Stellung einnimmt und im Begriffe ist, sich eine noch größere zu erobern und den Markt mit zu beherrschen [...]⁶⁸

It highlighted that under the current state of Emden's port, these achievements were only made possible by the strenuous efforts of Emden's mercantile community.

The second part of the memorandum neatly follows on from there. The determination of Emden's merchants is given as one of the reasons for expectations of a brighter future after an expansion of the port. Other reasons are of historic, geographic, trade political and commercial nature. It was underlined that even after Emden's misfortunes, which included foreign rule, the city was still active in trade and shipping. More importantly, Emden's history and geography met all conditions which 'zur Bildung eines großen Marktes oder

⁶⁷ StE IV 1432, Denkschrift über den Umfang und die Bedeutung des Handels und der Seeschifffahrt von Emden mit Bezug auf die Nothwendigkeit einer Umgestaltung des Emder Hafens, Emden, den 31. Mai 1876

⁶⁸ Ibid.

Handelsemporiums erforderlich sind.’⁶⁹ Emden still regarded itself as the natural port for the Rhineland and Westphalia. Despite competition from Antwerp, Rotterdam and Bremen, there can be no doubt about the high ambitions and hopes connected to Emden’s role in the Prussian state. After all, Emden’s merchants ‘sind so zu sagen im Welthandel zu Hause und wußten von jeher alle Chancen, die sie der politischen Ereignisse und der Lage des Welthandels abgewinnen konnten, für sich auszubeuten.’⁷⁰ Proof of this was given by a projected shipping line from Emden to Great Britain and even to New York, in competition with Bremen’s connection to the United States. In the end, all these projects had to be dropped. Instead, the shipping service to New York was established from Stettin.⁷¹ Still, with this memorandum, Emden’s authorities resolutely backed demands for an expansion of its port facilities.

At this point, the situation of Emden and other ports on the River Ems was also openly discussed in a four-part newspaper article on *Die zukünftige Konkurrenzfähigkeit der Emshäfen*.⁷² In the first part, it asked why the ports on the River Ems were not able to benefit from its geographical position vis-à-vis the industrial region of Westphalia. Instead of German ports, Dutch ports were taking advantage of the German Empire’s industrialisation. With regard to this fact, the article highlighted: ‘Man mag Holland alles Gute wünschen, aber so lange es festgefügte Staatengebilde giebt, wird man den Verkehr lieber im eignen Lande behalten, soweit es ohne Vertheuerung desselben möglich ist.’⁷³ However, even though the Dutch also had problems with accessibility for large vessels, the Dutch state made an effort to produce relief in this matter – unlike the Prussian state. Due to the fact that planning of the *Ems-Jade-Kanal* was being held up, it was also feared that plans for the expansion of Emden’s port were not going to be realised. The article expressed that it was ‘jetzt Mode, von der Ebbe in den preußischen

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ The memorandum only mentioned that *Y&B Brons*, a shipping company from Emden, had repeatedly received offers for the establishment of shipping lines from Emden to Great Britain and ‘ein Mal wurde sogar der Plan, Dampfer zwischen hier und Newyork in Concurrenz mit Bremerhaven laufen zu lassen, ernstlich ventilirt.’

⁷² StE IV 1450, Die Konkurrenzfähigkeit der Emshäfen I.-IV., Ostfriesische Zeitung, Emden, 9.-12. August 1876, No. 185–188

⁷³ StE IV 1450, Die Konkurrenzfähigkeit der Emshäfen I., Ostfriesische Zeitung, Emden, 9. August 1876, No. 185

Staatskassen zu reden, als wenn auf Ebbe nicht allemal die Fluth folgte.⁷⁴ Still, since Emden had fulfilled its task of proving that expanding the port would lead to economic upswing, the Prussian state was seen as morally obliged to do its part. Not without reason did the article wonder:

Was geschieht nun und ist bis jetzt in Deutschland geschehen, dem großen Weltreiche, bezw. in Preußen, dem Führer Deutschlands, um sich nicht von Holland, dem kleinen hauptsächlich von Kolonien mächtigen Weltstaate, die Butter vom Brot nehmen zu lassen?⁷⁵

Since Prussia had made some attempts to facilitate trade in other German port cities, East Frisians now also expected an improvement of the port conditions on the River Ems. After all, '[v]om vaterländischen Standpunkte aus ist aber ganz besonders zu wünschen, daß sie ihre Konkurrenzfähigkeit gegen holländische und belgische Häfen ausüben [...].'⁷⁶

Needless to say, there were also voices against the expansion of Emden's port. However, as the article points out, these people did not make their criticism public. This minority opinion was then simply dismissed with the following words: 'Es muß aber auch solche Käuze geben, die gern im Dunkeln munkeln.'⁷⁷ More worrying than the critics was the fact that a noticeable impoverishment had taken place in East Friesland for some time. The expansion of ports on the River Ems, particularly in Emden, was regarded as a last resort in order to lead the region to recovery, 'denn ein guter Hafen ist für den Kaufmann dasselbe, was verbessertes Handwerkszeug für den Handwerker und verbesserte Maschinen für den Großindustriellen bedeuten.'⁷⁸ All in all, it was seen as a duty of the state to care for its subjects by facilitating trade in East Friesland. By linking it to the world market, this would serve the inland even more than protective tariffs. Hence, this series of newspaper articles, together with the aforementioned memorandum, illustrate that the people of Emden and East Friesland were now willing to go to

⁷⁴ StE IV 1450, Die Konkurrenzfähigkeit der Emshäfen II., Ostfriesische Zeitung, Emden, 10. August 1876, No. 186

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ StE IV 1450, Die Konkurrenzfähigkeit der Emshäfen III., Ostfriesische Zeitung, Emden, 11. August 1876, No. 187

⁷⁷ StE IV 1450, Die Konkurrenzfähigkeit der Emshäfen IV., Ostfriesische Zeitung, Emden, 12. August 1876, No. 188

⁷⁸ Ibid.

any length to make the Prussian state assume its responsibility of caring for the people of Emden.

Still, the success of this public pressure was limited. One of the points at issue was the fact that Emden planned to hand over ownership of the port to the Prussian state. In 1846, when parts of the port were reconstructed, Emden took over the liability for its maintenance from the Hanoverian Kingdom in return of a reimbursement of 4500 Marks. By the 1870s, it was realised that this had been a huge mistake, as the city would not have been able to afford the port's expansion and its maintenance. So, realising the plan of developing Emden into a major seaport would have meant a Prussian takeover of the port. In November 1876, Achenbach took a firm stand in the matter by stating that the Prussian state would not be able to take over Emden's port facilities. Instead, the city had to carry out the development of its port itself. Fortunately, the Minister of Trade offered his support in promoting the project.⁷⁹ Hence, even though the Prussian annexation of 1866 had raised expectations among Emden's population, the Prussian state did not have any plans to expand Emden's port. While the people of Emden had hoped that the city would become Prussia's state-run port on the North Sea coast, this dream was shattered by Prussia's firmly negative attitude. At this point, Emden's port was certainly not part of a Prussian economic-political project. In fact, it is doubtful whether there actually were any comprehensive plans for promoting shipping within the Prussian government prior to the memorandum on inland waterways of 1877. After all, the Prussian government was for a long time suspicious of expensive waterways projects⁸⁰ and the naval port of Wilhelmshaven certainly took priority. Therefore, local and regional efforts had to enable this development.

Here, another significant politician, decisive for Emden's future, came into play: Carl Schweckendieck. Although his mother's roots lay in Southern Germany, Schweckendieck felt closely connected to Emden through his grandparents⁸¹ His

⁷⁹ StE IV 1450, Der Minister für Handel, Gewerbe und öffentliche Arbeiten, Berlin, den 10. November 1876

⁸⁰ Karl Löbe, 'Ein Fluß belebt seine Landschaft', in: *Jahrbuch der Hafenbautechnischen Gesellschaft* 25/26 (1958/61), pp. 92–137, here p. 98

⁸¹ Ostfriesische Landschaft, Rolf Uphoff, 'Carl Schweckendieck': http://www.ostfriesischelandschaft.de/fileadmin/user_upload/BIBLIOTHEK/BLO/Schweckendieck.pdf

Accessed: 20/04/2016

grandfather ran a trading company in Emden and his father, Heinrich Wilhelm Schweckendieck, was head of the *Gesellschaft für bildende Künste*. Schweckendieck favoured a political career and became *Regierungsassessor* at the Prussian *Landdrostei* in Aurich in 1867. From there, Schweckendieck moved to Berlin to work for the *Ministerium für Öffentliche Arbeiten*, where he became *Regierungsrat* in 1880. In May 1875, Schweckendieck was entrusted with promoting the development of Emden's port facilities by the *Landdrostei*. Technical matters would be dealt with by *Baurat Müller*.

With regard to Achenbach's negative response, Schweckendieck contacted Fürbringer, to whom he had a close connection, and suggested that the best solution would be 'wenn die Stadt zunächst auf Grundlage des Ministerial-Rescriptes die Verhandlungen fortsetzt, ohne den, zur Zeit jedenfalls fruchtlosen, Versuch zu machen, die Übernahme der Hafenanstalten sofort durchzusetzen.'⁸² To Schweckendieck, it was clear that the *Ems-Jade-Kanal* would have to be built in any case. In Schweckendieck's eyes this also made the expansion of Emden's port inevitable. He was still optimistic 'daß bei fortgesetzten eifrigen Bemühungen der Staat doch schließlich die Hafenanstalten wieder übernimmt oder doch eine entsprechend höhere Rente zahlt.'⁸³ Just as Schweckendieck had not lost hope, neither had Carl Dantziger. In December 1876, Carl Dantziger and the *Kaufmännische Deputation* approached the Minister of Trade, Achenbach. Once again, Achenbach was asked to ensure that Prussia assumed responsibility for Emden's port.⁸⁴ However, Emden's efforts to convince the Prussian government to take action in Emden seem to have been uncoordinated. In another letter to Fürbringer, Schweckendieck complained about a report from Emden's city council to the Minister of Trade and the Minister of Finance. He pointed out 'daß dieselben in der vorliegenden Form beide Minister gegen die Anlage aufbringen werden.'⁸⁵

Instead, the people of Emden were urged to act true to the motto: 'Fortiter in re, suaviter in modo!' – or as 'der gute Ostfrieser sagt „anhollen deit kriegen“ [...].'⁸⁶ Schweckendieck was still convinced that the *Ems-Jade-Kanal*, which was still

⁸² StE IV 1432, Aurich, 25.11.76. Verehrter Herr Bürgermeister!

⁸³ StE IV 1432, Aurich, 30. Novr. 1876. Verehrter Herr Bürgermeister!

⁸⁴ StE IV 1432, Kaufmännische Deputation, Emden, 13. Decbr. 1876

⁸⁵ StE IV 1432, Aurich, 17. Debr. 1876

⁸⁶ This Frisian proverb translates as: slow and steady wins the race. See StE IV 1432, Aurich, 17. Debr. 1876

in its planning stage, would have to entail the expansion of Emden's port facilities. In March 1877, Achenbach then approved of the *Ems-Jade-Kanal*, which was dependent on the Minister of Finance's consent. As forecasted by Schweckendieck, this also led to the decision of expanding Emden's port, of which Emden was informed in May 1877. However, the question of whether the Prussian state was going to assume liability for the port was still undecided. It was highlighted that a Prussian assumption together with a possible continuation of annual compensation payments 'werde nur aus Gründen des allgemeinen Staatsinteresses unter Berücksichtigung der gesamten jetzigen Lage der Stadt gerechtfertigt werden können.'⁸⁷ Furthermore, it was stated explicitly '„daß die in ungeeigneter Weise nach einer angeblich „gesetzlichen, moralischen und politischen Verpflichtung“ der Staatsregierung gestellte desfallige Forderung jeder Begründung entbehre.“'⁸⁸ Thus, the Prussian government was still careful when it came to assuming liability for Emden's port.

In contrast to Schweckendieck, Emden's public opinion was less calm about the situation. On the subject of the deferred decision regarding the construction of the *Ems-Jade-Kanal*, the *Emder Zeitung* wondered on November 25 1878:

Und nun soll durch das ganze für den Staat vorteilhafte und für die Erhaltung des Wohlstandes geschweige für die weitere Entwicklung der Verkehrs- und Erwerbsverhältnisse in unserer seit langer Zeit immer nur stiefmütterlich behandelten Landschaft so hochwichtige Project einfach ein Strich gemacht sein? [...] Wird nicht namentlich Ostfriesland durch die niemals zu verschmerzende Absonderung Hollands vom alten Deutschen Reich gedrückt und werden hier nicht die Ideen einer größeren nationalen Wirtschaftspolitik auch im neuen deutschen Reiche durch die verderbliche Ausnahmestellung der Hansestädte niedergehalten?⁸⁹

Thus, by this point, there was a noticeable degree of discontent about Prussia's failure to address the problems of Emden's port. It had been more than a decade since the people of Emden celebrated the return of Prussian rule, which was tied to

⁸⁷ StE IV 1432, Abschrift, Aurich, den 28. Mai 1877

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ StE IV 1434, *Emder Zeitung*, Nr. 276, Montag den 25. November 1878.

economic recovery. However, there was obviously no Prussian strategic economic planning that embraced Emden.

After all these complications, Emden was able to reach an agreement with the Prussian state in December 1879. The treaty between the two parties gives insight into the importance that the Prussian government ascribed to Emden as a port city. Paragraph three of the treaty emphasised that a 'rechtliche Verpflichtung zur fortdauernden Unterhaltung des Hafens [...] Seitens der Staatsregierung nicht übernommen [wird].'⁹⁰ Instead, the Prussian state government only assumed liability for the time, 'während welcher die Staatsregierung es für begründet erachtet.'⁹¹ There was still no Prussian plan to take over Emden's port permanently. Eventually, the Prussian state took over the port of Emden on April 1 1888. Only a few weeks after this, on June 5 1888, the *Ems-Jade-Kanal* was officially put into operation. Since Emden had not been able to fulfil a part of the contract stating that the city had to look after a new canalisation system, the Prussian government had suspended construction works for some time. It took Emden one and a half years to approach the Prussian planning department and to reveal that the city simply could not afford the construction of a new canalisation system. The costs of the new system were estimated at around half a million Marks. Ultimately, the Prussian Diet agreed to pay more than half of the estimated costs and even then, only construction works were able to continue.

The timing of this treaty is interesting. At this point, the Reich Chancellor had already enquired of both Hanseatic cities their opinion on an accession to the Empire's customs union. Even this situation did not change Emden's status within Prussia and the Empire, although the city regarded itself as a legitimate competitor to the Dutch ports as well as to Bremen and Hamburg. With regard to economic policy, Emden did still not play a role as Westphalia's natural seaport. In light of Bismarck's turn to protectionism at the end of the 1870s, this foot-dragging by the Prussian government is not quite understandable. After all, as pointed out by Nipperdey, '[g]anz wichtig für den Gesamtprozeß der Volkswirtschaft im Zeitalter der intensivierten Industrialisierung war der Außenhandel.'⁹² Therefore, it is incomprehensible why the Prussian state realised the need for a military base on

⁹⁰ StE IV 1431, Vertrag betreffend Unterhaltung der Hafenanstalten in Emden (vom 18./22. Decbr. 1879 nebst Anhang v. 16./28. Septbr. 1882)

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte, Band I*, p. 279

the North Sea Coast, namely Wilhelmshaven, but did not take any action to create competition for Hamburg and Bremen, which were still not part of the customs union. An answer to this might again be given by Nipperdey, who argues that, even during the protectionist turn '[war] das Prinzip liberaler Handlungsfreiheit und der Marktorientierung [...] so stark und sicher verankert, daß man allenfalls von einer Doppelung individualistischer und tariff- und sozialpolitisch interventionistischer Prinzipien der Wirtschaftsverfassung sprechen kann.' Hence, unlike, for example, the Dutch state in Rotterdam or Amsterdam, the Prussian government did not pursue an active policy of seeing to the facilitation of trade in Emden – at least in this case. At the same time, the fact that the Prussian state was not interested in creating competing against Hamburg and Bremen suggests that the Hanseatic *Zollanschluss* did not have an economic motivation but rather a symbolic one.

d. The Dortmund-Ems-Kanal – Emden finding its place?

Before examining the way Emden was finally connected to the industrial region of Westphalia, it is necessary to take a look at how this fitted in with plans that were made for an extensive canal network in the German Empire. As early as the 1850s, there was a committee in Dortmund that submitted a memorandum to the Prussian *Ministerium für Handel, Gewerbe und öffentliche Arbeiten*. In this memorandum, the need for a *Mittellandkanal* was pointed out. The idea at the time was to create a canal system crossing the whole of Germany from West to East and another one from the River Main to the Danube. Indeed, water transport was of growing importance to Germany. While inland water transport on the Rhine and rail transport in the area were of equal importance at the end of the century, only ten years later, the share of water transport had doubled in comparison.⁹³ The Hohenzollern monarchy had proven to be a supporter of canalisation. In the Prussian heartland, it had been the Great Elector which began to see to the construction of artificial waterways, namely the canal from the River Oder to the Spree. This was followed other canals, such as the *Finow-Kanal*, the *Klodnitz-Kanal*

⁹³ Karl Löbe has, for example, pointed to the increasing significance of inland water transport prior to the First World War in Löbe, 'Ein Fluß belebt seine Landschaft', p. 93. See also Hannelore Horn, *Der Kampf um den Bau des Mittellandkanals* (Köln, 1964)

in the eighteenth century or the *Spandauer Schiffahrtskanal* in the middle of the nineteenth century. Still, the project of a *Mittellandkanal* remained innovative, as it envisaged the construction of a canal in the West-East direction through the whole of Germany. It is not surprising that many different ideas arose regarding the canal's actual route nor that it was extremely difficult to press ahead with this matter; 'die Idee des Binnenverkehrs auf dem Wasser fand anfangs in weiten Teilen des Reiches, und in besonders wichtigen, kaum Widerhall.'⁹⁴

It was not until the second half of the 1870s that the Prussian government turned to the plan of expanding inland waterways. In 1877, the Prussian government issued a memorandum regarding the improvement and expansion of the inland waterway system. In this memorandum, the Prussian government asked for the construction of a canal connecting the rivers Rhine, Weser and Elbe. Two years later, another report was submitted to the Prussian Diet by the Prussian government with the subject of upgrading the navigable parts of the Vistula, the Oder, the Elbe, the Weser and the Rhine. Rather than focusing on the seaports on the North Sea Coast, emphasis was at first put on improving and expanding inland waterways. However, this inevitably also led to reflections about the need for a North to South connection, from the hinterland to the seaports on the North Sea Coast. Discussions about the *Dortmund-Ems-Kanal* have to be seen in the context of this *Mittellandkanal* project, since it was planned as only one section of the complete *Mittellandkanal*. It also needs to be pointed out that favour for the construction of a canal to the North Sea Coast first grew in the Rhineland and Westphalia and not in Emden.

In 1882, the Prussian government issued yet another memorandum entitled *Denkschrift über die geschäftliche Lage der Preußischen Kanalprojekte*.⁹⁵ This memorandum also dealt with the project of the *Mittellandkanal*. In contrast to former plans, there were now considerations about a Northern route that the canal could possibly take. The first section of this Northern route would be the *Dortmund-Ems-Kanal*. The route from Dortmund to the Ems was estimated to cost around 50 million Marks, thus enabling Emden to make use of its position vis-à-vis the Ruhr area. From this section, the canal was thought to make its way via

⁹⁴ Löbe, 'Ein Fluß belebt seine Landschaft', p. 95

⁹⁵ Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz I. HA Rep. 93 B, Nr. 5194, *Denkschrift über die geschäftliche Lage der Preußischen Kanalprojekte*

Oldenburg to Vegesack, located on the Lower Weser, and then to Stade, which is situated on the Lower Elbe. At this point, it had been realised that it was necessary to incorporate seaports into the project of a large canal system in the German Empire. Interestingly, the Southern route of the *Mittellandkanal*, the one that was eventually built, was resolutely opposed in Hamburg. In Bremen, on the other hand, opinions on the preferred route were divided.⁹⁶ Thus, competition from Emden did not seem to have had an impact in neither Hamburg nor Bremen. In the end, the plan for a *Mittellandkanal* was declined by a commission of the Prussian House of Representatives. As highlighted by Löbe, in the Prussian *Landtag* 'begnete jeder Kanalbau der Ablehnung der Konservativen, wo starke landwirtschaftliche Interessen sich vor allem gegen Erleichterungen der Getreideeinfuhr wehrten.'⁹⁷ Due to the fact that there was no direct connection to the Rhine, benefits for the ports on the River Ems were regarded as doubtful.⁹⁸ In fact, 'allgemeines Staatsinteresse hielt die Kommission nur unter den Umständen für gegeben, daß der im Rahmen eines größeren Binnenkanals gedachte Dortmund-Ems-Kanal zugleich mit diesem zur Ausfertigung gebracht werde.'⁹⁹ Hence, Emden was still not regarded as a viable alternative to Hamburg and Bremen.

In fact, there are no signs that indicate the active engagement of incorporating Emden into the new canal system. In April 1882, when the memorandum was submitted to the Prussian House of Representatives, Emden amongst others was requested to take action in favour of the project by the city council of Lingen. Since Lingen did not consider itself influential enough, its city council contacted Dortmund, Münster, Papenburg, Leer and Emden with respect to seizing the initiative against the *Kanalrebell*, the opponents of the canal. Indeed, while Emden was still inactive, other regions had already been promoting the construction of a *Mittellandkanal*. For example, in January 1882, the *Kölnische Volkszeitung* argued:

Wenn das Reich in der Hamburger Frage so bedeutende Kosten auf seine Schultern zu nehmen sich bereit findet, so sollten wir meinen, dürfte Preußen für die Entwicklung seines Emdener Hafens, des von der Natur

⁹⁶ Löbe, 'Ein Fluß belebt seine Landschaft', pp. 98-99

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 99

⁹⁸ Horn, *Kampf*, pp. 34-35

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 35

angewiesenen Ausführungspunktes unseres westfälischen Kohlereichthumes, auch etwas zu thun in der Lage sein.¹⁰⁰

Similarly, it was the city council of Leer that decided to react to Lingen's request and to call a meeting between all cities with an interest in the construction of the planned *Rhein-Weser-Ems-Kanal*.¹⁰¹ The meeting between all representatives of cities affected by the canal project took place on May 3 1882 in Leer.

Senator Brons agreed to represent Emden at the meeting and spoke in favour of awaiting the decision of the Prussian House of Representatives in Berlin rather than taking any immediate actions. Brons argued that the House of Representatives was either already discussing the canal project or would so in the coming days. Hence, he did not regard it as necessary to take any action before the House of Representatives had come to a decision. This was met with incomprehension by the other attendees. Leer's mayor Pustan, who was chairman of the meeting, pointed out that 'durch Schweigen der nächstbetheiligten Bezirke dieselben leicht einer nachtheilig wirkenden Gleichgültigkeit und Lässigkeit geziehen werden könnten [...]'.¹⁰² It was argued that in light of the sudden agitation against the project, it was absolutely necessary to take a firm stand for the project. In the end, all attendees, including the representative of East Friesland's agricultural society, agreed to submit a resolution to the Prussian House of Representatives. In this, the need for the *Dortmund-Ems-Kanal* would be highlighted, which 'entspricht allseitig und vollkommen den Interessen der von ihnen vertretenen Gemeinden und Institute; insbesondere auch erscheint es den berechtigten Anforderungen der Montan-Industrie und des Ackerbaus und der Forstwirtschaft durchaus förderlich.'¹⁰³ Furthermore, upon Brons' proposal, Dortmund was chosen as the head of any further agitation in favour of the canal. When it came to bearing the costs of this agitation there seems to have been less agreement, particularly on Brons' side. The minutes of the meeting state that the expenses for promoting the *Dortmund-Ems-Kanal* would be shared by the cities involved on the basis of the number of inhabitants. Yet, Brons left a note on the side that clarifies: 'Dies ist nicht richtig. Es ist meinerseits ausdrücklich constatirt,

¹⁰⁰ StE IV 2021, Kölnische Volkszeitung, Köln, 5. Jan. Donnerstag, Zweites Blatt, 1882.

¹⁰¹ StE IV 2021, Magistrat der Stadt Leer, Leer, den 27. April 1882.

¹⁰² StE IV 2021, Verhandelt Leer am 3. Mai 1882.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

daß es sich bei diesem Beschlusse nur um die in dieser Verhandlung gemachten Kosten handele.' Emden was hard-pressed for money, due to issues involving a new sewage system. Therefore, agitation for the *Dortmund-Ems-Kanal* was obviously not the city's priority, which is to some extent astonishing regarding the impact of the canal on Emden.

Subsequently, Dortmund did indeed become the head of any further agitation which did not end even after the project had made it to the Prussian House of Representatives. In Emden, it was the *Kaufmännische Deputation* that agreed to pay for further expenses – the first payment to the newly founded committee amounted to 300 Marks.¹⁰⁴ In 1883, another bill regarding the construction of the *Dortmund-Ems-Kanal* was again submitted to the Prussian Diet. Naturally, the committee for promoting the project sent a petition to the Prussian House of Representatives, which was the first to decide on the matter. In this petition, it was emphasised that the canal would connect 'zwei hochentwickelte Wirtschaftsgebiete [...], auf der einen Seite den niederrheinisch-westfälischen Industriedistrict mit seiner von Jahr zu Jahr wachsenden Massenproduction, auf der anderen Seite das Handelsgebiet der deutschen Nordseeküste.'¹⁰⁵ Certainly, the fact that the *Syndikus* of Bremen's Chamber of Commerce had also signed the petition reveals that the project of the *Dortmund-Ems-Kanal* was always viewed as one step towards the expansion of Germany's entire inland waterway system. However, this also shows the widespread impact that the project had. Instead of Emden, which actually regarded itself as the natural seaport of Westphalia and the Rhineland, other circles assumed responsibility. Business circles in Westphalia and the Rhineland, in particular, made it their priority to realise the *Dortmund-Ems-Kanal*.

At the same time, Emden eventually intensified its efforts to promote the motion. In April 1883, it was decided that another memorandum to highlight the need for the planned canal should be presented to the members of the Prussian Diet. Representative bodies of the interested cities along the River Ems and mercantile institutions joined many in handing in petitions to the Prussian *Landtag*. Furthermore, Leo Fürbringer resolved to travel to Berlin himself in order

¹⁰⁴ StE IV 2021, Geschehen Emden, in der Magistratssitzung am 20. Novbr. 1882.

¹⁰⁵ StE IV 2021, Münster in Westfalen, den 25. Januar 1883. An das hohe Haus der Abgeordneten Berlin.

to press ahead with the matter. Indeed, even though a commission of the House of Representatives again voted with 13 to 10 votes against the construction of the canal, the House of Representatives voted in favour of the *Dortmund-Ems-Kanal* on June 6 1883. From Düsseldorf, Henry Alex Bueck, manager of the *Vereins zur Wahrung der gemeinsamen wirtschaftlichen Interessen in Rheinland und Westfalen*, promptly sent a telegram of congratulations to Fürbringer, which indicates the importance that was ascribed to the project.¹⁰⁶ In addition to Bueck, Fürbringer was also in contact with William Thomas Mulvany, another influential entrepreneur in Westphalia and the Rhineland, who was advocating the expansion of inland waterways.¹⁰⁷

In any case, the Prussian House of Deputies rejected the envisaged canal. Remarkably, only 135 deputies took part in the vote, while 36 deputies were absent with an excuse and another 109 without an excuse, one of whom was Bismarck. Of the remaining 135 deputies, 70 voted against the *Dortmund-Ems-Kanal* and 65 in favour.¹⁰⁸ The decision against the canal in Berlin again resulted in post from the Rhineland. In a letter from July 1, Franz Merkens, president of the *Westdeutscher Fluss- und Kanalverein* and participator in the banking house *Seydlitz & Merkens* in Cologne, wrote to Fürbringer. Merkens raged:

So kann, so darf sich ein Volk in seinen materiellen Interessen nicht schädigen lassen, wie es hier geschehen. Wenn die Aristokraten den politischen Fortschritt zu hemmen bestrebt sind, um verrottete Privilegien zu schirmen und zu schützen, so mag man darin eine Art von Berechtigung erkennen, denn die idealen Anschauungen des Communismus und Socialismus haben unpraktische Seiten; wenn sie sich aber vermessen, dem materiellen Fortschritt erschwerend entgegenzutreten, dann wagen sie den Lebens und Existenznerv des Volkes zu unterbinden, eine Handlung die ebenso ungestraft nicht vollzogen werden kann, als wie jene, in das Rad der Zeit eingreifen zu wollen.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ StE IV 2021, Telegraphie des Deutschen Reiches. Telegraphenamt Emden, 7.6.1883

¹⁰⁷ See StE IV 2021, Rede von Wm. T. Mulvany in der am 13. März 1883 abgehaltenen General-Versammlung

¹⁰⁸ Horn, *Kampf*, p. 35

¹⁰⁹ StE IV 2021, Rhöndorf 1 July 1883, Mein lieber, verehrter Freund!

In fact, efforts by the advocates of the canal did not stop at that point. In November 1883, the *Komité zur Förderung des Schiffahrtskanals von Dortmund nach den Emshäfen* in Dortmund informed Emden's city council that it was campaigning to submit the motion once again to the Prussian *Landtag*. However, since the committee did not regard itself legitimised under the Prussian constitution to submit the motion, it made a request to Bismarck, who was at that time also the Minister of Trade and Industry.¹¹⁰ The fact that the committee was not going to give up is also proven by the discussion about the establishment of a permanent office.¹¹¹ Emden even took the trouble to prepare another petition to the Prussian *Landtag* at the end of 1883. In this, the city expressed that its hopes were tempered 'nach Vollendung der in der Ausführung begriffenen staatsseitigen Umwandlung ihres Hafens in einen für große Seeschiffe zugänglichen Hochwasserhafen zum Hauptplatze für den Import und Export des westlichen Deutschlands zu erblühen [...].'¹¹²

Still, there was little progress made until early 1885 when Albert von Maybach, Prussian Minister for Public Works, made an announcement before the House of Representatives to submit another bill to the Prussian *Landtag*.¹¹³ By August 1885, Maybach was ordered to work out the details of the new bill. This bill was supposed to include the whole section between the Rhine via Dortmund to Emden. Of this section, only the construction of the *Dortmund-Ems-Kanal* was requested. However, by April 1886, it looked like the bill would be rejected by the House of Representatives for the second time. Conservatives would most likely vote against the bill. The party, which had already voted in the majority against the canal in 1883, argued that the state's financial status did not allow for such a project. Similarly, the *Freisinnige Partei* was also expected to vote against the bill. As a result of this, all involved parties in favour of the canal were urged by the *Westdeutscher Fluss- und Kanalverein* to again send petitions to the Prussian Diet in

¹¹⁰ Article 32 of the Prussian Constitution was concerned with the submission of petitions to the *Landtag*. In this, it states that only authorities and corporations were allowed to submit petitions. For the letter to Bismarck, see StE IV 2021, Dortmund und Münster den 16. November 1883

¹¹¹ StE IV 2021, An die Herren Mitglieder des Executivausschusses des Komité's zur Förderung des Schiffahrtskanals von Dortmund nach der unteren Ems, Dortmund, den 26. November 1883.

¹¹² StE IV 2021, An das hohe Herrenhaus (Abgeordnetenhaus) des Preußischen Landtages zu Berlin, Emden den 14. Dezember 1883

¹¹³ Horn, *Kampf*, p. 35

April 1886.¹¹⁴ Consequently, a flood of petitions was sent to the *Landtag* and this effort seems to have made an impact. On May 25 1886, the Prussian House of Representatives approved the bill by a large majority. The feeling of relief that this decision produced is best illustrated by the following poem that was sent to Emden from Cologne by telegram the following day:

Der Kanal er ist kein Wahn, denn er kommt trotz Eisenbahn.
Gratuliere Stadt und Land, Magistrat und Schifferland.
Und als Vater Goethe sprach: Ein Lanze fuer ihn brach,
Mann mit zugeknöpften Taschen dir thut niemand was zu lieb,
Hand wird nur von Hand gewaschen, wenn du nehmen willst, dann gieb
-- stumm --, ist keiner da gewesen, Beifall tönt von allen Seiten,
in den Augen konnt man lesen, jetzt beginnen beßere Zeiten,
drum ein hoch dem Kind der Qual, dreifach hoch der Emskanal.¹¹⁵

On June 10 1886, the bill was also approved by the House of Deputies. Again, only a small number of deputies were present for the vote, in which 57 out of 102 votes were in favour of the bill.¹¹⁶ It is not surprising that the *Emder Zeitung* and the *Ostfriesische Zeitung* were unanimously enthusiastic about this decision. Both newspapers reported the spontaneous festivities that took place after the outcome of the vote had been announced.¹¹⁷ The *Emder Zeitung* wrote that 'viele Bürger [hängten] noch ihre Fahnen aus, [...] vom Rathausthurm herab ließ unsere städtische Capelle, um der Stimmung der Bürgerschaft Ausdruck zu geben, das „Nun danket Alle Gott“ erschallen [...].'¹¹⁸

For the *Dortmund-Ems-Kanal* a budget of 58.4 million Marks was provided. However, this budget had to be raised to 79.4 million Marks by 1897. Due to the continued protest from opponents of the canal, such as Finance Minister Johannes von Miquel, the beginning of construction works was delayed until 1892. One of the consequences of these continued protests was that only vessels with a

¹¹⁴ StE IV 2022, Westdeutscher Fluss- und Kanal-Verein, Berlin, im April 1886

¹¹⁵ StE IV 2022, Telegraphie des Deutschen Reiches. Amt Emden. 26/5 1883. Emden v Coeln

¹¹⁶ Horn, *Kampf*, p. 35

¹¹⁷ See StE Ostfriesische Zeitung, No. 135, Emden, Freitag, den 11. Juni 1886 and Emder Zeitung, Nr. 135, Freitag den 11. Juni 1886

¹¹⁸ StE Emder Zeitung, Nr. 135, Freitag den 11. Juni 1886

maximum tonnage capacity of 750 tons were allowed to use the canal.¹¹⁹ On August 11 1899, Wilhelm II himself inaugurated the *Dortmund-Ems-Kanal*. Naturally, the fact that ‘gewissermaßen dem Rhein eine deutsche Mündung verschafft wird [...]’ generated high expectations.¹²⁰ The *Emder Zeitung*, for example, spoke of the ‘Beginn einer hoffentlich bis in die fernsten Zeiten währenden Blütheperiode [...]’¹²¹ Furthermore, unlike the inauguration of the *Ems-Jade-Kanal* in 1888, which had hardly received any attention in the *Emder Zeitung*, the procedure of the inauguration of the *Dortmund-Ems-Kanal* made it to the title page of the *Emder Zeitung* and the *Ostfriesische Zeitung*.¹²² The high expectations in Emden were also nurtured by the Emperor himself, when he explained: ‘Ich bin der festen Ueberzeugung, daß es dieser Stadt gelingen wird, in Verbindung mit Dortmund und weiter hinein in das Hinterland [...] eine große Zukunft herbeizuführen.’¹²³

As part of the canal construction, Emden’s port was also expanded again. For this, the Prussian state first budgeted around 4.8 million Marks and another 965, 000 Marks for the shipping channel. The fact that these works were extremely necessary is demonstrated by Carl Schweckendieck. In his festschrift for the opening of Emden’s new seaport, Schweckendieck pointed out that until 1896, there was only one larger vessel arriving in Emden with a draught of 5.4 metres.¹²⁴ Subsequently, Emden received new port facilities and the depth of water was increased. Once the *Dortmund-Ems-Kanal* was inaugurated, the *Hamburg-Amerikanische Packetfahrt-Aktiengesellschaft* (*Hapag*) of Hamburg and the *Norddeutscher Lloyd* of Bremen showed interest in expanding their business to Emden. The condition for this was another expansion of Emden’s port so that seagoing vessels would be able to call there. This further expansion was then completed in 1901. On July 30 1902, Wilhelm II visited Emden, the only time the Emperor had made it to East Friesland, to celebrate the inauguration of Emden’s

¹¹⁹ Hummerich, *Kaufmannsgut*, p. 23

¹²⁰ StE Ostfriesische Zeitung, Nr. 189, Emden, Montag, den 14. August 1899.

¹²¹ StE Emder Zeitung, Nr. 187, Freitag, den 11. August 1899

¹²² See StE Ostfriesische Zeitung, Nr. 188, Emden, Montag, den 12. August 1899; Ostfriesische Zeitung, Nr. 188 (Zweites Blatt), Emden, Montag, den 12. August 1899 and StE Emder Zeitung, Nr. 188, Sonnabend, den 12. August 1899

¹²³ StE Emder Zeitung, Nr. 188, Sonnabend, den 12. August 1899

¹²⁴ Carl Schweckendieck, *Festschrift zur Eröffnung des neuen Emder Seehafens* (Berlin, 1901), p. 39

seaport. By the time construction works were completed in 1901, the expansion of Emden's port had cost more than 22 million Marks. Another 75 million Marks had been invested in the construction of *Dortmund-Ems-Kanal*.¹²⁵ These works did not even mark the end of the expansion of Emden's port and until the First World War, there were continued works in the city, such as the *Große Seeschleuse* which was built between 1907 and 1913.¹²⁶ At the time of its construction, the *Große Seeschleuse* was one of the largest of its kind in the world. Its construction had been made necessary due to Emden's increased shipping traffic in previous years. Furthermore, Fürbringer had also agreed to the establishment of a dockyard in Emden. For this purpose, the *Nesserlander Schleuse* simply would not have been sufficient.

Thus, in 1901, with the completion of the expansion of Emden's port, the hopes that already arose after the Prussian annexation of 1866 had finally materialised. Emden was now in a position that allowed for competition with the other major port cities on the North Sea Coast. As we have seen, the journey to this new position was highly difficult for Emden. While the *Ems-Jade-Kanal* was primarily built for military-strategic reasons, the *Dortmund-Ems-Kanal* was capable of opening up a large and prosperous hinterland to Emden. Certainly, Emden played a comparatively minor role in realising the project of a canal from Dortmund to Emden. It was mainly the more influential industrial circles in Westphalia that enabled the construction. However, despite all this, Emden was in an extremely favourable position by the turn of the century. As early as January 1886, the *Rheinisch-Westfälische Zeitung* argued that if it was possible to make Emden a viable alternative again 'dann wird die weitere Entwicklung keine künstliche sein, weil in einer mehrgestalteten Verbindung mit einem großen Hinterland die Vorbedingungen für ein ferneres Gedeihen gegeben sind.'¹²⁷ From the beginning, the hopes that were drawn from Emden's port expansion were great. Therefore, it needs to be examined next how Emden's mercantile community took advantage of the city's new seaport.

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 59

¹²⁶ For more information on the *Große Seeschleuse* see Clasmeier's detailed study on this topic: Clasmeier, *100 Jahre Große Seeschleuse*

¹²⁷ StE IV 2022, Rh.-Westf. Zeitung, No. 8 vom 8./1. 86.

e. Further canal projects – a danger to Emden

The *Dortmund-Ems-Kanal* was first regarded as just one section of a larger inland waterway system. At the beginning of the twentieth century, there were plans to expand the *Hunte-Ems-Kanal*, or *Campe-Dörpen-Kanal* as the new project was also called, to connect the River Ems and Bremen via Oldenburg. In contrast to the *Dortmund-Ems-Kanal*, these plans were worked out by the Grand Duchy of Oldenburg and Bremen. The reaction to these plans document how fragile Emden's position vis-à-vis its competitors on the North Sea Coast still was despite the fact that the Prussian state had spent a fortune on expanding the city's port. Even though the *Rheinisch-Westfälische Zeitung* had opined that 'eine Vermehrung großer Handelsplätze nicht eine Schwächung der einzelnen, viel eher eine Erstarkung derselben zur Folge hat [...]', Emden regarded the project of the *Campe-Dörpen-Kanal* with suspicion.¹²⁸

In April 1906, after complaints from Emden's city council, the Prussian Minister for Public Works responded that there could be no objections against preliminary works by Oldenburg's government for the *Campe-Dörpen-Kanal*. As early as possible, Emden attempted to thwart Oldenburg's plans. Similarly, the *Kaufmännische Deputation* wrote to Paul von Breitenbach, at that point Minister for Public Works, in order to interfere in the plans for the new canal. In particular, Bremen was criticised for advertising the canal: 'In besonderem Maße ist es dabei auf die Schädigung der Stadt Emden abgesehen, gegen die Bremen oft in geradezu kleinlicher Weise vorgeht.'¹²⁹ As an example of this, the deputation points to the fact that there were import levies on goods imported from Emden to Bremen while there were none for goods imported from Leer.¹³⁰ In order to convince Breitenbach of the need for intervention, the *Kaufmännische Deputation* also did not fail to mention that approving the canal would 'das Interesse des eigenen Staates auf das schwerste schädigen, zum mindestens würden sie die bedeutenden Aufwendungen nutzlos machen, die [...] für die Erweiterung der hiesigen

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ StE IV 2086, Kaufmännische Deputation betr. den Bau des Hunte-Emskanals, Emden, den 3. Mai 1906

¹³⁰ Leer is situated close to Emden further upstream on the River Ems. While Leer had modernised its port between 1901 and 1903, it remained considerably smaller. Leer's industry also grew. Leer, for example, possessed an iron foundry and a paper mill. See Krömer, *Kleine Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, p. 82

Hafenanlagen aus Staatsmitteln bewilligt worden sind.¹³¹ So, even after the turn of the century, Emden's *Kaufmännische Deputation* hoped to make a case by pointing to the self-interest of the Prussian state.

Breitenbach quickly dashed this hope by soberly responding to the deputation that the Prussian government had only allowed preliminary works. However, when it came to deciding on the project in general it had to evaluate – 'bei allem Wohlwollen für Emden [...] – 'ob das geplante Unternehmen für weitere nationale Kreise in wirtschaftlicher Beziehung von besonderem Vorteil sein wird.'¹³² According to Breitenbach, this focus on national interest had been the sole reason for agreeing to the expansion of Emden's port. When Emden made further efforts to frustrate Oldenburg's plan for the canal, the city's representatives had to find out that the Emperor himself, Wilhelm II, was in favour of the project, as was the Ministry for Public Works.¹³³ Bremen's attitude towards the projected canal was also concretised now: the *Norddeutsche Lloyd* was said to be in favour of the *Campe-Dörpen-Kanal*, while other circles wanted to concentrate on the *Mittellandkanal*.

Subsequently, Emden's efforts did not abate. The *Kaufmännische Deputation* sent a petition to the Minister of Public Works. In addition to this, the *Handelskammer für Ostfriesland und Papenburg* also got involved in the agitation against the canal. In this, it was again highlighted that the project canal almost exclusively drew Bremen's interest, which would receive a connection to the *Dortmund-Ems-Kanal* via the *Mittellandkanal*. Fears of losing out to Bremen through the new *Campe-Dörpen-Kanal* were justified by the *Königliche Wasserbauinspektion* in Emden. In a survey, that body argued that although freight costs to Bremen would still exceed those to Emden by about 18%, Bremen would still constitute fierce competition. The problem was that imports for Westphalia and the Rhineland were processed via Emden but the majority of barges leaving Emden southwards returned without any goods. Only 289 out of 675 barges could be fully loaded in 1905. In Bremen, on the other hand, the *Norddeutscher Lloyd* alone needed more German coal than the total tonnage delivered to Emden on the *Dortmund-Ems-Kanal*. Even worse, the *Norddeutsche Lloyd* had already bought

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² StE IV 2086, Der Minister der öffentlichen Arbeiten, III.A.3.984., Konstanz, den 3. Juni 1906

¹³³ StE IV 2086, Vertraulich! Leer, den 15. Juni 1906

some coal pits on the *Dortmund-Ems-Kanal*. As a result, the import of ore to Emden, which was currently carried out by the *Hapag*, was also in danger of being moved to Bremen. For other goods, such as coal and wood, the prospect of keeping the business in Emden was equally bleak. Therefore, the *Campe-Dörpen-Kanal* was clearly a threat to Emden's position. It would have exclusively benefitted Bremen and Oldenburg.

In this context, it certainly is unsurprising that Emden did not stop agitating against the envisaged canal. Its construction would have been a huge blow to Emden's favourable development as a port city. In a letter to the Minister for Public Works, Emden's city council made this clear: 'Im allgemeinen wird nach Ausführung dieses Kanals der Verkehr im hiesigen Hafen auf den Standpunkt des Jahres 1898 zurückgeschraubt werden [...].'¹³⁴ Bremen was still pictured as foreseeing Emden's bright future and therefore wanting to eliminate the competition before it was too late. Thus, in Emden, there was still a clear separation between the German nation and the Prussian state. This is absolutely in line with Emden's attitude towards the German nation which is discussed above. In Emden, the Prussian state still had priority over the German nation. With regard to what had been achieved in Emden since the Prussian annexation, this is certainly understandable. Yet, while Emden had always regarded itself as a possible competitor to Hamburg, Bremen and the Dutch ports, by 1906, there was still no feeling of being able to compete face to face with these ports. Prussian approval of the *Campe-Dörpen-Kanal* was equated with Berlin turning its back on Emden. After all, the city, 'die mit äusserster Anstrengung aller Kräfte an der Aufgabe, aus Emden ein preussisches Handelsemporium zu machen, wird [...] Opfer einer Politik der Regierung, die nicht vorauszusehen war [...].'¹³⁵

This viewpoint was also set out in a petition to the Emperor. In this, it was argued again that Bremen simply wanted to get rid of its new competition on the River Ems. As proof, the petition mentions a member of the *Nordwestdeutscher Kanalverein* who emphasised to the *Weserzeitung* in 1905: 'Bremen muß Anstrengungen machen, denn es wird durch Emden geschädigt. Was Emden an sich riß, das ging auf Kosten deutscher besonders der Weserhäfen.'¹³⁶

¹³⁴ StE IV 2086, Magistrat der Stadt Emden. J. No. 16854, Emden, den 5. November 1906

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ StE IV 2086, Reinentwurf, Sr. Majestät dem Deutschen Kaiser und König von Preußen

Furthermore, there were also preparations for a petition to the Reich Chancellor, Bernhard von Bülow. However, aside from taking official action, there are indications that Leo Fürbringer made a lot of progress in Berlin behind the scenes. For example, on January 10 1907, Fürbringer sent a letter to Emden's city council from Hamburg. In this letter, Fürbringer informs the city council of a meeting he had with Albert Ballin, general director of the *Hapag*. Fürbringer reported:

Die Rundschau hatte überdies im gestrigen Abendblatt die Nachricht gebracht, dass in Kreisen der Oldenburgischen Landtagsabgeordneten verlautete, dass der Kaiser dem Großherzog versprochen hatte, dass der Canal Dörpen-Campe zugelassen werden solle. Das Blatt übergab ich Ballin, der mir versprach es sofort dem Kaiser einzusenden u. S. M. um Auskunft zu bitten, ob dies bezweckt sei. Er sprach die Überzeugung aus, dass es nicht so sei, der Kaiser sei überrascht gewesen u. habe ganz entschieden Abneigung bekundet auf den Canal einzugehen als Ballin S. M. neulich gesprochen und die Schädigung des Hafens von Emden hervorgehoben hatte.¹³⁷

Supporting Emden had, of course, two advantages for Hamburg. Firstly, Hamburg could exert influence on developments in Emden. Secondly, Hamburg could also ensure that its competitor on the Weser was kept in check by the growing significance of Emden as a seaport. Subsequently, Emden and Fürbringer's lobbying activities continued. On February 9 1907, the *Budgetkommission* of the Prussian House of Representatives requested the Prussian government to not decide on the matter of the canal before consulting the House of Representatives. This request was then endorsed by the Prussian Minister for Public Works. Subsequently, Fürbringer was approached by a Prussian Under-Secretary of State and asked to cease agitation against the canal project, since 'Regierung sei entschlossen denselben abzulehnen, doch werde aus Höflichkeit gegen Oldenburg die schriftliche Eröffnung noch einige Woche aufgeschoben werden.'¹³⁸

Of course, the manner of undertaking agitation for and against the *Campe-Dörpen-Kanal* reveals a lot about the way politics was conducted in the German

¹³⁷ StE IV 2086, Hotel Union – Hamburg, Hamburg, den 10. Januar 1907, Wohllöblicher Magistrat!

¹³⁸ StE IV 2086, Haus der Abgeordneten, Berlin, den 18. Februar 1907, Wohllöblicher Magistrat!

Empire. It also shows how much influence Fürbringer had been able to build in Berlin and in Hamburg, where he seems to have been close to Albert Ballin. In March, at a soiree in Berlin, Fürbringer was also able to talk to Breitenbach about the matter. Fürbringer informed Breitenbach that he already knew of the Emperor's decision to reject the plans for the canal. Even Breitenbach, the Minister for Public Works, had only been notified of this a few days before the soiree. Breitenbach told Fürbringer that, when the canal question was discussed with Wilhelm II, the Emperor expressed about Emden's mayor: 'Der Arme hat auch einen seiner Söhne in Südwestafrika verloren.'¹³⁹ However, there were supporters of the canal present at the soiree, who shouted at Fürbringer: 'gebaut wird er doch'.¹⁴⁰ The decision against the canal was definitely not regarded as permanent. In order to remain on good terms with the government, Fürbringer invited Breitenbach, who had visited Emden before, and his wife to Emden. After all, the Minister for Public Works had not doubted for one second that the canal 'mit Rücksicht auf Emden u. seine Bedrohung für den preußischen Staat und des deutschen Reich schlechterdings abzulehnen sei und die Auffassung vom Anfang an offen ausgesprochen hätte.'¹⁴¹ Hence, for the time being, Emden was able to fend off plans for the *Campe-Dörpen-Kanal*, which certainly would have deteriorated its situation vis-à-vis Bremen.

However, as early as 1909 the subject aroused interest again. In the meantime, the lobbying work for the canal had continued, as promised to Fürbringer during the soiree in 1907. Indeed, there is some indication that the two parties moved closer. For example, Fürbringer was negotiating with representatives from Oldenburg the possibility of receiving compensation in case the *Campe-Dörpen-Kanal* was built. Unsurprisingly, Emden's city council rejected this idea on the grounds that there would be no adequate compensation. Still, due to the fact that Breitenbach revealed to Emden's city council that the Prussian government believed 'aus bundesfreundlichen Rücksichten und nach dem Grundsatz „noblesse oblige“ nicht länger dem verbündeten Staate Oldenburg den Anschluss ihres projektierten Hunte-Ems-Kanals versagen zu können.'

¹³⁹ StE IV 2086, Notiz für den Magistrat der Stadt Emden, Berlin, den 15. März

¹⁴⁰ StE IV 2086, Haus der Abgeordneten, Berlin, den 15. März 1907

¹⁴¹ StE IV 2086, Notiz für den Magistrat der Stadt Emden, Berlin, den 15. März 1907

Subsequently, it was decided in Emden to once again underline the resentment against the projected canal to the Emperor. In a petition to Wilhelm II from February 1910, Emden even warned of serious differences with the Prussian Diet, as the new canal would interfere with existing Prussian projects. Emden warned that 'Krisen hervorgerufen werden [könnten], die jeder preussische Patriot zu vermeiden bemüht sein muss.'¹⁴² In fact, in 1910, it was realised in Emden that its situation had not significantly improved since the foundation of the Empire. Emden's trade for its own account was still comparatively low. Therefore, it was argued: 'die Hansestadt Bremen, ein Riese dagegen, der den kleinen Konkurrenzhafen vollständig lahm legen würde, sobald er über seine Lebensader, den Dortmund-Ems-Kanal das Mitverfügungsrecht erlangt haben würde.'¹⁴³ Emden suspected an intrigue behind the canal project. The *Hapag*, which in contrast to the *Norddeutscher Lloyd*, had actually established business in Emden, was now assumed to withdraw from Emden again – on the initiative of the *Norddeutscher Lloyd*. It was pointed out that this suspected intrigue was organised in order to 'in Emden keine Konkurrenz für die Hansestädte entstehen zu lassen.'¹⁴⁴ In the end, even though Breitenbach reported to Emden's city council that the Prussian government would not refuse negotiations out of consideration for Emden, the *Campe-Dörpen-Kanal* was not built before the First World War. Construction of the *Küstenkanal*, as it is called today, began in 1922 and ended in 1935, as part of one the first job creation schemes of the Third Reich.¹⁴⁵

f. Emden's problem of getting connected

At the end of the seventeenth century, Emden became the headquarters of the *Brandenburgisch-Afrikanische Compagnie*. At the time, Frederick William of Brandenburg chose Emden as the port of registry for his new overseas endeavour. However, the company's success was limited and so it had to be dissolved by Frederick William's son. By the time of the Empire, Emden, due to its small size and standing, certainly could not have the same amount of influence on Germany's

¹⁴² StE IV 2087, Emden, Februar 1910, Allerdurchlauchtigster grossmächtigster Kaiser, allergnädigster Kaiser, König und Herr!

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Clasmeier, *100 Jahre Große Seeschleuse*, p. 36

colonial venture as Hamburg or Bremen. Additionally, when the decision in favour of acquiring colonies was made, during the early 1880s, Emden's port had not yet been expanded to the size of a viable seaport. In addition to this, in Emden itself it was realised that the city's trade volume was still relatively low even after the turn of the century. Therefore, it is necessary to ask how Emden's mercantile community was capable of taking advantage of Emden's new port facilities and to what extent Emden's merchants were actually able to compete with those in Hamburg and Bremen. Certainly, Emden still had a monopoly on trade with the Empire's industrial areas in Westphalia and the Rhineland, yet this situation did not seem to be permanent. Trade with Germany's colonial possession would have been one option for Emden to become an alternative to Hamburg and Bremen on the North Sea Coast.

Carl Lehnkering definitely had a similar idea in 1905. In 1872, Carl Lehnkering together with his father and the merchant Carl Scholl had founded the firm *Lehnkering & Cie.* Originally headquartered in Duisburg, the firm also opened a branch office in Emden, only two years prior to the opening of the *Dortmund-Ems-Kanal*.¹⁴⁶ Henceforth, the firm was able to establish itself as one of the most significant shipping companies in Emden. One of its branches of business was agency business. Amongst other companies, *Lehnkering & Cie.* represented the *Westfälische Transport Aktiengesellschaft* in Emden, which played a major role in the freight traffic on the *Dortmund-Ems-Kanal*. When in 1905, the Colonial Department of the Foreign Office ordered the compilation of freight rates from Germany to German East Africa, Carl Lehnkering urged Carl Schweckendieck in Berlin to press for the consideration of Emden in this matter.

In addition to this, Lehnkering points to the projected construction of a railway line in South West Africa between Lüderitzbucht and Kubub, which is situated to the east of Lüderitzbucht and south of Aus. This line was planned as the first section of a southern railway line between Lüderitzbucht and Keetmanshoop. For this railway line, Lehnkering wanted to see the material being shipped from German ports only, as had been officially decided earlier in the year. Lehnkering's preference in this respect was, of course, Emden, from where his firm was already exporting material to Swakopmund, South West Africa. Lehnkering did not fail to

¹⁴⁶ Hummerich, *Kaufmannsgut*, pp. 53–56

emphasise to Schweckendieck that Emden's port 'immer noch von allen Seiten der kräftigsten Unterstützung bedarf, um sich weiter zu entwickeln.'¹⁴⁷ The matter was then brought before the Ministry for Public Works, which in turn contacted the Colonial Department. In fact, in the Department it was then determined to instruct the *Deutsche Stahlwerksverband AG* to produce the materials close to the *Dortmund-Ems-Kanal*, so that Emden could be used as the port of export. With regard to integrating Emden into the traffic with German East Africa, there were no objections from any side. However, the precondition for this was of course the establishment of a regular shipping service to the colony.

Indeed, this turned out to be the biggest obstacle to the realisation of Lehnkering's plan. While it was simple to find a shipping company that was able to handle the shipment of railway materials to South West Africa, namely Hamburg's *Woermann-Linie*, it was more difficult to find a company dealing with trade to German East Africa. As a result, Fürbringer first wrongly contacted the *Hapag*, which did not maintain a service to East Africa. The matter was forwarded to the *Deutsche Ost-Afrika Linie* of Hamburg. However, the company's response to Fürbringer was far from satisfactory for Emden. Fürbringer was informed that 'der Export nach Ostafrika noch ein sehr geringer [ist], sodas sich das Anlaufen von Emden nicht lohnt.'¹⁴⁸ Therefore, a direct and regular calling at Emden was not feasible for the company. Once trade with German East Africa could reach appropriate dimensions and calling at Emden would make economic sense, the company promised to attend to the matter again.

In 1907, the *Ostfriesische Nachrichten* then announced that the *Hamburg-Bremer Afrika-Linie* was going to introduce a regular shipping service to the Empire's African colonies. It was also announced that one of the company's vessels was going to call at Emden in order to deliver goods to Togo. However, this plan seems to have been extremely short-lived. Only a few weeks after the announcement, the *Hamburg-Bremer Afrika-Linie* clarified that it had not been possible to call at Emden due to the lack of export goods. In the letter from mid-April, the shipping company revealed its plans to organise a single shipment to Africa from Emden in June of that year. For the time being, a monthly service to Emden 'wird uns jedoch vorderhand nicht möglich sein, da es an genügenden

¹⁴⁷ StE IV 2083, Carl Lehnkering, Kommerzienrat, Duisburg, den 13. Dezember 1905

¹⁴⁸ StE IV 2083, Deutsche Ost-Afrika-Linie, Hamburg, den 21. Februar 1906

ausgehenden Gütern mangelt, um ein Analufen Emdens mit den Interessen unserer Rhederei zu vereinbaren.’¹⁴⁹ The Prussian district president in Aurich then took up the issue again in autumn of 1907. Subsequently, Emden contacted the *Hamburg-Bremer Afrika-Linie* once more. However, Emden received another negative response, even though the company confirmed that it was still eager to establish a regular service from Emden. The company also highlighted that it had even reduced freight rates from Emden, so that the port could compete with Rotterdam and Antwerp. Still, the company had to admit that whenever it was able to attract business from Westphalia, shipment could not be organised from Emden. This was because consigners generally preferred Rotterdam and Antwerp. This example shows how difficult it was for Emden to take part in the colonial business, in which Hamburg and Bremen played the major roles within Germany. Since there was no native shipping company that could have assumed the task of organising trade with the African colonies, Emden was entirely dependent on companies from Hamburg and Bremen.

In order to change this situation, there were plans to found an *Afrikanische Compagnie* towards the end of 1905. Fürbringer in particular seems to have been heavily involved in planning this new company, which would be headquartered in Emden. Together with Fürbinger, Emden’s city council promised to support the envisaged company in every way. Naturally, the initiators of the project referred to Emden’s proud history as the headquarters of the *Brandenburgisch-Afrikanische Compagnie*. In contrast to the past venture, the *Afrikanische Compagnie* was planned as a joint stock company with a total seed capital of 1.25 million Marks. Functions of the new company were manifold and included purchasing new territory, running plantations and commercial transactions of all kinds. A firm from Hamburg, which already owned factories in Cameroon, was supposed to merge with the *Afrikanische Compagnie*. According to the company’s brochure, this did indeed look like an extremely profitable deal. After all, the firm’s profits were respectable: with a capital of 800, 000 Marks, the firm made profits of around 16%, 30% and 35% in 1903, 1904 and 1905 respectively.¹⁵⁰ In addition to the German colonies, the *Afrikanische Compagnie* also planned to develop business in other

¹⁴⁹ StE IV 2083, Hamburg-Bremer Afrika-Linie A.G., Hamburg, den 15. April 1907

¹⁵⁰ StE IV 2083, Prospekt betreffend Gründung der „Afrikanischen Compagnie“

parts of Africa, such as Morocco, with the collaboration of the *Mittelmeergesellschaft*.

However, Emden's general interest in the company seems to have been limited. In May 1906, after the brochure had been made public, Eberhard von Schkopp, one of the initiators of the project, complained to Fürbringer: 'Meine Vermutungen, daß seitens der Emdener Bürgerschaft fast gar kein Interesse für die Afrikanische Compagnie besteht, geht wohl am deutlichsten daraus hervor, daß ein einziger Bürger Emden's sich mit nur 2000 Mark [...] zu beteiligen gedenkt.'¹⁵¹ Furthermore, Schkopp also enquired about the provision of land in Emden at no charge, which had been promised previously. To this, Emden's city council responded that it was still waiting for the actual foundation of the company. Unluckily, this strategy turned out to be fatal. In June 1906, Schkopp once again pushed for more enthusiasm for the project in Emden. He pointed out that it was entirely up to the shareholders to determine the company's headquarters, so that Emden's cooperation in the matter was necessary.

At the time of the foundation of the *Afrikanische Compagnie*, Emden's participation was still limited. In August 1906, a newspaper article announced that [w]as die in Gründung begriffene Afrikanische Compagnie anbelangt, [...] so ist diesmal der Engel scheints an uns vorbeigegangen.'¹⁵² While one person informed the newspaper that he had lost interest in the project, others even claimed to have been falsely associated with it. One of these people seems to have been a certain Hermann Paasche, who claimed that he 'seinerzeit auf Wunsch des Herrn Oberbürgermeister Fürbringer-Emden an einer konstituierenden Versammlung teilgenommen [habe]'.¹⁵³ Still, according to Paasche, while he took part in the discussion, he was not involved in any of the company's business thereafter. In any case, the company's headquarters were moved to Hamburg and Berlin instead of Emden. Therefore, the newspaper concluded that this project 'bedarf für uns außer dieser doch wohl zweckdienlichen Orientierung dafür jedenfalls weiter keines – namentlich finanziellen – Interesses, zumal es jetzt hierorts selbst an Unternehmungslust nicht mangelt.'¹⁵⁴ The company seems to have been

¹⁵¹ StE IV 2083, Sehr geehrter Herr Oberbürgermeister, Berlin, d. 29.V.06

¹⁵² StE IV 2083, Afrikanische Compagnie, Emden, 18. Aug.

¹⁵³ StE IV 2083, Hannov. Courier vom 30/8. 1906, Abend-Ausg., No. 26395

¹⁵⁴ StE IV 2083, Afrikanische Compagnie, Emden, 18. Aug.

successful: in its first year, the company planned to pay a dividend of 10% to shareholders.¹⁵⁵

In the end, Emden was not able to establish any kind of connection to the German colonies. Whether or not moving the headquarters of the *Afrikanische Compagnie* to Emden was in fact due to the lack of enthusiasm for the project in Emden is difficult to evaluate. Fürbringer and Emden's city council were certainly willing to support the venture. Still, there seems to have been a general problem with integrating Emden into the international shipping network and with mobilising Emden's mercantile community. This is demonstrated by attempts in Emden to establish a regular shipping service to Great Britain. As early as 1883, there were plans for the establishment of a shipping service between Emden and Boston, Great Britain. These plans were put forward by Julius Rothenstein, a merchant based in Berlin at *Leichtentritt & Rothenstein*. Even though Emden's city council supported this venture by way of a petition to the Prussian government, Rothenstein was not able to put his initial plan into action. The reason seems to have been financial problems on Rothenstein's side. From the beginning, the project had been viewed critically:

An Schwierigkeiten wird es dem Unternehmen anfangs namentlich nicht fehlen; Bremen und Hamburg auf der einen Seite und Holland und Belgien auf der anderen werden schon Alles aufbieten, dasselbe zu drücken, so daß ohne kräftigste Unterstützung der Regierung und der betr. Behörden namentlich im Anfange das Unternehmen kaum wird bestehen können, wie denn auch wohl die Annahme eines regelmäßigen täglichen Versands über hier von 21 Wagenladungen für den Anfang wohl etwas zu sanguinisch sein möchte.¹⁵⁶

Still, Rothenstein was not the only party interested in a shipping service between Emden and Great Britain. For example, in April 1887, a certain H. Diekenga let Emden's city council know about the interest of an English firm in establishing a

¹⁵⁵ StE IV 2083, Bericht über das 1. Geschäftsjahr der Afrikanischen Kompanie A.-G. zu Berlin pro Jahr 1907

¹⁵⁶ StE IV 2043, Königl. Eisenbahn-Direktion (Rechtsrheinisch) Köln, Emden, 23. Februar 1884, G. Voss

regular service between Emden and Great Britain. Ultimately, this venture also came to nothing.

Thereafter, the idea of a regular service between Emden and Great Britain arose again and again. In 1900, Fürbringer brought the idea of a regular passenger service before Albert Ballin. In the *Hapag's* response, it was emphasised that the company, after due consideration 'des Projectes einer Passagierdampferverbindung Emden-Harwich zu der Überzeugung gelangt [ist], dass eine erfolgreiche Concurrenz der neu zu gründenden Linie mit den holländischen Linien [...] nicht möglich sein wird.'¹⁵⁷ The reason given by the *Hapag* was that the journey between the Dutch ports and Great Britain was shorter. A service from Emden would not have been able to compete. Even when travelling from Great Britain to the German Empire or vice versa, the route via Emden was said to be one to two hours longer than via Dutch ports.

In 1912, Fürbringer was contacted by a certain Friedrich Kothe, who was working for the *Argo Reederei* in Bremen. Kothe proposed to Fürbringer the establishment of a fast liner service between Emden and London. While working for a company in Bremen, Kothe realised that 'fast die Hälfte des gesamten deutsch/ englischen Verkehrs über die fremden Häfen zur Beförderung kommt.'¹⁵⁸ According to Kothe, this was mostly due to the fact that Hamburg and Bremen were geographically disadvantaged in comparison to the Dutch and Belgian ports. Hence, the two Hanseatic Cities were not able to attract trade from Westphalia, the Rhineland, Thuringia and Southern Germany. Although Kothe had already attempted to awaken interest in his project in Bremen, these efforts remained unsuccessful. He claimed that in Bremen 'will man aus verschiedenen bestimmten Gründen, welche Ihnen auch wohl erklärlich sein werden, nichts von einer neuen Linie wissen, welche evtl. den Interessen Bremens zuwider laufen könnte.'¹⁵⁹ Kothe estimated the costs for this new shipping service at no more than 12 million Marks. Still, Kothe also realised that it would be absolutely essential to receive support from the government in this matter. Indeed, Reinhold Krätke, State Secretary in the *Reichspostamt*, endorsed the project by showing interest in using

¹⁵⁷ StE IV 2043, Hamburg-Amerika-Linie, Hamburg, den 9. November 1900

¹⁵⁸ StE IV 2101, Friedrich Kothe to Leo Fürbringer, Bremen, 15. Juni 1912

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

the new service provided that the conditions were favourable.¹⁶⁰ One of these conditions was a direct railway connection to and from Emden.

On the other hand, Breitenbach, still Minister for Public Works, rejected the idea of introducing special railway tariffs in support of the shipping service. A special tariff like this was, for example, granted for trade with the Levant. Breitenbach highlighted that while trade with the Levant would not be feasible without the special tariff, German trade with Great Britain was also possible without governmental assistance.¹⁶¹ At the end of 1912, the regional administrative authority in Aurich informed Fürbringer that representatives of the *Königliche Eisenbahndirektion* were overall in favour of the project, yet the details of the project were not sufficiently worked out.¹⁶² During 1913, the realisation of the project was further delayed; in particular, the profitability of passenger traffic from Emden to Great Britain was questioned. Contacting a larger shipping company was considered in order to be able to use redundant vessels for the service but the *Hapag* refused to take part in the project.¹⁶³ Subsequently, in early 1914, Emden's city council had to report to the administrative authority in Aurich: 'Die Finanzierung der geplanten Dampfer-Linie Emden-London ist noch nicht gelungen.'¹⁶⁴ Until the beginning of the First World War, there was no progress on the matter.

Hence, all these examples demonstrate how difficult it was for Emden to establish itself as a viable alternative to the major German, Dutch and Belgian ports on the North Sea Coast. Emden's port underwent major expansion works up until the First World War but this did not mean that the city was suddenly able to attract new business. While the condition of Emden's port facilities improved throughout the period of the German Empire, its mercantile community was not able to make full use of these new conditions. With regard to colonial trade, it was not possible for the city to compete with Hamburg and Bremen. When it came to establishing a regular service to Great Britain, Dutch competitors had the edge over Emden. Certainly, these are only two examples, but the fact that Emden attempted to establish a shipping service to Great Britain for about 30 years reveals a lot about

¹⁶⁰ StE IV 2101, Der Staats-Sekretär des Reichs-Postamts, Berlin, den 18. Oktober 1912

¹⁶¹ StE IV 2101, Der Minister der öffentlich Arbeiten, Berlin, den 25. Oktober 1912

¹⁶² StE IV 2101, Der Regierungs-Präsident, Aurich, den 13. Dezember 1912

¹⁶³ StE IV 2101, Adolf Koch, Berlin, den 3. September 1913

¹⁶⁴ StE IV 2101, Der Regierungs-Präsident, Aurich, den 29. Dezember 1913

its status on the North Sea Coast. It was relatively easy to update Emden's port facilities but creating the infrastructure to connect Emden to world trade was a different matter.

g. Emden and the emigration business

While Emden certainly encountered problems when competing with Hamburg and Bremen, there were also some more positive developments. Hamburg and Bremen had both received free port areas in the 1880s due to the cancellation of their free port status. Still, Hamburg and Bremen were not the only ports with free port areas. For example, Stettin, Danzig and Altona also possessed free port areas. With the expansion of Emden's seaport, the question of whether or not Emden should receive a free port area also arose. After all, Friedrich II had granted free port status to the city in 1751. This significant right, however, was lost with the decline of Emden's trade, as pointed out by Carl Schweckendieck.¹⁶⁵

One of the supporters of a free port area was the *Hapag*. In a report on the matter, the company argued that it had from the beginning pointed to the fact that 'als eine der wesentlichsten Vorbedingungen, von denen die Erreichung des Zieles, Emden einen beträchtlichen überseeischen Seeverkehr zuzuführen, abhängig sei, die Einrichtung eines Freibezirks angesehen werden müsse.'¹⁶⁶ Furthermore, the report emphasised that if Emden had not received a free port area, it would not have been able to compete with other port cities that possessed such an area. This argument was generally accepted and, thus, the government decided to grant this privilege to Emden. Since it had been standard practice to make the cities contribute to the costs of establishing a free port area, Emden also had to pay its part. Due to the fact that Fürbringer had asked 'mit Bezug auf die ungünstige Finanzlage der Stadt um Beschränkung dieser Forderung auf einen minimalen Betrage', Emden was requested to contribute 30, 000 Marks to the project, which amounted to a fifth of the total costs.¹⁶⁷ Still, even this amount exceeded the city's means, so Emden promised to pay only 20, 000 Marks. In the end, the Federal Assembly resolved Emden's free port area of 81.2 hectares in February 1901.

¹⁶⁵ Schweckendieck, *Festschrift*, p. 69

¹⁶⁶ StE IV 2061, Hamburg-Amerika-Linie, Hamburg, den 29. Juni 1900

¹⁶⁷ StE IV 2061, Der Minister der öffentlichen Arbeiten, Berlin, den 20. Oktober 1900

Overall, the new free port area in Emden seems to have had an overall positive impact on trade and shipping. In 1904, Emden's free port area was turned into a *Zollausschlußgebiet*. This aimed to further facilitate Emden's trade. In a report on this subject, it was emphasised that promoting competition by creating a free port area 'ist bis zu einem gewissen Grade gelungen, und damit hat sich das Abhängigkeitsverhältnis, in dem sich bisher das rheinisch-westfälische Industriegebiet anderen Seehäfen gegenüber befand, wenigstens in etwas gelockert.'¹⁶⁸ Indeed, overall traffic in Emden's port increased significantly, although it remains questionable to what extent the free port should be credited for this. Between 1898, when the *Dortmund-Ems-Kanal* was inaugurated, and 1902, trade had risen from 158, 818 to 1, 044, 788 tons. Similarly, traffic on the *Dortmund-Ems-Kanal* had also increased from 119, 000 in 1898 to 890, 000 register tons in 1902. Due to this upsurge in traffic, 'machen ausländische Häfen die größtmöglichen Anstrengungen, um diese erfreuliche Entwicklung zu hemmen und womöglich auch den jetzigen Verkehr [...] wieder in die alten Geleise zu ziehen.'¹⁶⁹ Upgrading Emden to a customs enclave was viewed as the only way to prevent this from happening. However, during the same period, the further expansion of Emden's port was also concluded. For this reason, it is difficult to attribute the rise in port traffic to either the establishment of the free port area or its expansion.

Still, even though being granted a customs enclave in Emden was certainly a success for the city, competing with Hamburg and Bremen in crucial business sectors remained next to impossible. One of these business sectors was certainly the emigration business. In Germany, the monopoly in this business was traditionally held by Bremen and Hamburg. While from Bremen, 4, 859, 676 emigrants had been embarked between 1832 and 1910, 3, 743, 924 emigrants had left from Hamburg between 1846 and 1910.¹⁷⁰ Bremen was definitively ahead of its competitor on the Elbe with regard to the emigration business. It also shows that the emigration business played an important role in both Hanseatic cities. For a city like Emden, which had no experience in organising the emigration business,

¹⁶⁸ StE IV 2061, Bundesrat, Session 1904, Ausschüsse für Zoll- und Steuerwesen und für Handel und Verkehr, Berlin, den 9. Januar 1904

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Oppel, *Die deutschen Seestädte*, pp. 148–149 and pp. 164–165

it was extremely difficult to get a foot in the door. Yet, this was a risk that Fürbringer and some companies were willing to take.

The first project to establish an emigration business in Emden took place in 1909. The company *Heinecke & Co.* in Harburg applied for an emigration concession from Emden to the United States and Canada, which was denied by the *Regierungspräsident* in Aurich. Thereafter, Fürbringer reported to the district president on the events surrounding the concession application from his point of view. This report sheds light on the difficulties that came with establishing a new shipping service. Fürbringer describes that the matter became:

Gegenstand einer eifrigen Zeitungsfehde [...], wobei das Hamburger Fremdenblatt und anonyme Inserate in den hiesigen Lokalblättern eine nicht schöne Rolle gespielt haben. Diese waren von einem Bremer Annoncenbüro eingesandt und dienten offenbar den Gegnern als Versuchs-Ballon und zur Irreführung der öffentlichen Meinung, um sie alsdann als wirkliche Tatsachen im Hamburger Fremdenblatt zur Verdächtigung und Heruntersetzung des Unternehmens zu verwerten.¹⁷¹

Furthermore, Fürbringer reported of a visit from two *Hapag* representatives, in which it was made clear that the *Norddeutscher Lloyd* and the *Hapag* would not tolerate competition in the emigration business from Emden. It was pointed out that Hamburg and Bremen would do anything to get in the way of the application for a concession in the Federal Assembly. Even if this were not possible, both companies would compete against the venture. This would 'nur kurze Zeit dauern, denn den beiden Gesellschaften sei kein noch so gut fundiertes Unternehmen gewachsen, es müsste nach kurzer Zeit unterliegen.'¹⁷² While Fürbringer urged the Prussian government to support the venture, the *Hapag* established a new monthly service between Hamburg and Galveston, which was supposed to be the port of call for the service from Emden.¹⁷³

¹⁷¹ StE IV 2106, Fürbringer, Betreff: Leitung eines Teils des Auswandererverkehrs nach den Südstaaten von Nordamerika und später auch nach Canada über den Hafen von Emden, Emden, den 3. Januar 1910

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ StE IV 2106, Heinecke & Co., Herrn Oberbürgermeister Geheimrat Fürbringer, Hamburg, den 14. März 1910

In 1912, with the so-called *Fürstenkonzern*, a group of Silesian industrials, another company showed interest in the project of establishing an emigration business in Emden. The plan was to introduce a regular shipping service between Emden and New York. To this end, the *Fürstenkonzern* had founded the *Deutsche Rhederei*, which was supposed to in charge of the emigration business from Emden. Initially, the company possessed an original capital of 5 million Marks. This would be augmented to 20 million Marks once the company received its concession. In total, the company planned to use seven new vessels for its service, which was due to start on October 1 1913, the date when Emden's expanded port would be inaugurated. Unsurprisingly, Fürbringer and the city of Emden immediately supported this venture. To this end, in May 1912, a petition was sent to the Wilhelm II. In this, it was emphasised that Emden 'kann nur durch eine gleichberechtigte, ausschließlich für seinen Verkehr besorgte kapitalkräftige Rhederei zu seiner von Euer Kaiserlichen und Königlichen Majestät vorgesehenen Bedeutung und Entwicklung für den Weltverkehr [...] gelangen.'¹⁷⁴ The *Norddeutscher Lloyd* and the *Hapag* also got in contact with the government and proposed a monthly service from Emden with their own emigrant vessels.

Once again, the project also sparked off a broad discussion about the usefulness of such a shipping service. For example, as late as 1912, the *Preußische Zeitung* still criticised Hamburg and Bremen as follows: 'Ohnehin schwärmt man in Hamburg und in Bremen für Manchesterum und Konkurrenzfreiheit.'¹⁷⁵ In this case, the newspaper argued, competition was desirable on a socio-political and economic level, since it would improve Emden's position and lead to a viable alternative to Hamburg and Bremen. Thus, in this scenario, Emden was regarded as a seaport of international importance next to Hamburg and Bremen. In a similar vein, the *Deutsche Wirtschafts-Zeitung* pointed to the following fact: 'Die Weiterentwicklung unserer transatlantischen Schifffahrt, ob sie von Hamburg oder Bremen oder vom preußischen Staatshafen Emden ihren Ausgang nimmt, ist eine welthistorische Notwendigkeit geworden.'¹⁷⁶ In this case, it was argued that

¹⁷⁴ StE IV 2106, Allerdurchlauchtigster, Großmächtigster Kaiser, Allergnädigster Kaiser, König und Herr! Emden, den 15. Mai 1912

¹⁷⁵ StE IV 2105, *Preußische Zeitung* (Kreuz-Zeitung), Abend-Ausgabe, Nr. 217, Berlin, Donnerstag, 9. Mai 1912

¹⁷⁶ StE IV 2106, *Deutsche Wirtschafts-Zeitung*. Nummer 12. Berlin, den 15. Juni 1912. VIII. Jahrgang

Emden was one step on the way to obtaining a larger share of the world's trade and shipping. In particular, competition to Great Britain was emphasised. However, there were also opposing views, such as the one brought forward by the *Berliner Actionair*. While the newspaper acknowledged that the company, Emden and Prussia, all of which injected millions into the seaport, were certainly right to be in favour of the venture, it also asked:

Von allen Seiten her ist die ausländische Konkurrenz den deutschen Schiffahrtsgesellschaften gegenüber im Wachsen begriffen. Enorme Werte sind in ihnen angelegt: will man sie leichtfertig durch Schaffung einer neuen Konkurrenz, gewissermaßen im eigenen Lager aufs Spiel setzen?¹⁷⁷

The *Berliner Actionair* reminded its readers of the capital that had been invested in emigrant vessels by the *Norddeutscher Lloyd* and the *Hapag*. Getting in the way of these two companies would mean that the interest on this capital, which was spread all over the German Empire, would be diminished. In this regard, the newspaper spoke of a national interest in keeping off competition for the two companies. Thus, it was not in the national interest to jeopardise the business of the two most important German shipping companies. Instead, the newspaper argued for encouraging the *Norddeutscher Lloyd* and the *Hapag* to call at Emden.

Unsurprisingly, public opinion in Hamburg was very similar. In the picture below, which was published in the *Hamburger Woche*, we can see two elderly women sitting at a dining table. The turkey in the background, entitled "Auswanderer", seems to have been finished by Bremen and Hamburg. Now, the little boy, "Emden", also wants to join the two ladies and he has even brought along another turkey. The boy states that he wants to join the two ladies, to which they reply in Low German: 'Of course, my dear, if you can handle all of this?!' In the background, we can also see a picture of Albert Ballin hanging on the wall, emphasising the fact that Hamburg and Bremen were home to the emigration business. After all, emigration was a well-established business in Hamburg and Bremen. Emden would only overextend itself with the emigration business.

¹⁷⁷ StE IV 2106, 2. Beilage zu No. 1279 des *Berliner Actionair*. Berlin. Mittwoch den 24. April 1912

Figure 3.2: Emden against Hamburg and Bremen



Source: StE IV 2106, Die Hamburger Woche, Nr. 17

In any case, on June 15 1912, the Reich Chancellor, Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg, informed Emden that he would not grant an emigration concession to the *Deutsche Rhederei*. Instead, he held out the possibility of allowing the *Norddeutscher Lloyd* and the *Hapag* to use Emden as their port of embarkation for the emigration business.¹⁷⁸ Hereafter, a discussion about the Emperor's role in this decision arose. The periodical *Die Zeitschrift* published an article on July 6 revealing that the Wilhelm II himself possessed company shares of the *Norddeutscher Lloyd* and the *Hapag*. It was estimated that the value of the shares amounted to between 10 and 12 million Marks. Additionally, the Grand Duke of Oldenburg was also said to possess company shares of the *Norddeutscher Lloyd*. In response to this, the *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* pointed out that the 'aus der

¹⁷⁸ StE IV 2106, Der Reichskanzler (Reichsamt des Innern), Berlin, den 15. Juni 1912, III A 4565

Ueberschrift des Artikels zu entnehmende bösertige Insinuation, als ob der Kaiser Hamburger Interessen gegen preußische begünstige, weisen wir aufs schärfste zurück.’¹⁷⁹ The *Hapag* declared that ‘die Mitteilungen der Zeitschrift unrichtig seien und daß man zurzeit nähere Angaben nicht machen könne.’¹⁸⁰ While both sides were in close contact with the Emperor, the *Norddeutscher Lloyd* and the *Hapag* seem to have been more capable of exploiting this advantage. Certainly, not without reason did the *Rheinisch-Westfälische Zeitung* render the following judgement on the two companies: ‘Sie wissen: im deutschen Großschiffahrtsgewerbe fällt, soweit obrigkeitliche Gewalt dreinzureden hat, keine Entscheidung, ohne daß der Kaiser gefragt wurde.’¹⁸¹

Subsequently, the *Norddeutscher Lloyd* and the *Hapag* entered negotiations about the establishment of a regular shipping service from Emden. These came to an end in December 1912. Both companies promised to alternately carry emigrants on a fortnightly basis from Emden to New York.¹⁸² The service would begin no later than April 1 1914. In May 1913, the *Hapag* and the *Norddeutscher Lloyd* also bought land in order to erect necessary buildings for the emigration business.¹⁸³ Both companies planned to make stopovers at Emden as well as using Emden as a port of departure and destination.

The following year, on April 16 1914, Emden officially became an emigration port. The steamer *Brandenburg* arrived at Emden and took on 89 passengers. In October 1913, the two companies had already started their stipulated services to Australia, East Asia and South America. On the occasion of Emden’s first emigrant vessel, the city council planned to organise festivities. However, both companies asked Emden’s city council to refrain from this idea. This led a newspaper from Bremen to report: ‘Peinlich bemerkt wurde, daß eine offizielle Begrüßung des ersten Amerikadampfers nicht stattfand.’¹⁸⁴ Although some important figures made their way to the new landing stage for emigrant

¹⁷⁹ StE IV 2105, Hannov. Courier. No. 29999 vom 14. Juli 1912 and StE IV 2105, Die *Hapag* gegen Emden: Der Kaiser als Schiffahrtsaktienbesitzer

¹⁸⁰ StE IV 2105, Die *Hapag* gegen Emden: Der Kaiser als Schiffahrtsaktienbesitzer

¹⁸¹ StE IV 2106, Rheinisch-Westfälische Zeitung, Abend (III.) Ausgabe. Donnerstag, 27. Juni 1912. Nr. 765. Jahrgang 171

¹⁸² StE IV 2106, Abschrift, Bremen/ Hamburg, den 11. Dezember 1912

¹⁸³ StE IV 2106, Kaufvertrag, Emden, den 6. Mai 1913

¹⁸⁴ StE IV 2106, Die Eröffnung des Auswandererverkehrs in Emden, Emden, 16. April. The article was presumably taken from the *Weser-Zeitung*.

vessels, there was no organised reception for the vessel. In a letter to Fürbringer's successor, Wilhelm Mützelburg, the *Norddeutscher Lloyd* criticised this report and advised the mayor to find out the correspondent's identity.¹⁸⁵ Interestingly, Mützelburg is also notified that the shipping company had not been informed of the article prior to its printing. Otherwise, the *Norddeutscher Lloyd* could have prohibited this from happening.

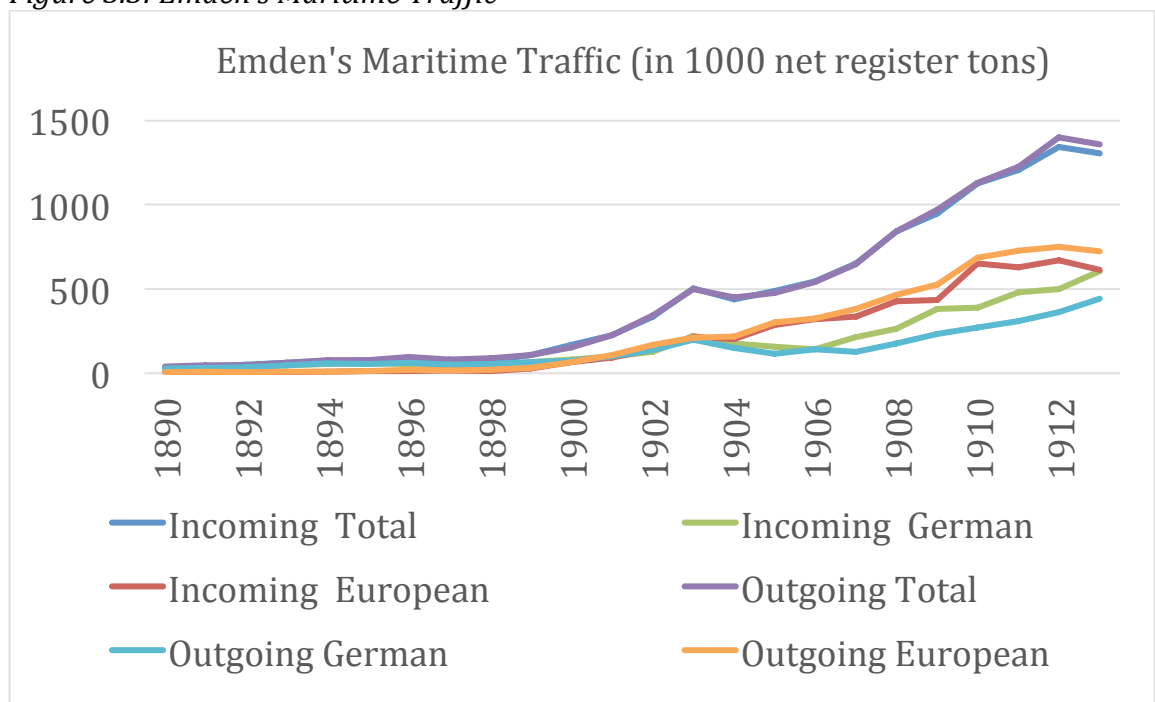
This again emphasises the influence the *Norddeutscher Lloyd* had in Bremen. Furthermore, together with the *Hapag*, the *Norddeutscher Lloyd* had been able to prevent the establishment of a rival shipping company in the emigration business. For this, influential contacts in politics were used. At the same time, the company could also exert influence on the media and, therefore, public opinion. To Bremen as a port city, the *Norddeutscher Lloyd* certainly was extremely advantageous, since it was one of the largest shipping companies in the German Empire. In Emden, on the other hand, the disadvantages of such a concentration of power in one commercial sector were laid open. Competition from Emden was not tolerated in Hamburg and Bremen. This meant that Emden was in a difficult position leading up to the First World War, which broke out only a few months after the first emigrant vessel had called at Emden.

¹⁸⁵ StE IV 2106, *Norddeutscher Lloyd*, Bremen, 20. April 1914.

h. The development of Emden's trade

Having looked at developments in Emden in detail, it is also necessary to examine their impact on Emden's trade statistics. As can be gathered from the graph below, Emden saw an impressive rise in incoming and outgoing seagoing vessels from 1899 to the outbreak of the First World War. The reason for this is certainly the expansion of Emden's port and the new connection to the industrialised hinterland of Westphalia and the Rhineland, which was completed in 1899.

Figure 3.3: Emden's Maritime Traffic



Source: The numbers for this graph are taken from Kunz, Scholl, *Die deutsche Seeschifffahrt*, pp. 156-157 and 162-163

The graph clearly demonstrates that Emden did not initially benefit from the foundation of the German Empire. This is due to the fact that Emden's port was in an extremely poor condition. Despite agitation for an improvement of this situation on Emden's side, it took up until the 1890s for Emden's trade to show noticeable signs of recovery. In the period between 1899 and 1913, the amount of incoming tonnage to Emden increased no less than twelve-fold, from 108,400 to 1,305,300 net register tons. Outgoing tonnage rose in similar dimensions, from 108,700 to 1,359,400 net register tons. Certainly, in comparison to Bremen, with an average tonnage of 5,228,394 register tons in 1913, these numbers were still relatively small. Still, it is the speed of Emden's increase in trade that is most

impressive. Emden was able to become one of the big players on Germany's North Sea Coast within 15 years or so.

At the same time, the graph also demonstrates Emden's dependence on the German and European markets. The effect of establishing a free port area in Emden, therefore, seems to have been minor. In 1913, more than 46% of Emden's total incoming tonnage arrived from other German ports. The rest of Europe made up another 47%, so that only a mere 4,5% of seagoing vessels calling at Emden came from overseas ports. Similarly, of the seagoing vessels departing from Emden, more than 32% were directed to German ports and about 53% to other European destinations while 10% of the outgoing tonnage went to overseas ports. While Emden's overall development is impressive, there was still a large dependence on its geographical position vis-à-vis the Ruhr area. This is proven by Emden's total traffic statistics: out of Emden's total traffic in 1909, only 44% was sea traffic, while 52% was made up of canal traffic, and another 4% of river traffic.¹⁸⁶ Furthermore, vessels under the German flag carried out 56% of Emden's total sea traffic in 1909. British (15% of the total), Swedish (13%) and Norwegian (8%) vessels also played an important role in Emden's sea traffic. Unsurprisingly, coal (40% of the total in 1909) and ores (30%) were by far the most important commodities trade in Emden.

To conclude, Emden unquestionably made some big steps towards becoming one of the most significant port cities on Germany's North Sea Coast. However, while Emden's overall growth was impressive, it was to a large degree dependent on its canal connection with Westphalia and the Rhineland. Naturally, this situation also carried with it some dangers. For example, Emden had to try hard to prevent the establishment of a canal connection from Dortmund to Bremen in connection with the *Dortmund-Ems-Kanal*. At the same time, it was extremely complicated for Emden to extend its sphere of influence, as can be seen from the difficulties of establishing an emigration business in Emden. Even though Emden's geographical proximity to the Empire's industrial area was made use of, the city's mercantile community overall failed to widen its field of activity beyond exploiting the *Dortmund-Ems-Kanal*. In this respect, Hamburg and Bremen's advantage of a long-standing, uninterrupted history as port cities had made it impossible for

¹⁸⁶ These numbers for 1909 were taken from Oppel, *Die deutschen Seestädte*, p. 178

Emden to catch up to any significant degree. In 1886, the *Rheinisch-Westfälische Zeitung* claimed that ‘wenn es gelingt, Emden erst wieder in die Zahl der in betracht kommenden Ein- und Ausfuhrhäfen einzureihen, dann wird die weitere Entwicklung keine künstliche sein [...]’.¹⁸⁷ Yet, this hope had not materialised by 1914. Emden’s development in trade and shipping was still largely controlled and driven from outside the city.

An essential driving force in the process of putting Emden back on the map was without doubt Leo Fürbringer. Unlike in Hamburg and Bremen, where long established mercantile communities exerted a dominating influence on the city, in Emden, Fürbringer mostly coordinated shipping and trade. When Fürbringer announced his retirement in 1913, the *Deutsche Rhederei* expressed its understanding ‘wenn Sie sich jetzt von Ihren Hauptgeschäften zurückziehen wollen, denn dieselben haben doch in den letzten Jahren in ganz aussergewöhnlicher Weise auf Ihnen gelastet.’¹⁸⁸ Fürbringer’s era in office was overall beneficial for the city. The mayor continuously pressed for the expansion of Emden’s port and the establishment of new shipping companies. Still, he was not able to compensate for the lack of a mercantile community capable of exploiting the expansion of Emden’s port to the full extent. Therefore, the majority of Emden’s trade remained focused on other German and European ports and on coal and ore.

¹⁸⁷ StE IV 2022, *Rheinisch-Westfälische Zeitung*, No. 8 v. 8/1. 86

¹⁸⁸ StE IV 2101, *Deutsche Rhederei*, Hamburg, den 10. Oktober 1912

IV. Hamburg

When examining the development of port cities on the North Sea coast, there is of course no way of disregarding Hamburg. At the beginning of the German Empire, Hamburg was Germany's most significant port city and it has maintained this status up to the present day. Indeed, as one of the busiest port cities in the whole of Europe, the city has attracted more academic attention than Bremen or Emden. For this reason, this chapter will not be as broad as the previous two. Instead, it will be able to focus on key events, illustrating Hamburg's evolving position within the German Empire. As in the case of Bremen, these events include the reaction to the *Reichsgründung* together with the public representation of the Franco-Prussian War, the *Zollanschluss* and Hamburg's involvement in the Empire's colonial venture. Examining these aspects will demonstrate that there were similarities between Hamburg and Bremen. As the section on Emden's emigration business demonstrated, it was not at all unusual for Hamburg and Bremen (or rather their respective shipping companies) to work together in order to strengthen their status within the German Empire and see off potential rivals. However, the chapter will also demonstrate that there were nonetheless significant differences between the two leading Hanseatic cities.

a. Hamburg and the German nation

In 1868, Wilhelm I of Prussia decided to inspect his new subjects in the Duchies of Schleswig and Holstein. Both duchies had been annexed by Prussia after the Austro-Prussian War of 1866 (alongside the former Kingdom of Hanover). Hamburg, which had owed its historic independence in part to the rivalries among its various neighbours, now found itself entirely surrounded by Prussian territory. That became an issue during Wilhelm's royal tour of 1868, when the Hohenzollern monarch was due to call at the town of Altona, located on the very doorstep of Hamburg. This opened up the question of whether or not the Hamburg should officially invite the Prussian King and head of the North German Confederation to the city. To Carl Herman Merck, *Syndikus* of Hamburg's senate, this matter was

clear. Merck saw little reason in officially inviting the King to Hamburg. After all, '[wird] man uns aber deshalb einen einzigen Thaler am Aversum erlassen? Man wird höchstens sagen: das Hamburg, Donnerwetter, ist eine reiche Stadt, da schwimmt man im Champagner, die können schon mehr bezahlen.'¹ On the other hand, Gustav Kirchenpauer, Burgomaster of Hamburg and member of the Federal Assembly in Berlin, was in favour of the imperial visit. Kirchenpauer's opinion prevailed: the visit took place in September 1868. While it did not proceed without a minor incident – the King's ship run aground on a sandbank in the River Elbe – both sides, the people of Hamburg and the King, both seem to have enjoyed the royal visit.²

However, there are two sides to this medal. It is not surprising that the Prussian King was welcomed jubilantly. After all, he was a celebrity at the time. It would be more problematic, however, to regard Hamburg's welcome for its royal visitor as straightforward proof of a new pan-German spirit in Hamburg. Overall, it is likely that there was a growing sense of pan-German patriotism in Hamburg, just like in other parts of Germany. On the other hand, Merck's argument in this context is interesting. While it seems that the people of Hamburg overall enjoyed the presence of the King, there were also voices pointing to reasonable commercial assessment and the cost-benefit-analysis of a possible visit. Admiration for the King was not altogether boundless. After all, there was little that the city received in return for welcoming Wilhelm to the city.

Hence, it is necessary to examine the way the foundation of the new German nation-state itself was celebrated and commemorated in Hamburg. For this, it is helpful to look at Hamburg's version of a *Kriegerdenkmal*. Here it is important to note that the case of Hamburg's *Kriegerdenkmal* is not comparable to Bremen's monument. While in Bremen there was a debate about the actual nature of the monument, in Hamburg it was decided straightaway that the monument should commemorate the fallen *of the State of Hamburg*. The initiative for this emanated from Hamburg's *Bürgerschaft*, the lower house of Hamburg's parliament.³ Even though the purpose of the monument was debated later on, the focus remained on the sacrifice of Hamburg *citizens* (and not of potential imperial subjects). In line

¹ Hauschild-Thiessen, *Bürgerstolz & Kaiserstreue*, pp. 7–8

² Ibid., p. 8

³ See StaH 111-1 Cl VII Lit. Fc No. 21 Vol. 6 Fasc. 1, Mittheilung der Bürgerschaft an den Senat. 16te Sitzung, den 26sten April 1871.

with this, the appointed joint commission between members of the Senate and *Bürgerschaft* decided to opt for a proposal by Johannes Schilling of Dresden.⁴ In the *Hamburgischer Correspondent*, Schilling's proposal was criticised for not fulfilling the obligation of living up to its historic cause. At the same time, it was regarded as a brilliant proposal on an artistic level. The problem was that, as the newspaper suggests, the monument could just as easily have been erected by the French for *their* fallen soldiers.

Schilling's Entwurf hält die Erinnerung an im Kriege gefallene Mitbürger mit zarter Empfindung in vollendet schöner Form wach, - erinnert aber auch nicht im Entferntesten daran, daß diese Mitbürger im gemeinsamen Kampf mit ihren deutschen Brüdern durch ihr Blut die Einheit unseres Volkes, das neue deutsche Reich erstreiten halfen.⁵

There had in fact been other more nationalistic, submissions. For example, a proposal by Siemering depicted Germania as she was approaching a wounded soldier in order to crown him. Similarly, the third of the newspaper's favourites, Pfeifer's proposal, also portrayed Germania. At the same time, Pfeifer's monument also showed Hammonia, Hamburg's counterpart to Germania, combining local Hamburg patriotism with pan-German sentiment.

However, in May 1873, the joint commission recommended adopting Schilling's proposal.⁶ In other words, the commission rejected the proposed representations of Hamburg's role as part of the larger German unification process in favour of concentrating firmly on Hamburg's citizens. While the Senate agreed to the commission's recommendation, the *Bürgerschaft* was not able to come to an agreement straightaway. The reasons for this were threefold: the planned location of the monument, doubts about the make-up of the joint commission, and thirdly,

⁴ So, the commission chose an artist from the traditionally pro-Austrian and anti-Prussian Kingdom of Saxony. Just like Hamburg, Saxony had sympathised with the Habsburg Empire during the Austro-Prussian War of 1866. In Hamburg, this sympathy with the Habsburg Empire had stemmed from the provision of a loan during the economic crisis of 1857. See Richard J. Evans, *Death in Hamburg: Society and Politics in the Cholera Years* (London, 2005), p. 5

⁵ StaH 111-1 Cl VII Lit. Fc No. 21 Vol. 6 Fasc. 2 b, Hamburgischer Correspondent No. 238, 8. October 1872

⁶ StaH 111-1 Cl VII Lit. Fc No. 21 Vol. 6 Fasc. 1, Mittheilung des Senats an die Bürgerschaft. No. 69. Hamburg, den 5. Mai 1873

the absence of a recognisable *national* dimension to the monument. This was emphasised by one Member of Parliament: 'Der Entwurf passe für einen Aufsatz oder für den Kirchhof, nicht für ein Denkmal; derselbe entbehre des nationalen Charakters.'⁷ Furthermore, Schilling was accused of having submitted an old proposal due to the fact that he did not expect to stand a chance against competitors from Hamburg.⁸ Yet, despite all this agitation against the monument, the majority of the *Bürgerschaft* still voted in favour of Schilling's proposal. So, as in the case of Bremen, it was eventually decided to concentrate on celebrating the local contribution to the Franco-Prussian War. Hamburg's historic identity clearly still trumped the nationbuilding project of the new German Empire.

b. Hamburg and the Zollverein

After Hamburg had become part of the Prussian-led North German Confederation, its position vis-à-vis the German Customs Union became a subject of heated discussion. The debate divided into two camps. On the one hand, there were those arguing for accession to the customs union (and the creation of entrepôts – a *Zollvereinsniederlage* – to facilitate intermediate trade); on the other, were the champions of Hamburg's existing free port status. The two camps both based their respective reasoning on economic factors.⁹ Ship owners such as Sloman, Godeffroy, Hertz, Schön and Laeisz worried about delays with regard to clearing formalities. Those merchants that carried out the significant European intermediate trade were of course in line with the ship owners, as were large parts of exporters and importers of declarable goods. Then again, owners of smaller shipping companies, like Woermann, O'Swald but also a partner of A. J. Schön, were in favour of Hamburg's accession. Naturally, there were also parts of Hamburg's mercantile community that would have remained unaffected by an accession. One example of this was the areas that imported goods that were exempt from duties or merchants

⁷ StaH 111-1 Cl VII Lit. Fc No. 21 Vol. 6 Fasc. 1, Auszug aus den Hamburger Nachrichten, den 12. Septbr. 1873. 30. Sitzung der Bürgerschaft, d. 10/9. 73.

⁸ StaH 111-1 Cl VII Lit. Fc No. 21 Vol. 6 Fasc. 1, Auszug aus den Hamburger Nachrichten, den 28. Novbr. 1873

⁹ An excellent overview of attitudes for and against Hamburg's accession is provided by Hans-Konrad Stein, 'Interessenkonflikte zwischen Grosskaufleuten, Handelskammer und Senat in der Frage des Zollanschlusses Hamburgs an das Reich 1866-1881, in: *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Hamburgische Geschichte (ZHG)* 64 (1978), pp. 55-89

that imported into Hamburg and then sold on the goods to customers in the customs union without processing them. Likewise, the merchant bankers did not have a unanimous view on the topic, which was characteristic of those who lived in Hamburg. Their view was largely dependent on the kind of business they were involved in and their respective clientele.¹⁰

The only group of merchants to favour Hamburg's accession were those that traded with produce from within the German customs union. In order to avoid duties on re-imports, these merchants had to move business outside Hamburg or store their goods in entrepôts. Therefore, only a minority of merchants were in favour of Hamburg's accession. Those advocating the retention of the status quo were definitely in the majority following the foundation of the North German Confederation. It is therefore necessary to look at the reasons behind this prevalent standpoint of Hamburg's merchants in more detail. In 1867, the *Freunde der Freihafenstellung* published 20 surveys on the need to maintain Hamburg's status as a free port.¹¹ This publication in defence of Hamburg's free port status was a response to a collection of nine surveys arguing in favour of joining the customs union. In the introduction to the publication, it is pointed out that 'die weit überwiegend grosse Mehrzahl des Hamburgischen Handelsstandes dem Anschluss unseres Platzes an den Zollverein entschieden widerstrebt [...]'.¹² The importance attached by Hamburg's mercantile community to their free port status is of course also proven by the fact that Hamburg and Bremen's role outside the customs union was later specifically guaranteed in Article 34 of the Imperial Constitution. Therefore, rather than looking at the general line of argument from advocates and opponents of the free port status, we will look at two surveys in detail. These surveys look at the expected consequences of joining the customs union for the import and export trade and on the shipping traffic and export trade.

The first survey by *Carl L. D. Meister & Co.* first of all points to Hamburg's historic role as a free port. It was argued that Hamburg's accession would be contradictory to the 'ganzen Vergangenheit unseres Freistaates und mit allen unseren bisherigen auf höchstmögliche Handelsfreiheit gerichteten Bestrebungen

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 61–64

¹¹ Gustav Eduard Nolte (ed.), *Zwanzig Gutachten in Bezug auf Hamburgs künftiges Verhältniss zum Zollverein* (Hamburg, 1867)

¹² Ibid., p. III

[...].'¹³ Like 'ein rother Faden zieht sich durch die Geschichte Hamburgs das unablässige Bestreben seiner Bürger, den Handelsverkehr von allen Fesseln zu befreien, die seiner Entwicklung hinderlich erschienen.'¹⁴ In other words, Hamburg's status as a free port city was stylised as part of its identity. Defending free trade was supposedly in the Hamburg blood. It is suggestive, however, that it was judged necessary to add a wider perspective: Hamburg's role as a free port was portrayed as serving the interests of the entire German nation. Hamburg, it was argued, was only able to compete with other leading Continental ports, such as Antwerp and Le Havre, due to its freedom of trade. While in these other ports goods had to be stored in entrepôts, in Hamburg goods could be stored, examined and sorted without any external controls. Once this advantage was abolished, Hamburg would not be able to compensate for its geographical disadvantage vis-à-vis those ports that were located closer to the Atlantic Ocean. In particular, Hamburg's trade in spirits was seen to be in danger of losing out to competing port cities. Spirits, especially Dutch gin, were exported to the La Plata countries, to Brazil, the West India, Brazil and other overseas markets. Under the customs laws of the new German Empire, the export of spirits might become unfeasible.

Complications were also expected for other exported goods should Hamburg lose its free port status. Hamburg was forecast to eventually lose its role as a major hub in European trade. Therefore, the report highlighted the necessity 'ganz besonders die Königl. Preussische Regierung, sowie die preussischen und deutschen Abgeordneten und die öffentliche Meinung Deutschlands zu überzeugen, dass der Freihandel Hamburgs ein Bedürfniss für Deutschland ist [...]'.¹⁵ Hamburg's accession to the German Customs Union would be of incalculable disadvantage to Germany's trade and industry, whereas the German Customs Union would not be materially weakened should Hamburg remain outside it. What is more, joining the customs union was portrayed as a retrograde step in an age when the whole of Europe seemed well on the way towards establishing free trade – Britain, for example, had repealed the Navigation Act in the mid-nineteenth century. The German Customs Union, in that perspective, was fast becoming an

¹³ Ibid., p. 4

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 4

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 8

anachronism and would eventually be forced to abolish its own trade barriers. Why join something with no future?

The local voices in favour of accession, meanwhile, were dismissed as 'Particularinteressen'.¹⁶ These voices, it was argued, put their own interests before the common good of Hamburg's mercantile community. They were reminded – in stern tones – that 'der Einzelne in einem Gemeinwesen sich nicht einreden möge, prosperiren zu können, während der eigentliche Lebensnerv der Gesamtheit leidet.'¹⁷

In a similar vein, the survey by August Bolten with respect to shipping traffic and export trade emphasised the difficulties connected with Hamburg's accession.¹⁸ These difficulties were mainly of a practical nature. It was highlighted that of the total of 6,000 arriving vessels per year, 4,500 would be subject to customs controls. These controls were seen to pose a threat to Hamburg's trading business, since they slowed down the handling of cargo. In addition, accession to the customs union would be regarded as the 'Anerkennung der Unrichtigkeit aller bisher befolgten Principien.'¹⁹ These were principles that had led to Hamburg's rise to one of the most frequented European ports. In contrast to port cities like Liverpool, London and New York, where free trade had never existed, Hamburg was able to flourish for other reasons. These reasons included the circumstance that Hamburg was not as closely connected to Germany as Liverpool and London were to their respective hinterlands – 'auf sich selbst angewiesen, erstrebte und erkämpfte Hamburg sein eigenes selbstständiges Handelsterrain [...]'.²⁰ As in the previous report, Hamburg's role as a free port city was defended on the grounds that it was the main reason for the city's economic success. It was again argued that free trade was Hamburg's recipe for success. Therefore, Hamburg's merchants saw no reason to change this. As a result of this, those people promoting Hamburg's accession to the customs union were viewed as representing vested

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 10

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 11

¹⁸ August Bolten was the owner of a shipping company and co-founder of the Hapag and the *Hamburg-Südamerikanische Dampfschiffahrts-Gesellschaft*. See Aug. Bolten Wm. Miller's Nachfolger (GmbH & Co.) KG. Geschichte. 'Mehr als 200 Jahre hamburgische Seeschiffahrt.': <http://www.aug-bolten.de/unternehmen/geschichte/> Accessed: 16/08/2016

¹⁹ Gustav Eduard Nolte (ed.), *Zwanzig Gutachten in Bezug auf Hamburgs künftiges Verhältniss zum Zollverein* (Hamburg, 1867), p. 135

²⁰ Ibid., p. 139

interests. Indeed, the advocates of accession were outnumbered in 1866/67.²¹ In any case, since free trade was thought to be on the rise in Europe, Hamburg's merchants were inclined to believe that the issue would eventually go away.

How wrong they were! In late 1878, Bismarck brought forward a motion to the Federal Assembly regarding the revision of the Empire's tariff system. Bismarck had turned to protectionism. Subsequently, the Reich Chancellor got in contact with Hamburg. Burgomaster Gustav Kirchenpauer, head of the *Deputation für Handel und Schiffahrt*, was asked about any specific changes that Hamburg would like to see implemented in the tariff's revision. Additionally, enquiries were made about whether Hamburg could participate in the commission tasked with the elaboration of Bismarck's plan. Naturally, this plan of introducing protective tariffs provoked resentment in Hamburg. For example, in a letter to Kirchenpauer's deputation, the Chamber of Commerce declared:

Sie ist auch jetzt noch der Überzeugung, daß ein System der Beschränkung des Zolles auf eine kleine Anzahl einträglicher Artikel [...] für die wirtschaftliche Wohlfahrt nicht allein Hamburgs und der Seestädte, sondern des gesamten Deutschland das Förderlichste sein werde.²²

It is therefore unsurprising that the Chamber was entirely against the tariff revision. It asked Hamburg's member of the commission to oppose any proposals that envisaged the introduction of tariffs 'mit vollen Kräften'.²³ The Chamber also got in contact with the *Geheimen Kommerzienrat* Delbrück (presumably Adelbert Delbrück). Here, the Chamber of Commerce sought support in its opposition against Bismarck's project. It was pointed out that various Chambers of Commerce such as Berlin, Frankfurt, Leipzig, Bremen, which represented diverse interests, would act irresponsibly 'wenn sie sich in einen kürzlich übertriebenen Gegensatz zwischen seestädtischen und binnenländischen Handelsinteressen hineinreden ließen [...]'.²⁴ Rather, the Chambers were urged to carry out their duty of caring for 'die gemeinsamen Lebensinteressen alles Großhandels, welche heute ernstlich nur

²¹ See also Stein, 'Interessenkonflikte', pp. 60–64

²² AdHH, 20.B.1.3.1, Die Handelskammer, Hamburg, den 31. Dezember 1878. An die Deputation für Handel und Schiffahrt, hier

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ AdHH, 20.B.1.3.1, Herrn Geheimen Commerzienrath Delbrück, Berlin, Hamburg, d. 14. Januar 1879

zu ernstlich bedroht scheinen [...].'²⁵ These quotes provide two crucial points. Firstly, as in the case with Bremen, Hamburg's role in advocating free trade was also met with disapproval from the rest of the German Empire. Secondly, there can be no doubt that Hamburg's Chamber of Commerce considered the effect of protective tariffs on trade to be severe. Like Bremen, it was prepared to stand up for this position and to take action against Bismarck's protectionism.

In April 1879, the finished plan for the new tariff system was submitted to the Reichstag in Berlin. In a letter to the Chamber of Commerce, the company *A. Spiermann & Wessely*, which was producing ovenware and pottery, gave an account of the effect the tariff system would have. The company reported that by using the tariff system the company would 'so außerordentlich hart getroffen werden, dass wir uns erlauben Ihnen hiervon Mittheilung zu machen [...].'²⁶ In detail, if the company were not passing the tariff on to the customer, it would have had to expect a loss of 10–16% on different models. This share would in most cases have exceeded the profit made on ovens. This led the author to complain: 'Nach 10 Jahre langem Fleiß größter Mühe & bedeutenden Kosten ist es uns gelungen die [Fabrik] wieder in Ehren u. an den Markt zu bringen [...].'²⁷ The new tariff would effectively result in the inability to sell the products abroad, which made up a quarter of sales.

In an evaluation of the impact of tariffs on specific goods, further inadequacies of the proposed law were demonstrated.²⁸ For example, the tariff law envisaged the introduction of a tariff on English curtains. This tariff would have led to additional costs of 30%. However, these curtains were not fabricated in Germany and the German Empire was fully dependent on imports from abroad. According to the evaluation, this product was largely bought by the less well-off part of the population. Similarly, unbleached curtain stuff was in the main imported by Saxon manufacturers which processed the material. As a result of the new tariff system, importing the material would become impossible. Overall, the effectiveness of protective tariffs was doubted. For example, there was already a high tariff on cotton filling and still it had not led to moves to produce it locally in Germany. Since the product was of low value, an increase of the tariff on it was seen as giving cause for concern. On the other hand, a rise of the tariff on silken

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ AdHH, 20.B.1.3.1, A. Spiermann & Wessely. Hamburg, d. 22. April 1879.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ AdHH, 20.B.1.3.1, Referat des Herrn Rothenbüchen Hamburg, 17. April 1879

lace was considered as entirely feasible but not to the extent envisaged by the new law. Thus, there can be no doubt that Hamburg's merchants had a clear, nuanced and informed opinion of the new tariff law. The preference of a liberal economic policy represented by the majority of merchants ran contrary to Bismarck's project of protective tariffs. At the same time, protectionism was not solely condemned on an ideological basis. Hamburg's merchants also saw practical deficiencies in the introduction of protective tariffs.

Hamburg's mercantile community was prepared to defend this standpoint publicly. The Chamber of Commerce submitted a petition to the Reichstag in April 1879.²⁹ Especially the fifth paragraph of the new law was met with opposition in Hamburg. In this paragraph, the Federal Assembly would be authorised to alter tariff rates for specific countries which did not possess a commercial treaty with the Empire. In Hamburg, this clause was understood as a means 'die anderen Staaten zum Abschluss von Handelsverträgen auf Grundlage des projektirten Tarifs zu zwingen.'³⁰ The Chamber expected that such measures would ultimately lead to a tariff war instead of compliance. Altogether, '[dem] Handel aber und speziell dem Seehandel würde damit die Axt an die Wurzel gelegt werden.'³¹ Like Bremen, Hamburg's Chamber of Commerce regarded it as necessary to point to the reasons behind Hamburg's exclusion from the customs union:

Die Freiheit der Bewegung ist es, in welcher die Hansestädte die Kraft gefunden haben, ihre Welthandelsstellung gegenüber der Konkurrenz der in weit günstigerer Lage gelegenen und von staatswegen auf alle Weise unterstützen kontinentalen Häfen aufrecht zu erhalten. Nicht Partikularismus, sondern die innerste, aus genauer Kenntniss der Verhältnisse geschöpfte Ueberzeugung, dass auch die bei dem jetzigen System mögliche schonende und kulante Zollbehandlung diese ihre jetzige Stellung erschüttern müsse, hat Bremen und Hamburg veranlasst, ihre Freihafenstellung aufrecht zu halten und die schweren mit derselben verbundenen Opfer auf sich zu nehmen.³²

²⁹ AdHH, 20.B.1.3.1, Petition der Handelskammer zu Hamburg, bezüglich des Entwurfs eines Gesetzes betreffend den Zolltarif des deutschen Zollgebiet. Hamburg, April 1879.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

Hamburg's Chamber of Commerce urged the Reichstag to continue the Empire's liberal economic policy. At the same time, it painted an extremely gloomy picture of the consequences the new system would have, particularly on trade. Another petition to the Reichstag submitted by a group of merchants from Hamburg came to a similar conclusion. In this, it was argued that should protectionist measures be introduced in order to support individual branches of the economy, then that would mean that 'Deutschland wird seinem Berufe als Culturstaat abwendig und Hamburg büsst seine Mission als Stätte des Welthandels ein [...]'.³³ Just like Hamburg's Chamber of Commerce, this group of merchants regarded the new tariff system as a serious threat to Hamburg's status as a seaport of international importance. On the other hand, neither these merchants nor the Chamber of Commerce opposed the introduction of financial duties on specific goods in order to support the state finances.

The position of Hamburg's mercantile community regarding the Empire's tariff law approved by the Reichstag in June 1879 is absolutely clear. Hamburg's merchants unquestionably opposed Bismarck's turn to protectionism. Protectionism was regarded as likely to lead to Hamburg's downfall. In light of all that, it may seem astonishing that Hamburg should have agreed to become part of the Empire's customs union only about two years later.

c. Hamburg's accession

In May 1879, Hamburg's senate received a letter from the Prussian envoy Otto von Wentzel. Like Bremen, Hamburg was asked whether the city wanted to join the customs union in the foreseeable future. It is clear that the initiator of this move was Bismarck himself. In May 1878, the Reich Chancellor had already muttered that 'es mit der Freihafenstellung auch nicht so weiter gehe'.³⁴ Soon after receiving the letter, Kirchenpauer, Hamburg's envoy to the Federal Assembly, wrote back to Hamburg. He reported that there was general bemusement about the letter's origin in Berlin. Kirchenpauer highlighted that even Minister Karl von Hofmann knew of nothing – he was quoted saying: 'Das wird er so über meinen Kopf weg

³³ AdHH, 20.B.1.3.1, Petition der unterzeichneten Hamburgischen Kaufleute

³⁴ StaH 314-6 ZI, Abschrift eines Briefes des Reichstagsabgeordneten Dr. Wolffson, aus Berlin, vom 1. Mai 1878, an Herrn Senator Dr. Versmann, Hamburg

gemacht haben.’³⁵ According to Maxmilian von Philipsborn, the *Auswärtiges Amt* was not involved in the matter either.³⁶ This strongly suggests that it was Bismarck alone who was pressing for Hamburg and Bremen’s accession. In any case, for both Hanseatic cities it was difficult to explain the reason behind the letter. Kirchenpauer reported that H. H. Meier (in Bremen) might have contributed to Bismarck’s initiative due to a previous discussion between the two on the topic of differential duties for the benefit of the shipping sector. Bismarck was said to have pointed out that ‘er es nur als eine vorübergehende Ausnahmestellung angesehen [habe], die nach etwa 10 oder 15 Jahren von selbst aufhören werde; jetzt sei es an der Zeit [...]’.³⁷

Subsequently, Hamburg and Bremen exchanged opinions on how to respond to the letter. From this, the overall attitude of Hamburg’s ruling elite towards the enquiry can be gathered. Gustav Kirchenpauer pointed out that Hamburg was also ‘beglückt worden’ with the Prussian enquiry but the one or the other took comfort in the assumption that it had primarily been directed to Bremen.³⁸ Still, Kirchenpauer already anticipated that the matter ‘wird [...] wohl bitterer Frust für beide Städte.’³⁹ Besides, Kirchenpauer conveyed that Ernst Gossler, a banker from Hamburg and head of the Chamber of Commerce, openly sided with Alexander Mosle in Bremen, who was a supporter of Bismarck’s turn to protectionism. According to Kirchenpauer, it was an unfortunate coincidence that Gossler, as the longest serving member, was head of the Chamber. This circumstance naturally added extra weight to Gossler’s stance on the issue.

At the same time, the reaction by the remaining members of the Chamber shows the prevalent attitude in Hamburg towards Bismarck’s protectionism in 1879. In reaction to Gossler’s positioning, the ‘sofortige Widerspruch seiner sämtlichen Kollegen nöthigte ihn [...] sein Amt niederzulegen [...]’.⁴⁰ However, it

³⁵ StaH 314-6 ZI, Deutsches Reich. Bericht des Hamburgischen Bevollmächtigten zum Bundesrathe. No. 52. Berlin, d. 28. Mai 1879

³⁶ In the end, on the assumption that Bismarck had not himself instructed Wentzel, Kirchenpauer concluded that there was only one last person to blame for having forwarded Bismarck’s will to Wentzel – ‘unser[...] alte[r] Freund v. B. [...]’ It is likely that these initials stood for Bernhard Ernst von Bülow, father of Bernhard von Bülow, who was a close ally of Bismarck.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ StaB 2-Ss.4.e.1., Bd. 1, Hamburg, d. 24. Mai 79, Verehrter Herr College

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

was still feared that Bismarck would construe Gossler's open approval of Mosle in the way that it demonstrated that there were voices in favour of Hamburg's accession. Subsequently, a senatorial commission was appointed in order to decide upon a response to the Prussian envoy. In June, Kirchenpauer gave notice to Bremen that 'nach Allem was ich höre bezweifle ich aber nicht, daß die Antwort ablehnend ausfallen wird.'⁴¹ Ultimately, with reference to Article 34 of the Imperial Constitution, Hamburg did indeed give a negative response to Wentzel. It was argued that 'die Beibehaltung der jetzigen, seit mehr als zehn Jahren bewährten Einrichtungen auch dem Reichsinteresse förderlicher sei, als die Aufhebung derselben.'⁴² It follows from this that, in 1879, both, Hamburg's governing body and the Chamber of Commerce were still by a clear majority in favour of maintaining Hamburg's status.

In April 1880, Hamburg was given another shock. In a bill to the Federal Assembly, the unelected upper chamber of the Imperial Parliament in Berlin, Prussia requested the inclusion of Altona and parts of the *Vorstadt St Pauli*, which was administered by Hamburg. By way of an overall majority and without consulting the Reichstag, the Federal Assembly was to resolve this matter. This was seen as a direct challenge to Hamburg's insistence on its free port status. Bismarck was planning to move the customs border straight to Hamburg's city gates. The bill rightly highlighted that Altona's inclusion in the customs union, as part of the Prussian province of Schleswig-Holstein, could be decided without Hamburg's agreement. St Pauli, on the other hand, was an entirely different matter. It was part of Hamburg's area of administration. Despite this, the bill stated that the question of 'wer darüber zu entscheiden hat, in welchem Umfange eine Ausschließung des städtischen Gebiets erforderlich ist [...]' was not answered in Article 34.⁴³

As a result of this bill, Hamburg's Chamber of Commerce convened the *Versammlung Eines Ehrbaren Kaufmannes*. In this, Arthur Lutteroth, president of the Chamber, claimed that the Prussian bill was 'als nichts anderes, denn als eine

⁴¹ StaB 2-Ss.4.e.1., Bd. 1, Hamburg, d. 12. Juni 79, Verehrter Herr College

⁴² StaH 314-6 ZI, Hamburg, den 25. Juni 1879, An von Wentzel

⁴³ AdHH, 20.S.2a.3, Hamb. Correspondent vom 25. April 1880, 'Antrag Preußens betreffend Einverleibung der Stadt Altona und eines Theiles der Vorstadt St. Pauli in das Zoll-Gebiet.'

Vergewaltigung Hamburgs zu betrachten [...].'⁴⁴ This statement was met with approval. Furthermore, since Prussia had not conferred with Hamburg on the topic prior to submitting the bill 'so stelle sie sich geradezu als ein förmlicher Ueberfall dar.'⁴⁵ Naturally, all the speakers of the meeting, including for example Adolph Woermann, agreed on the audacity of the Prussian bill. The mood towards Bismarck at this time is best demonstrated by a speaker by the name of Zacharias, who pointedly observed:

Man sage, Bismarck sei von einem Ringe politischer Streber und Interessenten umgeben, der den Kanzler verhindere, die richtigen Stimmen in der wirthschaftlichen Frage zu hören, und es sei zu verwundern, daß ein mann, der auf politischem Gebiete realien Zielen nachstrebe, in wirtschaftlicher Hinsicht Idealpolitik treibe. Wir seien stets berei, dem großen Kanzler auf politischem Gebiete die Ehre zu geben, welche ihm gebühre, und hätten ihm zugejubelt, als die deutsche Einheit durch ihn herbeigeführt ware, auf wirthschaftlichem Gebiete sei der Fürst aber nicht derjenige große Mann, für den seine Freunde ihn so gerne ausgeben möchten.⁴⁶

In this meeting, it was also decided that a petition would be submitted to Hamburg's senate, highlighting the Chamber's opposition to the Prussian bill. The Senate was urged to proceed against Bismarck's plan.

Hamburg's newspapers were also taken by surprise in the face of the bill. The *Hamburgische Börsen-Halle*, for example, pointed out that it was as much surprised by the content of the bill as by the fact that the Imperial Government had not previously advised Hamburg's government of the bill. This new approach by the Imperial Government was in conflict with the 'freundschaftlichen Verhältniß, daß zwischen Bundesstaaten und Reichsgenossen bestehen soll.'⁴⁷ Similarly, the *Hamburger Nachrichten* expressed that the bill was entirely devoid of any legal

⁴⁴ AdHH, 20.S.2a.3, Hamb. Börsenhalle vom 28. April 1880, 'Versammlung Eines Ehrbaren Kaufmanns.'

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ SuB Hamburg, Hamburgische Börsen-Halle, Abendzeitung für Handel, Schiffahrt und Politik, 21,098, Sonnabend, den 24. April 1880, Nachmittags. Ausgabe 4 Uhr

foundation.⁴⁸ Therefore, the newspaper sided with the decision taken by the *Versammlung Eines Ehrbaren Kaufmannes*. On the other hand, the *Hamburgischer Correspondent* primarily concerned itself with the possible consequences of the Prussian bill. It is not surprising that the inclusion of St Pauli in particular was criticised. According to the *Correspondent*, the bill would lead to the economic ruin of St Pauli. Thus, the bill 'streitet nicht nur gegen die Gerechtigkeit, sondern auch gegen den wirthschaftlichen Vortheil.'⁴⁹

However, it was not only Hamburg's mercantile community and Hamburg's newspapers that were surprised by the Prussian bill. The *Kieler Zeitung*, for example, also advanced an opinion on this matter. In an article, the newspaper warned of the adverse effect that the Prussian exploitation of its power would have and 'bei den verbündeten Regierungen den Glauben erweckte, als ob es bereit sei, sich zu ihrem Nachtheil über die Grundlage unseres staatlichen Lebens, die Reichsverfassung, hinwegzusetzen.'⁵⁰ It was thus perhaps not so much the fact that Hamburg would be affected by this but Bismarck's blatant disregard of the Empire's constitution that incensed Hamburg most. Hamburg duly filed a motion to the Federal Assembly requesting that the Prussian bill be regarded as illegal without approval by Hamburg's senate.

Bismarck's course of action also caused a stir in the Reichstag. The representatives Isaac Wolffson, Rudolf Heinrich Möring (both from Hamburg) and Heinrich Rickert – who was one of the leaders of the left wing of the National Liberal Party – initiated an interpellation to the Reich Chancellor regarding the planned accession.⁵¹ In this, Bismarck was asked whether it was correct that he had requested the Federal Assembly alone to resolve upon the projected accession. He also asked whether there had been any previous negotiations with Hamburg's government and whether the accession would be carried out without Hamburg's agreement. The interpellation was debated in the Reichstag on May 1 1880. In this

⁴⁸ SuB Hamburg, Hamburger Nachrichten, No. 101, Hamburg, Mittwoch, den 28. April 1880, Morgen-Ausgabe

⁴⁹ SuB Hamburg, Hamburgischer Correspondent, No. 98, Sonnabend, den 24. April 1880

⁵⁰ AdHH, 20.S.2a.3, Hamb. Börsenhalle vom 28. April 1880, 'Stimmen der Presse über den Antrag auf Zoll-Anschluß Altona's und St. Pauli's.'

⁵¹ 1880, 4, Nr. 148. Interpellation, Verhandlungen des Deutschen Reichstags, Reichstagsprotokolle:

http://www.reichstagsprotokolle.de/Blatt3_k4_bsb00018412_00330.html. Accessed 18/06/2016

debate, Wolffson gave the reasons for initiating the interpellation. While Wolffson argued that the Prussian motion was not in the interest of Altona, the interpellation was first of all directed to the case of St Pauli. Wolffson pointed to the fact that Hamburg had just been able to come to terms with the government regarding the increase of the *Aversum* from 3 to 5 Marks per capita. To this, Wolffson noted that 'man glaubte bei uns in Hamburg mit diesem Opfer – als solches ist es betrachtet worden – endlich einmal sich Ruhe erkaufte zu haben.'⁵² However, suddenly 'wie ein Blitz aus heiterem Himmel, ohne daß ein Mensch etwas davon geahnt hätte', the government proposed the accession to the customs union of parts of Hamburg's municipal area.⁵³ Overall, the main reason for concern in the Reichstag was the question of the motion's constitutionality rather than concern for Hamburg's status as a free port. In response to this, Adolf von Scholz pointed out, on behalf of Bismarck, that the Reich Chancellor would not discuss a matter that had been submitted to the Federal Assembly in the Reichstag.

There is no need to go into further detail about the subsequent discussions in the Reichstag. Ultimately, the interpellation led to nothing more than the debate in the Reichstag. In a second session, on May 7 1880, it was decided not to take the matter further. However, it is still significant to learn from this that the Prussian motion to the Federal Assembly caused a stir throughout the Empire. It was seen as a process affecting not only Hamburg and Bremen. As such, it went beyond the dispute between advocates and opponents of Hamburg and Bremen's special statuses as free ports. For example, Eugen Richter, who also spoke in the discussion about the interpellation, argued: 'Meine Herren, wir haben dieses Reservatrecht den Hansestädten gegeben, nicht im politisch-partikularistischen Interesse sondern mit dem vollen Bewusstsein, daß diese Freihafenstellung ein deutsches Interesse ist.'⁵⁴ Then, Richter concluded by highlighting:

⁵² 1880, 2, 43. Sitzung am 1. Mai 1880, Verhandlungen des Deutschen Reichstags, Reichstagsprotokolle:
http://www.reichstagsprotokolle.de/Blatt3_k4_bsb00018409_00393.html. Accessed 18/06/2016

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ 1880, 2, 43. Sitzung am 1. Mai 1880, Verhandlungen des Deutschen Reichstags, Reichstagsprotokolle:
http://www.reichstagsprotokolle.de/Blatt3_k4_bsb00018409_00401.html. Accessed: 18/06/2016

Meine Herren, wenn man heut zu Tage sagt, daß in Deutschland die Autorität vor Recht und Gesetz in weiten Kreisen des Volkes erschüttert ist – hüten Sie sich im Bundesrath, dieser Stimmung neue Nahrung zu gebe, schützen Sie die Autorität von Recht und Verfassung, damit man nicht sagen kann: In Deutschland geht Macht vor Recht.
(Lebhaftes Bravo.)⁵⁵

Hence, there were clearly voices in the Empire that completely disagreed with the Prussian motion. Indeed, the motion was part of much larger historic issues in the German Empire. These were Bismarck's way of governing and the latent constitutional crisis of the Empire. Not without reason has the Imperial Constitution been described as 'merkwürdiger Zwitter, eine Mischung aus konservativen und progressive Elementen.'⁵⁶ In the end, this hybrid cemented the Prussian hegemony over the rest of the Empire. Protest against Bismarck's approach was not limited to the political arena of the Reichstag. As Oncken has demonstrated: 'Einstimmig fast ward von der Presse das Mittel verdammt und der Zweck ungefähr ebenso ungewürdigt gelassen, wie einst im Jahr 1865 die Februarbedingungen in der Schleswig-Holsteinschen Frage.'⁵⁷ Thus, just like Prussia had deceived the Habsburg Empire in 1865/66, it now dealt with the remaining states of the German Empire in a similar manner. Breaches of law and agreements remained an effective remedy for Bismarck.

In any case, it remains hard to imagine that Bismarck intended to accomplish anything other than to pressurise Hamburg into joining the customs union. As we have seen, the constitutionality of Bismarck's motion to the Federal Assembly was at least dubious. Such a view is also advanced by Julia Cholet, who highlights that Prussia had intended to provoke Hamburg's countermeasure 'um die Verhandlungen um einen Zollanschluss der gesamten Stadt voran zu treiben.'⁵⁸ Bismarck, on the other hand, stated that, as the Prussian representative, it was merely his duty to stand in for those Prussian interests 'welche durch die

⁵⁵ 1880, 2, 43. Sitzung am 1. Mai 1880, Verhandlungen des Deutsches Reichstags, Reichstagsprotokolle:
http://www.reichstagsprotokolle.de/Blatt3_k4_bsb00018409_00402.html. Accessed: 18/06/2016

⁵⁶ Volker Ullrich, *Die nervöse Großmacht: Aufstieg und Untergang des deutschen Kaiserreichs, 1871-1918* (Frankfurt, 1997), p. 31

⁵⁷ Wilhelm Oncken, *Das Zeitalter des Kaisers Wilhelm, Zweiter Band* (Berlin, 1892), p. 703

⁵⁸ Julia Cholet, *Der Etat des Deutschen Reiches in der Bismarckzeit* (Berlin, 2012), p. 348

gegenwärtige Gestaltung des hamburgischen Freihafenbezirks geschädigt und im Genuß der ihnen auf Grund der nationalen Einigung Deutschlands und des Artikels 33 der Verfassung zustehenden Rechte beeinträchtigt werden.’⁵⁹ In the end, Bismarck’s initial plan to include Altona and St Pauli in the customs union was altered, so that only Altona was included. This was duly approved by the Federal Assembly.

However, the issue regarding Hamburg’s accession was not resolved with the decision made in the Federal Assembly. The Member of Parliament, Rudolf von Delbrück, Bismarck’s former right hand, had submitted a motion to the Reichstag regarding the revised *Elbschiffahrtsakte*.⁶⁰ In this treaty between states situated on the River Elbe it had been determined that the Federal Assembly would be able to shift the customs border. Delbrück urged the Reichstag to agree to this only on the condition that the Reichstag was to first agree to any such shifts. In a speech before the Reichstag opposing Delbrück’s proposal on May 8 1880, Bismarck pointed to the fact that, in his opinion, there was a sensible decline in patriotism. Bismarck argued:

Wenn ich sehe, [...] daß mein thätigster und bedeutendster Mitarbeiter, den ich bei der Herstellung der Reichsverfassung gehabt habe, heutzutage Arm in Arm mit dem Centrum und mit den Parteien, die damals gegen die Reichsverfassung waren, mir gegenüber tritt, so habe ich das Gefühl, daß die rückläufige Bewegung, die Minderung der Begeisterung für die nationale Entwicklung, die damals uns alle, beherrschte, alle einen ganz außerordentlich weiten Weg schon zurückgelegt hat. [...] Ist es nützlich, den Partikularismus zu unterstützen? Er ist stark genug ohne Sie, meine Herren.⁶¹

⁵⁹ AdHH, 20.S.2a.3, Hamb. Nachrichten vom 8. Mai 1880

⁶⁰ Rudolf von Delbrück was a Member of Parliament for the constituency Neustadt a.d. Orla, which was located in the Grand Duchy of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach. Delbrück represented this constituency in the *Reichstag* between 1878 and 1881. See Parlamentarierportal (BIOPARL). Abgeordnete in den norddeutschen und deutschen Reichstagen 1867-1918 (BIORAB-Kaiserreich). Rudolf von Delbrück: http://zhsf.gesis.org/ParlamentarierPortal/biorabkr_db/biorabkr_db.php
Accessed: 17/08/2016

⁶¹ Oncken, *Zeitalter des Kaisers*, pp. 703-704

Thus, by emphasising Hamburg's particularistic role as a free port, Bismarck was able to depict Hamburg as a *Reichsfeind*, an enemy of the Reich. Bismarck simply equated Hamburg's special status with a non-patriotic attitude of the city. This is the opinion that Bismarck wanted to take when he argued that economic disunity stood in the way of a unified nation. Here, Bismarck precisely refers to the problem of economic and cultural unification. He argued that without economic unification, the idea of a unified German nation would be impossible to achieve. This line of argument seems to have gained recognition. The Reichstag voted with a majority of 138 to 110 against Delbrück's modification.

Only a couple of weeks after this incident, Bismarck announced an upcoming Prussian motion regarding the incorporation of the River Elbe into the Empire's customs union. In response to this, Hamburg submitted a report to the Federal Assembly regarding the feasibility of this plan. In this, Hamburg argued that any 'über das Aufziehen einer besonderen Zollflagge bei Tage, beziehungsweise das Zeigen einer Zolllaterne bei Nacht hinausgehende Kontrolmaßregel' would have a devastating effect on Hamburg's maritime traffic.⁶² In fact, it was emphasised, that Antwerp had just been able to implement the abolishment of any customs control on the way to its port. Still, the Reich Chancellor declared that he had to insist 'darauf, daß die preußischen Provinzen Hannover und Schleswig-Holstein nicht länger Hamburg zu Liebe durch Zollschranken gegen die Elbe hin getrennt bleiben könnten [...]'.⁶³ Ultimately, the Federal Assembly approved of including the Lower Elbe, from Hamburg to Cuxhaven, in the customs union. Bismarck was tightening the noose around Hamburg. In Hamburg, Bismarck's actions prompted Gustav Kirchenpauer to resign as Hamburg's envoy to the Federal Assembly. Kirchenpauer had been a prominent champion of Hamburg's historic role as a free port. Henceforth, Johannes Versmann took over the role in Berlin. In the end, Versmann turned out to be well suited for this job: 'Daß Bismarck Hamburg erheblichen

⁶² AdHH, 20.S.2a.3, Besonderer Abdruck der Drucksache des Bundesrath No. 108. Vorläufige Bemerkungen zu der in der Sitzung des Bundesraths vom 1. Juni 1880 eingebrachten Vorlage No. 106, betreffend die Einverleibung der unteren Elbe in das Zollgebiet

⁶³ Gottlob Engelhaaf, *Geschichte der Neuesten Zeit: Vom Frankfurter Frieden bis zur Gegenwart* (Stuttgart, 1915), p. 189

Verhandlungsspielraum einräumte, ist dem unermüdlichen, stets fachkundigen und pragmatischen Versmann zu verdanken.’⁶⁴

Indeed, it seems that the pressure Bismarck exerted on Hamburg had an effect on how a possible accession was dealt with in Hamburg. At the end of June 1880, a small group of members of the Chamber of Commerce prepared a report on its general standpoint on the matter as well as a list of conditions under which an accession would be acceptable – the so-called “Robinow programme”. While it was considered to officially submit this report to the Senate, this plan was not realised. Looking at the report gives a perfect insight into the position this part of Hamburg’s mercantile community took vis-à-vis Hamburg’s accession. In the report, it was pointed out that if the group of merchants had been able to render a judgement solely on the basis of Hamburg’s interests and needs, it would have decided in favour of Hamburg’s free port status.⁶⁵ At the same time, the delegates also admitted that it was concerned ‘daß bei einem starren Festhalten an diesem Standpunkt [...] dem Blühen unseres Handels, die ernstesten Gefahren drohen [...]’.⁶⁶ For this reason, the Chamber of Commerce regarded itself constrained to specify a course of action in to order to avert these dangers.

Above all stood the realisation that there was little that Hamburg was able to do once Bismarck had set his mind on bringing about Hamburg’s accession. There can be no doubt that this was candidly realised by the delegates of the Chamber. Additionally, it was also accepted that Hamburg had few supporters in the rest of the Empire. Although Hamburg had received support in the Prussian motion on Altona and St Pauli’s accession, the city possessed a level of prosperity, ‘welches sich zu vortheilhaft abhebt von dem unserm Hinterlande beschiedenen Loose, als daß es nicht vielfach Mißgunst gegen uns erregen sollte.’⁶⁷ Apart from changing party interests against Bismarck, a victory like the one in the matter on St Pauli was entirely unrealistic. In fact, even this victory was assumed to turn out to be a Pyrrhic victory. Consequently, in view of this situation, the Chamber’s delegation advised the Senate to enter negotiations with the imperial government

⁶⁴ Frank M. Hinz, *Planung und Finanzierung der Speicherstadt in Hamburg: Gemischtwirtschaftliche Unternehmensgründungen im 19. Jahrhundert unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Hamburger Freihafen-Lagerhaus-Gesellschaft* (Hamburg, 2000), p. 95

⁶⁵ AdHH, 20.S.2a.3, Handelskammer, Hamburg, d. 28. Juni 1880

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid. This part seems to have been cut out in a later version.

regarding the terms of an accession. Like this, Hamburg would 'nicht ferner dem Vorwurf des Particularismus ausgesetzt sein, und dem Odium, welches bisher in Folge unserer Separat-Stellung, wenn auch mit Unrecht, auf uns lastete, in wirksamer Weise begegnen.'⁶⁸ In any case, negotiations with the imperial government were not binding. In case they actually produced acceptable results, for example concessions to Hamburg's industry, 'dann könnte jeder Hamburger, auch der eifrigste Anhänger unserer Freihafenstellung, solche Lösung getrost als die glücklichste bezeichnen, welche zu finden überhaupt möglich war.'⁶⁹

This statement contains two vital points. Firstly, Hamburg's mercantile community was totally aware of its weak position vis-à-vis the Reich Chancellor. There were few illusions about the German Empire's ability to force the accession upon Hamburg. It was without a doubt realised in Hamburg that Bismarck's measures, the motion regarding Altona and St Pauli and the customs border on the Elbe, were aimed at making the city change its mind. Under these circumstances, opposition to the Empire's economic political turn to protectionism took a back seat. Secondly, Hamburg's mercantile community was well aware of the fact that the right granted in Article 34 led to a dismissive attitude – the 'Odium' – towards Hamburg in the rest of the Empire. Since negotiations were seen as a way to end accusations, the contempt of Hamburg in the rest of the Empire must at least have had some effect in Hamburg. It is unlikely that this contempt in the rest of Germany actually had a negative economic effect on the city. After all, the delegates of the Chamber admitted that it would not have opted for an accession in case it had been able to make a truly independent decision. Yet, ridding themselves from the taint of being "un-German" was a welcome side-effect of an accession.

At the beginning of the July 1880, a small delegation of the Chamber of Commerce then enquired of Hamburg's senate about the state of negotiations. In the end, two senators, Versmann and O'Swald, were assigned to hold a meeting with representatives of the Chamber of Commerce, which took place on July 13 1880. In this, Versmann pointed out that the members had been right not to submit the report to the Senate. The reasons for this were straightforward: Versmann pointed out the need to delay the matter in order to improve Hamburg's basis for negotiations with the Empire. At the same time, this did not mean that

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

Hamburg should wait for a change in the government staff – this had been discussed amongst the delegates. After all, Bismarck's dismissal was neither probable nor desirable, as Versmann emphasised. Versmann argued: 'Der Umschwung in der Stimmung hier sei ihm in höchstem Grade überraschend gewesen; auch in Berlin sei man ganz der Ansicht, daß die Stimmung hier noch dieselbe sei, wie vor weniger Wochen.'⁷⁰ By this, Versmann most likely meant the increasing favour for Hamburg's accession. For example, at the end of May 1880, the *Hamburger Zollanschlußpartei* had been founded. However, it remains questionable whether there had been a general turnabout in the general opinion on Hamburg's accession. After all, when Versmann began to look for a settlement with the Imperial government in early July 1880, he did so without letting Hamburg's senate know.⁷¹ Even if Hamburg was now prepared to start negotiations, Bismarck was said not to want to negotiate. Therefore, Versmann was of the opinion that what 'jetzt erreicht werden könne, das werde immer zu erreichen sein.'⁷² Before Hamburg was able to enter negotiations with the German Empire, it would need to elaborate a comprehensive plan. Overall, Versmann took a pessimistic view of what actually could be achieved in negotiations with the Reich Chancellor.

The delegation of the Chamber of Commerce also learnt that preparations for the coming negotiations with the imperial government were being made. To assist with this, a questionnaire had been drawn up. Additionally, visits to influential members of every branch of the economy had taken place and were to be continued. These negotiations between Hamburg's senate and the imperial government then began in secret in November 1880. Prior to this, in late October, a group of 32 merchants from Hamburg had submitted a note to Bismarck. In this, the group asked the Reich Chancellor to see to Hamburg's accession. Opponents of the accession were labelled as "un-German". In response to this, over 1,700 merchants and firms signed a protestation against the demand note to Bismarck. This group of objectors claimed 'daß die Aufrechterhaltung der Freihafenstellung

⁷⁰ AdHH, 20.S.2a.3, Dienstag d. 13. Juli 1880. Nachmittags 2 ½ Uhr im Verwaltungsgebäude

⁷¹ Becker, 'Eingliederung der Hansestädte', pp. 236-237

⁷² AdHH, 20.S.2a.3, Dienstag d. 13. Juli 1880. Nachmittags 2 ½ Uhr im Verwaltungsgebäude

Hamburgs sowohl im nationalen Interesse des gesamten Vaterlandes wie auch im Hamburgischen Interesse unbedingt geboten ist.’⁷³

At roughly the same time, in late 1880, there were also talks between Hamburg’s senate and delegates of the Chamber of Commerce regarding the conditions upon which an accession would be manageable. The options discussed in one meeting in December 1880 were later written up by a member of the Chamber of Commerce. In this, the need for a free port area rather than a customs free entrepôt is emphasised. Under any other solution than a free port area, it was questionable whether Hamburg’s ‘Handel in bishriger Weise sich erhalten und fortentwickeln könne [...]’.⁷⁴ Interestingly, Hamburg’s basis for negotiations is again regarded as being poor. The report argues for adhering to the idea of a free port area even if the prospect of being granted an entire area was unlikely. With regard to the location and requirements this area had to fulfil, the consensus, at this early stage, still seems to have been that it should be established in a sparsely populated area of Hamburg. It was highlighted: ‘Ist aber das Verbleiben von Bewohnern im Freihafengebiet ausgeschlossen, werden damit auch alle Projekte, welche einen größeren Theil der jetzt bewohnten Stadt in dasselbe einschließen, hinfällig.’⁷⁵ The relocation of people and the costs for expropriations would ‘ganz abgesehen von allen anderen. mit einer so umfassenden Veränderung verbundenen Unzuträglichkeiten, unerschwingliche und mit den zu errichtenden Vortheilen außer allem Verhältniß stehnde Kosten beanspruchen.’⁷⁶ The problem of determining the right location for the free port area will be discussed later on in this chapter. For now, it is suffice to say that, from the beginning, expectations in Hamburg of the outcome of negotiations with the imperial government were low. Being granted a free port area was viewed as a best-case scenario. The decision-making elites of Hamburg were still aware of the fact that they were reliant on Bismarck’s good will.

Later on, when the decision about Hamburg’s future as a free port drew to a close – negotiations were concluded in late May 1881 – Hamburg’s position towards the Reich Chancellor seems to have improved. In late March 1881, Versmann disclosed to some members of the Chamber of Commerce that the

⁷³ Stein, ‘Interessenkonflikte’, p. 57

⁷⁴ AdHH, 20.S.2a.3, Hamburg, Januar 1881

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

implementation of the decision concerning the accession of Altona and the Lower Elbe was raising major difficulties in Berlin.⁷⁷ For this reason, Versmann wanted to see about the following five concessions: a reserved free port area, the facilitation of customs regulations, concessions for the export industry, Hamburg's own customs authority, and a contribution by the Empire towards the costs of the new free port area. At the same time, Versmann gave up hope of being granted an imperial guarantee for the new conditions.

On April 12 1881, another session of the *Versammlung Eines Ehrbaren Kaufmanns* took place.⁷⁸ This was just around a year after Lutteroth had spoken of the violation of Hamburg with respect to Bismarck's motion to the Federal Assembly. However, this time, the meeting took a completely different course. The meeting began with the deputy Heinrich Amsinck calling upon the assembly to show:

... daß bei allen Meinungsverschiedenheiten die Hamburger-Kaufmannschaft mit unverbrüchlicher Treue an Kaiser und Reich festhalte, auf ein dreifaches Hoch auf den Kaiser auszubringen, in solches die Versammlung entschieden einstimmt.⁷⁹

After this open display of loyalty to the Emperor and the Reich, Amsinck went on to propose a resolution. This change of tone in the Chamber of Commerce had, of course, become necessary due to the imminent conclusion of negotiations between the Empire and Hamburg. It was now in the merchants' interest to portray themselves as loyal subjects to the Emperor. In the proposed resolution, which was based upon the Chamber's annual report for 1880, it would be emphasised that the Chamber of Commerce still accepted Hamburg's status as a free port city as the most desirable solution. In the case that it was impossible to maintain the current

⁷⁷ AdHH, 20.S.2a.3, Sonnabend, den 26. März 1881. Nachmittags 2 ½ Uhr im Versammlungszimmer der Handelskammer. Only a small group of members of the Chamber of Commerce had been privy to the negotiations between Hamburg's senate and the imperial government. On April 9 1881, this group discussed a petition, which had been signed by 50 members of the Chamber of Commerce, asking for a meeting of Eines Ehrbaren Kaufmanns in order to get an update on the state of affairs. See AdHH, 20.S.2a.3, Sonnabend, den 9. April 1881. Abend 7 ¼ Uhr im Versammlungszimmer der Handelskammer.

⁷⁸ AdHH, 20.S.2a.3, Versammlung Eines Ehrbaren Kaufmanns. Dienstag, den 12. April 1881. Nachmittags 2 ¼ Uhr im Börsensaale.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

circumstances, it was argued that a free port area was inevitable. In a vote on the matter, the majority of the attendant members approved of Amsinck's resolution.

In the end, official negotiations between Hamburg, the Federal Assembly and the imperial government were concluded on May 25 1881. The terms of Hamburg's accession to the Empire had been determined. Hamburg's delegation was able to announce that it had carried its point. The Reich Chancellor had accepted all the relevant points. After some efforts at persuasion, Hamburg's *Bürgerschaft* also approved of the treaty on June 15 1881.⁸⁰ Upon the treaty's promulgation, Hamburg's Chamber of Commerce discussed the phrasing of a statement on the issue. In this discussion it became apparent that general opinion in Hamburg was not necessarily in favour of the accession. The need for a statement from the Chamber of Commerce was argued to be necessary in order to 'der äußerst lebhaften Agitation, welche die Bevölkerung und die Bürgerschaftsmitglieder zu schroff ablehnender Haltung bestimmen wolle, entgegenzutreten [...]'.⁸¹ In a public statement, the Chamber of Commerce then declared that the treaty between Hamburg and the Reich did not endanger Hamburg's position in overseas trade. Indeed, the Chamber regarded 'die festere und wohlwollende Verbindung mit dem übrigen Deutschland für so werthvolle Güter, daß sie nur dringend wünschen kann [...]' to support the treaty.⁸²

Hence, it is not surprising that Hamburg's newspapers were not exactly enthusiastic about the decision to join the customs union. For example, the *Hamburgische Börsen-Halle* complained that the agreement between Hamburg and the German Empire was not satisfying for any of the parties involved. According to the newspaper, the costs for Hamburg's accession were too high to be justifiable in the face of the little benefits.⁸³ While the *Hamburgischer Correspondent* also saw no reason for changing Hamburg's status quo, it argued that if Hamburg was ever to join the customs union it had to be done under the favourable conditions offered by the agreement with the German Empire. Accepting these conditions was

⁸⁰ Frank M. Hinz, *Planung und Finanzierung*, pp. 96–97

⁸¹ AdHH, 20.S.2a.3, Dienstag d. 31. Mai 1881. Nachmittags 2 ¼ Uhr im Versammlungszimmer der Handelskammer.

⁸² AdHH, 20.S.2a.3, Erklärung der Handelskammer betreffend den Zollanschluss, Hamburg, d. 7. Juni 1881

⁸³ SuB Hamburg, *Hamburgische Börsen-Halle*, Abendzeitung für Handel, Schiffahrt und Politik, No. 129, Mittwoch, den 1. Juni 1881, Nachmittags-Ausgabe, 77. Jahrgang

regarded as the only way to restore peace with the German Empire.⁸⁴ The *Hamburger Nachrichten*, on the other hand, criticised the agreement sharply. For the liberal newspaper the agreement was a looming disaster, which ‘die schwerste Gefährdung unserer wirthschaftlichen Interessen über uns verhängt [...]’.⁸⁵

In a private letter to Arthur Lutteroth, head of the Chamber of Commerce, it becomes obvious that among the members of Hamburg’s *Handelskammer* there were similar views to those expressed by, for example, the *Hamburgischer Correspondent*. Due to the absence from Hamburg, the author, who was also a member of the Chamber, made sure to give his general view on whether or not to join the customs union. He highlighted:

Ich bin für einen Anschluss nur unter den bekannten Bedingungen & zwar nicht aus wirthschaftlichen sondern aus politischen Gründen; denn wenn der bisherige Zustand bestehen bleiben könnte wäre es besser & ich würde für Erhaltung desselben sein. Die Art und Weise der Behandlung der Sache, wie sie neuerdings von Berlin aus beliebt ist, könnte mich, wenn ich meine Meinung zu sagen hätte, veranlassen, mich für Abbruch aller Verhandlungen auszusprechen.⁸⁶

By late 1880 and early 1881, this view seems to have reflected the attitudes of wider circles in the Chamber of Commerce. We have seen that there were vociferous protests against Bismarck’s turn to protectionism and the projected incorporation of Altona and St Pauli. However, together with these protests came the realisation that, from a political point of view, it was sensible to give in to Bismarck. Compared to 1866/67, when the majority of members were in favour of maintaining Hamburg’s status, the support for this status had begun to crumble by the late 1870s. In view of Bismarck’s increasing pressure, the “Robinow programme” then turned into a feasible alternative. It suddenly became the most diplomatic and politically reasonable solution. In view of these facts, Bismarck’s

⁸⁴ SuB Hamburg, *Hamburgischer Correspondent*, No. 155, Sonntag, den 5. Juni 1881, Morgen-Ausgabe, 151. Jahrgang

⁸⁵ See SuB Hamburg, *Hamburger Nachrichten*, No. 125, Hamburg, Freitag, den 27. Mai 1881, Abend-Ausgabe and *Hamburger Nachrichten*, No. 127, Hamburg, Sonntag, den 29. Mai 1881, Morgen-Ausgabe

⁸⁶ AdHH, 20.S.2a.3, Geehrter Herr Lutteroth, Hamburg, 21. Mai 1881.

pressure on Hamburg has to be regarded as the main driving force in the process towards Hamburg's accession.

In addition to this, as Stein has pointed out, there was certainly also a shift in attitudes among Hamburg's mercantile community.⁸⁷ It was not so much a case of growing support for Hamburg's accession, as demonstrated by merely 32 advocates favouring an accession in October 1880. Rather, those merchants resolutely arguing in favour of maintaining Hamburg's free port status decreased in number, as did their overall influence in the community. As a result, the 'indifferent' faction grew. What is striking about Hamburg's accession is that, unlike in Bremen, ideological considerations became subordinate relatively quickly in Hamburg. Even though there were voices, such as Kirchenpauer's, invoking Hamburg's historic role as a liberal free port, these were progressively drowned out. Political and diplomatic considerations gained the upper hand and their advocates became more vocal.

d. The Speicherstadt

In the agreement between Hamburg and the Imperial government from May 25 1881, Hamburg was granted the right to build a free port area, which is now known as the *Speicherstadt*. The construction of this area was connected to a large relocation programme. After having decided in favour of an accession, Hamburg's political and economic elites were then urged to make a decision that directly impacted upon large groups of people. So, Hamburg's accession to the German customs union was no longer simply a matter that affected Bismarck on one side and Hamburg's governing body and mercantile community on the other. Instead, Hamburg's economic integration into the Empire suddenly turned into a subject that directly concerned thousands of people in Hamburg. Therefore, it will be necessary to investigate how this decision was pushed through. After all, it is one thing to cheer for the King on his visit to Hamburg but it is a whole different matter when the idea of a German nation forces those people, who supposedly cheered for the King 15 years or so earlier, to leave their homes behind. In this respect,

⁸⁷ Stein, 'Interessenkonflikte', pp. 75–78

Hamburg constitutes a special case, since the process of economic integration was inseparably connected to a social problem.

Recently, Hamburg's *Speicherstadt* has been made a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The huge complex of warehouses in the former free port area reflects Hamburg's significance as Germany's main seaport. However, prior to the construction of warehouses, the Wandrahm-Kehrwieder district was home to thousands of people. The Wandrahm Island had received its name from a historical site for the production of cloth between the fourteenth and the seventeenth centuries. As part of the production process, the cloth was hung up to dry on wooden frames. When these workers moved away, the area became home to other craftsmen, as well as wealthy merchants, such as emigrant Dutch merchants; this became the *Holländischer Brook*. While the area remained home to the well-off – the Godeffroy family, for example, owned a house on the *Alten Wandrahm* – the island was also a quarter for labourers and the poor. The situation of these inhabitants has been described as follows:

Ihre Wohnung gehören zu den ungesündesten Wohnstätten in der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg. Die meisten Straßen liegen so tief, daß die Häuser regelmäßig bei Hochwasser überflutet werden. Manchmal steht das Wasser so hoch, daß in den Erdgeschoßwohnungen Tische und Stühle bis an die Decke schwimmen. Der Schmutz, den das ablaufende Hochwasser hinterläßt, wird kaum noch entfernt, er kommt mit der nächsten Flut ja wieder. Die meisten Wohnungen zur ebenen Erde sind ständig feucht.⁸⁸

The distance from homestead to workplace for those male labourers employed in Hamburg's port was short; the women could work on the nearby *Hopfenmarkt* or for the wealthier population of the island.

However, Hamburg's agreement with the Imperial government did not include details about the precise location of the area. Instead, finding an acceptable location for the area was largely left to Hamburg. Therefore, a commission was appointed in Hamburg in order to make preparations for the accession to the customs union. With respect to locating the free port area, the commission initially put forward three different projects, differing principally in the extent to which

⁸⁸ Fischer, Griem, *Kaufmannsträume*, pp. 7–8

they covered the Kehrwieder and Wandrahm islands. While projects VII and VIII did not include all of Wandrahm, Project VI planned to turn the whole of the area into a free port area. The three projects were later modified, so that Project VIa effectively envisaged the relocation of around 18, 500 inhabitants. The available storage space was estimated at 64, 000 square metres at a land price of around 54.5 million Marks. Project VIIa and Project VIIIa would have led to the relocation of 16,500 and 13,000 inhabitants respectively. On the other side, the attainable storage space was notably smaller at 40,000 and 27,500 square metres. The estimated costs of expropriations for these two projects were disproportionate to its attainable storage space. Project VIIa was calculated to cost around 45.5 million Marks and Project VIIIa around 37 million Marks. According to a report by Hamburg's Chamber of Commerce, the city needed a free port area of around 59, 000 square metres in order to be able to further pursue its business.⁸⁹ In comparison, the total area covered by storehouses at the time in Hamburg and its suburb was estimated to be around 87, 877 square metres.

Naturally, the plan to erect Hamburg's new free port area led to wider discussions. Even in the *Senats-Commission für die Vorbereitung des Zollanschlusses*, the need for a free port area in Hamburg's centre was questioned. According to the commission's report, there was one anonymous member pointing to the expendability of the area on the northern bank of the Elbe. In the member's view the traditional need for proximity of offices and storehouses had already ended. Instead, Hamburg's merchants were now cutting deals by presenting samples. For this reason, the member proposed a considerably smaller free port area on the northern bank of the Elbe without demolishing an entire residential area. In opposition to this view, it was pointed out that 'es für die Erhaltung der Handelsstellung Hamburgs von großer Bedeutung sei, die Lagerung der auf das Freihafengebiet angewiesenen Waaren in unmittelbarer Nähe der Zollstadt zu ermöglichen.'⁹⁰ Changing the principle of storing trading goods in the immediate vicinity of the merchants' offices would lead to similarly unfavourable conditions as those obtained in London, where the location of the docks had led to trade being conducted on the basis of samples. Hamburg's other principal former competitors,

⁸⁹ AdHH 20.S.2a.9, Hamburgs Anschluß an das deutsche Zollgebiet. Verhandlungen zwischen Senat und Bürgerschaft. No. 2. Antrag des Senats an die Bürgerschaft vom 3. Juli 1882, pp. 21-22

⁹⁰ Ibid., pp. 15-16

namely Rotterdam and Liverpool, had managed to avoid London's constraints. Although storehouses on the respective opposite banks of the rivers had been necessary in both cases, they were easily accessible by bridge (in the case of Rotterdam) or by ferry (in Liverpool). Even so, merchants of these two cities still attempted to find storage space in the old parts of town, close to their offices. Consequently, in the light of processes in Hamburg's rivalling cities, the free port area in Hamburg's centre was regarded as vital. This view was also shared by the *Deputation für Handel und Schifffahrt* and the Chamber of Commerce.

Hence, locating the free port area in the centre of Hamburg was, by the majority, viewed as the most advantageous solution for the port city. Certainly, the commission itself realised that 'für die Durchführung des Projektes aber auch ganz außerordentliche Opfer zu bringen sein würden.'⁹¹ This sacrifice, of course, meant the relocation of at least 18, 500 people. While the commission's concerns actually led to the elaboration of the two alternative projects (VIIa and VIIIa), Project VIa was regarded as the most beneficial for Hamburg. Similarly, Hamburg's *Baudeputation* voted with six to five votes in favour of Project VIa. Meanwhile, there was disagreement amongst the members of the *Finanzdeputation*. Half of its representatives were in favour of Project VIa, while the rest expressed unease about the dimensions of the planned project. In their view, the necessity of a free port area could 'in anderer, minder bedenklicher und kostspieliger Weise, als durch die Niederlegung eines bewohnten Stadttheils genügt werden [...]'.⁹² With respect to the question of postponing a decision about including parts of the area until 1886, the financial deputation argued in favour of reaching a decision as early as possible 'mit Rücksicht auf die betreffenden Grundeigenthümer und Bewohner [...]'.⁹³ In other words, there were doubts at least amongst parts of Hamburg's ruling elite about the wisdom of sacrificing an entire residential district to the new port area.

In line with this, Johann Friedrich Stahmer's statement regarding the project is highly interesting.⁹⁴ This statement was given during a plenary meeting of the *Baudeputation*. Stahmer was a merchant in Hamburg and Senator from 1875 until his death in 1896. Having been a member of different deputations, head of the

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 28

⁹² Ibid., p. 5

⁹³ Ibid., p. 6

⁹⁴ Ibid., pp. 66–69

Chamber of Commerce in 1872 and also head of the second section of the *Baudeputation*, Stahmer was a fully-fledged member of Hamburg's ruling elite.⁹⁵ In March 1882, Stahmer took a firm stand in the discussion about the project of establishing the free port area on the Kehrwieder-Wandrahm Island. Stahmer openly argued that he was 'von Anfang an gegen das Wandrahmsinsel-Projekt gewesen und zwar wegen der damit verbundenen enormen Kosten und der Nothwendigkeit, eine große Anzahl Menschen zu dislociren.'⁹⁶ Stahmer also pointed to the fact that the project was making accessible an area for storage that was just as large as Hamburg's current total area (including St Pauli and St Georg). Instead, Stahmer proposed the erection of the free port area on the southern bank of the Elbe. In his eyes, the actual area needed for storage was considerably smaller than that envisaged by the project. In any case, in the joint commission appointed by both, the Senate and the *Bürgerschaft* – the *Senats- und Bürgerschafts-Commission über den Generalplan und Generalkostenanschlag für die Ausführung des Anschlusses Hamburgs and das Deutsche Zollgebiet* – there was no more room for Stahmer. As also pointed out by Hinz, opponents of the Kehrwieder-Wandrahm project, such as the Senators Mönckeberg, Kirchenpauer [i.e. Bismarck's old antagonist over the issue of Hamburg's accession], Schroeder and Stahmer, were henceforth simply ignored.⁹⁷

Ultimately, the joint commission between members of the Senate and the *Bürgerschaft* came to the same conclusion as the senatorial commission. It was emphasised that locating the free port area on the southern bank of Elbe was incompatible with the nature of Hamburg's trade. The Kehrwieder-Wandrahm Island was the only acceptable solution. However, the commission also entertained doubts about the necessity of turning the entire island into a free port area. With ten to three votes, the commission then resolved upon not recommending Project VIa to Hamburg's government.⁹⁸ The three members in favour argued that it would

⁹⁵ Since Stahmer was a member of the *Senats-Commission für die Vorbereitung des Zollanschlusses*, it is in fact likely that the aforementioned anonymous opponent of the project in the commission was Stahmer.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 66

⁹⁷ Hinz, *Planung und Finanzierung*, p. 112

⁹⁸ AdHH 20.S.2a.9, Mittheilung des Senats an die Bürgerschaft. Hamburg, den 8. November 1882. Bericht der Senats- und Bürgerschaftscommission über den Generalplan und Generalkostenanschlag für die Ausführung des Anschlusses Hamburgs an das Deutsche Zollgebiet

be difficult to extend the border of the free port area once it had been determined. For this reason, the area should be set out larger than was actually needed. In the end, the commission decided to introduce another alternative (Project X), which was passed with eleven to two votes.

Governmental commissions were not the only ones engaged with finding a solution for locating the free port area. Robert Miles Sloman Jr., manager of the family-owned shipping company, came up with yet another solution, which would have saved the Kehrwieder-Wandrahm Island. Sloman was not a member of the commission and had decided to publicise his plan. However, the commission did not accept this plan as a feasible alternative to the projects incorporating the Kehrwieder-Wandrahm Island. Even though the plan was not viewed as a valid option, Sloman's plan demonstrates that the discussions regarding the free port area also had wide repercussions outside the appointed commissions. Certainly, people like Sloman, who were attempting to find different solutions, did not necessarily consider the poor population of the Kehrwieder-Wandrahm quarter. The significance of preserving the historic warehouses of the Wandrahm certainly also played a role. Nonetheless, there was vocal opposition to this project.

In the end, the joint commission of members of the Senate and of the *Bürgerschaft* dropped its former plan. There were now voices which protested against the demolition of the 'Wandrahm, des alten Sitzes der Hamburgischen Kaufmannschaft mit zum Theil werthvollen Wohngebäuden und Speichern [...]'.⁹⁹ After all, according to the report, it was desirable, 'wenn man bei der verhältnismäßig besten Lösung der Aufgabe für das Gemeinwohl die entgegenstehenden Einzel-Interessen verhältnismäßig im Großen und Ganzen am wenigstens verletzt'.¹⁰⁰ As a result, another alternative was brought forward. This again highlights the chaos that prevailed at the time. In any case, the *Bürgerschaft* eventually rejected the commission's counterproposal, even though it would have led to a lower number of relocations compared to the majority of other alternatives.

This inevitably leads to the question of how the *Bürgerschaft* came to this decision. Let us look at the minutes of the sessions of the *Bürgerschaft*.

⁹⁹ AdHH 20.S.2a.9, Mittheilung des Senats an die Bürgerschaft. Hamburg, den 29. Januar 1883. Fernerer Antrag, betreffend den Generalplan und Generalkostenanschlag für die Ausführung des Anschlusses Hamburgs an das Deutsche Zollgebiet, p. 30

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 30

Surprisingly, the plan to realise Project VIa (incorporating the Wandrahm) was once more put forward by a group of 52 Members of Parliament. This group included Arthur Lutteroth, who had first been an opponent of Hamburg's accession, and Adolph Woermann. The main motivation of this group was that, as pointed out by Lutteroth, the profitability of Project VIa was expected to be higher than of any other alternative: 'das große Projekt muß sich besser rentiren, weil das, was wir schaffen, dem Handelsstande verhältnißmäßig billiger kommt, als das kleinere.'¹⁰¹ While it was with regret that Lutteroth asserted that 3,000 more people would have to be dislocated, this was definitely not a reason to forego the project. Instead, it was pointed out that 'das Wohl der Vaterstadt [...] auch dies nothwendige Uebel [erfordert]'.¹⁰² Indeed, this seems to have been the prevailing opinion on the matter in the *Bürgerschaft*. In the following debate in the *Bürgerschaft* the issue of dislocating an expected total of 18, 000 people was not discussed in detail again. Another member, Tilemann, only noted:

Viel ist von der Austreibung der Massen geklagt worden; es ist allerdings sehr beklagenswerth , daß so viele Familien ihre Wohnungen verlassen müssen, aber es ist auch bei Vielen nur die Macht der Gewohnheit, welche sie in den alten Räumen halt. Verhältnismäßig wenige sind an die jetzigen Lokale gebunden, ihre Geschäfte lassen sich auch in anderen Stadtgegenden betreiben.¹⁰³

Prior to the debates in the *Bürgerschaft*, the projected extent of relocations was met with incomprehension and criticism. The newspaper *Reform*, for example, highlighted that even though it was futile to try and change the minds of Hamburg's ruling elites; it was their duty to warn of the planned mass demolitions.¹⁰⁴ It was argued that the projected free port area would, amongst other things, lead to the 'kostspieligen Abbruch zahlreicher Straßen, [...] die für manche Familien geradezu ruinöse Austreibung von 15 000 Bewohnern [...]'.¹⁰⁵ The necessity to build the *Speicherstadt* was doubted by the newspaper. Instead, it

¹⁰¹ StaH 314-6 A11, Reform No. 33 v. 8/2. 83. 5 Sitzung der Bürgerschaft. Mittwoch, den 7. Februar, Abends 7 ¼ Uhr.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ StaH 314-6 A11, Reform No. 31 v. 6/2. 83. Lokal-Bericht.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

pointed to statements from 'Vertreter des Welthandels, die »königlichen Kaufleute«, such as Heinrich Amsinck, who had first defended Hamburg's status as a free port city. Once Hamburg's accession had been decided, these merchants argued against the establishment of a free port area. The reason for this was that these merchants, like Amsinck, Sloman, Laeisz, John Henry Schröder and others, believed that there was no need for such a large project. To the critics of the free port area, it all seemed an orgy of profiteering: 'Bauspekulanten, Hauswirthe, Bauhandwerker träumten von goldenen Bergen. Vom »Bedürfnis des Handels« ist schon seit langer Zeit gar nicht mehr die Rede, die Frage war immer nur: »Wie brechen wir recht viel ab?«'¹⁰⁶

Nonetheless, the *Bürgerschaft* voted in favour of accepting Project VIa with a majority of 76 against 53. The reaction to this decision was largely critical. For example, the *Fremdenblatt* wrote: 'Wir bedauern deshalb, daß VIa. gestern in der Versammlung Annahme fand und hoffen, daß bis zur dritten Lesung am nächsten Mittwoch eine bessere Einsicht in die Gemüther einkehrt.'¹⁰⁷ Similarly, the *Correspondent* pointed to the negative consequences of the decision, such as the financial burden for Hamburg.¹⁰⁸ More severe criticism was brought forward by the *Reform*. The newspaper informed its readers that the 'Land-Haifische [...] für VIa mit einer kolossalen Unverfrorenheit [plaidiren]'.¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, it was said that members of the joint commission had already been involved in speculative purchases of territory in those parts that were to be demolished. Later on, Julius Keller, who had been quoted in the newspaper, repudiated such a statement. Besides, Gerhard Busch, editor of the *Reform*, was also persecuted for having insulted Members of Parliament.¹¹⁰ On the other hand, the *Hamburger Nachrichten* pronounced that the project would turn into a blessing for Hamburg.¹¹¹ In the end, Hamburg's senate rejected the realisation of Project VIa. So, both the *Bürgerschaft* and the *Senat* had to settle for a compromise. Although it had previously been

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ StaH 314-6 A11, *Fremdenblatt* 34 v. 10/2. 83. Tagesbericht.

¹⁰⁸ StaH 314-6 A11, *Correspondent* No. 40 v. 10/2. 83 M. Die vorläufige Entscheidung in der Zollanschluß-Frage. Hamburg, den 9. Februar.

¹⁰⁹ StaH 314-6 A11, *Reform* No. 35 v. 10/2. 83

¹¹⁰ In the end, the author of the article, Georg Wilhelm Waltemath, was convicted to three months in jail for having insulted the joint commission of *Bürgerschaft* and *Senat*

¹¹¹ StaH 314-6 A11, *Hamb. Nachrichten* No. 36 v. 11/2. 83 M. Vaterstädtische Blätter. Die Anschluß-Frage

accepted in the commission with a majority of eight to four, Hamburg's *Bürgerschaft* altogether rejected the idea of saving the storehouses in the western part of the island.¹¹² In view of the large majority that had voted for this plan and in order to make progress in the matter, the Senate reluctantly agreed to this.¹¹³ In the end, the compromise was still 10 million Marks more expensive than the initial Project XIIc.

What is remarkable about Hamburg's path to its new *Speicherstadt* is not only the length of the deliberations but also the sheer disunity prevailing during this period. None of the involved parties were certain about the actual space needed for the free port area. Together with the fact that there was suspicion towards the Empire regarding allowing a later expansion of the area, this caused chaos in Hamburg. In this whole process, the *Bürgerschaft* certainly did not prove to be a representative body of the whole of Hamburg's population. On the contrary, it seems that it was primarily private interests that proved decisive in determining the attitude of those involved in the decision-making process. As demonstrated by the accusation of speculations, this caused a deep rift amongst the people of Hamburg. For those involved in the decision-making process it was easy to justify personally motivated projects with the Hamburg's fate as a seaport. As Sloman pointed out at the time, 'Wie die Angelegenheit aber jetzt liegt, so muß es ein wahrhaft patriotisches Herz doch mit dem tieffsten Schmerz erfüllen, daß Ansichten in der Bürgerschaft Platz greifen, die einen Privatmann sicher zu Grunde richten würde.'¹¹⁴ The impact that public opinion could have in this process was certainly limited, although this was attempted by the *Reform* newspaper. All in all, the fate of people affected by the relocations was subordinated to the greater good of Hamburg. The majority of Hamburg's ruling elites definitely did not pursue a reformist social agenda. Instead, personal and commercial interests prevailed.

¹¹² AdHH 20.S.2a.9, Mittheilung des Senats an die Bürgerschaft. Hamburg, den 21. Februar 1883. Mittheilungen der Bürgerschaft an den Senat betreffend den Generalplan und den Generalkosten-Anschlag für die Ausführung des Anschlusses Hamburgs an das Deutsche Zollgebiet.

¹¹³ AdHH 20.S.2a.9, Mittheilung des Senats an die Bürgerschaft. Hamburg, den 26. Februar 1883. Erwiderung, betreffend den Generalplan und den Generalkostenanschlag für die Ausführung des Anschlusses Hamburgs an das Deutsche Zollgebiet.

¹¹⁴ StaH 314-6 A11, Correspondent No. 47 v. 17/2. 83 M. Sprechsaal. Zur Zollanschlußfrage.

After the precise dimensions of Hamburg's free port area had finally been determined, a commission was appointed in 1883 in order to overlook the execution of the project. One of the first actions of the so-called *Senats- und Bürgerschafts-Commission zur Ausführung des Anschlusses Hamburgs an das Deutsche Zollgebiet* was to resolve upon a work schedule for the project in April 1883. This schedule envisaged the approbation of a total of around 440 properties together with 16,000 inhabitants. Hamburg's financial deputation was instructed with the task of carrying out the necessary property acquisition. On this subject, the commission reported in its annual report that the deputation's request 'ist Seitens der beteiligten Grundeigenthümer überall bereitwillig entsprochen worden, so daß Entschädigungsansprüche oder auch nur Differenzen wegen nicht rechtzeitig auf den 1. November 1883 erfolgter Kündigung nicht vorgekommen sind.'¹¹⁵ During subsequent planning stages, it was then determined that further properties had to be expropriated.

To the end of acquiring all the necessary properties, a law was publicised in May 1883. This law arranged for the appointment of a commission made up of four jurists and 24 non-jurists. Together, the members of this commission planned to assume the role of estimating the value of properties, in case no other agreement could be reached. Of the total of 440 properties and around 16,000 inhabitants, it was decided that 200 properties together with around 8,000 inhabitants had to be appropriated by the state immediately. In early 1884, it was determined that another 78 private properties had to be expropriated from their owners. Thus, Hamburg's government planned to carry out the appropriation of around 500 properties between 1883 and 1887, when the last properties would be acquired.

Even Hamburg's senate realised the challenge that this project brought with it. In March 1883, the Senate emphasised that it might be possible to come to terms with some of the property owners and to agree on adequate prices, 'doch mit der Wahrscheinlichkeit gerechnet werden müsse, daß bei der überwiegenden Mehrzahl das Expropriationsverfahren zur Anwendung kommen werde.'¹¹⁶ In any case, the commission regarded the first round of property acquisitions as successful overall. Of those properties that were needed by November 1 1883, a

¹¹⁵ AdHH 20.S.2a.12, Erster Bericht der Senats- und Bürgerschafts-Commission zur Ausführung des Anschlusses Hamburgs an das Deutsche Zollgebiet umfassend das Geschäftsjahr 1883/84, p. 4

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 7

total of 126 were bought by usual contract. The commission for estimating the value of properties had to get involved in 106 cases. In 88 cases, this commission was able to come to terms with the owners, in ten cases it had to make a final judgement, and the remaining eight cases were still unsolved. Six property owners also appealed against the expropriation.

In addition to this, the commission also discussed accommodating the former occupants. Since Hamburg's revenue authorities had informed the commission that there was a surplus supply of newly built accommodation in Hamburg, the matter was not further deliberated. Instead, the matter was left to the private initiative of the displaced people. Neither did the commission compile information on where these people moved. All that could be assumed on the basis of population censuses was that the greater part of the 8,000 people remained in the city centre. Others moved to outlying districts, such as Hammerbrook, Billwerder or St Pauli, or even to suburbs, such as Eilbeck, Borgfelde or Eimsbüttel. Hamburg's senate and parliament deployed a commission in November 1883 that was entrusted with examining petitions for financial support sent in by former occupants. For this, the commission was granted 100,000 Marks which would be used according to the commission's best judgement. In comparison, for the demolition of all houses vacated by November 1, a total of 156, 000 Marks was allowed for by Hamburg's government.¹¹⁷

The process of acquiring properties continued throughout the financial year of 1884/85. The commission was again able to conclude that '[derselbe] hat sich im Ganzen in den schon im ersten Jahre gebahnten Wegen bewegt und giebt aus diesem Grunde zu besonderen Bemerkungen erfreulicher Weise keinen Anlaß.'¹¹⁸ Indeed, the estimation commission dealt with a total of 131 cases. Only in two of these did the property owner appeal against the decision made by the commission. Overall, around 5,600 people were again forced to leave the area. Within two years, from December 1882 to December 1884, the population of the area that would become the *Speicherstadt* had decreased from around 16,500 people to 3,000. Again, the report mentioned that most of the displaced people remained in

¹¹⁷ In the end, these costs could be decreased by selling the debris and other measures. The remaining amount was estimated at 6,000 Marks.

¹¹⁸ AdHH 20.S.2a.12, Zweiter Bericht der Senats- und Bürgerschafts-Commission zur Ausführung des Anschlusses Hamburgs an das Deutsche Zollgebiet umfassend das Geschäftsjahr 1884/85, p. 4

the city centre, 'indem er die dort leer stehenden Wohnungen bezog oder andere Bewohner von dort verdrängte.'¹¹⁹ However, this only seems to have been the case for those that could afford to live in this area. Those that needed to find cheaper accommodation moved to outlying districts. Still, the problems arising with this huge relocation project were larger than Hamburg's government first expected. By September 1884, the commission in charge of supporting those in need, which had been appointed in November 1883, had already run out of money. As a result, it received another 50, 000 Marks.

As in previous years, the remaining territory acquisitions and relocations continued without any critical incidents. Between December 1884 and December 1886, the population of the area further decreased from 3,029 to 1,009 inhabitants. By the time of Hamburg's accession to the customs union in October 1888, the majority of construction works had been completed. Overall, according to the commission's report, the area needed for Hamburg's new free port area had been home to over 21,000 people. Of these, only 1,112 still lived there in December 1888. In total, the project had cost a minimum of 112,711,000 Marks. It was expected that further additional costs would mean that the estimated costs were exceeded. More than 40% of these estimated costs were made up of costs for property purchases. For 523 properties in the free port area, the city had to pay 47.7 million Marks plus some minor additional costs. To this, the commission added another 3.3 million Marks for other properties in the southern part of the free port area.¹²⁰

It is not surprising that the commission assessed the execution of the project in a bureaucratically sober manner. Still, it is also necessary to grasp how the rest of the population looked at the massive changes that took place in Hamburg's cityscape. When it came to the first expropriations and compulsory changes of residence in late 1883, the *Fremdenblatt* wrote: 'Greise Männer und Frauen packten ihre Habe nicht ohne Wehmuth auf Karren und Wagen und vergossen Thränen beim Scheiden aus ihrem ihnen seit Jahren liebgewordenen

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 5

¹²⁰ AdHH 20.S.2a.12, Fünfter Bericht der Senats- und Bürgerschafts-Commission zur Ausführung des Anschlusses Hamburgs an das Deutsche Zollgebiet umfassend das Geschäftsjahr 1887/88 sowie den Zeitraum vom 1. April bis Ende December 1888, pp. 34–36

Heim; Kinder schrien umher, als sie die Eltern weinen sahen [...].'¹²¹ While it seems that it was not a major problem for these people to find new residences, many people seemed to struggle to meet the higher rents. Therefore, by the end of October, prior to the due date for the change of residence, the police had already received over 100 requests.¹²² Overall, the newspapers described a melancholic atmosphere in Hamburg. There were, for example, calls for collections of photographs in order to keep this historic part of Hamburg in memory. At the same time, the newspapers gave comfort with the words of Schiller: 'Das Alte stürzt, es ändert sich die Zeit, Und neues Leben blüht aus den Ruinen.'¹²³

By 1887, according to non-local newspapers, the mood in Hamburg had shifted towards an acceptance of Hamburg's accession. The *Kölnische Zeitung* reported that '[a]llgemein versicherte man mir, daß irgendwelche Gegnerschaft gegen die Umwandlung wenigstens in der Oeffentlichkeit kaum mehr hervortrete.'¹²⁴ Furthermore, it was noted that hardly anyone would regret the remodelling of the district, 'da sie mit ihren engen Gassen und Höfen zu den am wenigsten anheimelnden Teilen des alten [...] Hamburg gehörten.'¹²⁵ The arch-conservative pro-Prussian *Kreuz-Zeitung* announced in a similar vein that public opinion had lately come to agree with the project, 'die trüben Prophezeihungen der Fortschrittspartei sind verstummt.'¹²⁶ However, the *Reform* argued against such generalisations. Prior to the aforementioned statements, the *Reform* had already emphasised:

Hier in Hamburg hat man sich in das Schicksal des Zollanschlusses mit jener Resignation gefunden, die starken Naturen eigen ist, wenn sie das Unvermeidliche nicht mehr abwenden können, nirgends aber, [...] wird der Zollanschluß als ein Segen gefunden.¹²⁷

Later on, the *Reform* again gave its opinion on views from non-local newspapers. For example, a paper from Lübeck had reported from Hamburg: 'Es ist ein Segen,

¹²¹ StaH 314-6 A11, Fremdenblatt No. 254 v. 31/10. 83

¹²² StaH 314-6 A11, Reform 257 v. 30/10. 83

¹²³ StaH 314-6 A11, Hamb. Nachr. No. 305 v. 25/12. 83 M.

¹²⁴ StaH 314-6 A12, Kölnische Zeitung No. 154 v. 5. Juni 87. II. Blatt

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ StaH 314-6 A12, Kreuz-Zeitung No. 130 A v. 8. Juni 87. II. Ausgabe

¹²⁷ StaH 314-6 A12, Reform No. 90 v. 15. April 1887

daß wir das alte Gerümpel los geworden sind.’¹²⁸ To this, the *Reform* responded that as part of the remodelling many still usable houses had to be demolished, which created a financial burden for the people of Hamburg. For this reason, it could not understand why the demolitions should have been a blessing for the city. In addition, the handling of the request for support was criticised as hundreds of requests were apparently turned down by the commission responsible. Thus, it was argued, the damage to the population was in fact larger than Hamburg’s government and other newspapers liked to admit.

In addition to this, the *Börsenhalle* pointed out that the city had not given up its status as a free port city in order to develop its industrial production but rather ‘weil man die Freihafenstellung der gesamten Stadt Hamburg aufgeben mußte.’¹²⁹ Thus, there can be doubt that even in 1887, just a year before Hamburg’s planned accession, the establishment of the *Speicherstadt* was still a controversial topic in Hamburg. Still, it is true that most of the criticism at this point revolved around the sheer size of the re-development. Certainly, the *Reform* remained an outpost of liberalism, criticising the accession from an ideological standpoint. The majority of the remaining newspapers, however, seem to have come to terms with the demolition of the historic quarter, although some were still concerned about the project’s general success. For example, the *Hamburger Nachrichten* was hoping that, while ‘man auch den Abbruch so vieler schöner Häuser, welche gleichsam die Handelsgröße des alten Hamburg repräsentiren, bedauern muß [...]’, the city would bloom even fuller.¹³⁰

Eventually, Hamburg’s new *Speicherstadt* proved to be a success. While the years of transition had been difficult for the city, the accession led to an economic upturn. In November 1886, the *Correspondent* had reported that although the Senate had estimated a steady increase of shipping traffic of around 300,000 tons, Hamburg’s traffic had decreased by around 5–7% since 1884. The reason for this was perceived to be rooted in the lack of wharves and warehouses. The building of the *Speicherstadt* was thus seen as a beneficial side-effect of accession, while the general consequences of Hamburg’s accession still seemed doubtful: ‘Lassen Sie uns daher hoffen, daß der gegenwärtig als unumstößlich Thatsache zu

¹²⁸ StaH 314-6 A12, Hbg. Reform No. 134 v. 7. Juni 87

¹²⁹ StaH 314-6 A12, Hbg. Börsenhalle No 158 v. 7. Juli 87

¹³⁰ StaH 314-6 A12, Hbg. Nachrichten No 267 v. 13 November 87 (Sonntags-Beilage)

betrachtende Anschluß unserer Vaterstadt and das deutsche Zollgebiet derselben in aller Zukunft zum Vortheil und Segen gereichen wird!’¹³¹ At the beginning of the year 1891, the same newspaper was then able to conclude that the accession had been an absolute success and pointed to the ‘täglich steigende[n] Verkehr des Hamburger Hafens [...]’.¹³² It also added that Hamburg mirrored ‘alles das in gedrängterem Raume wieder, was für die wirthschaftliche Entwicklung des großen deutschen Vaterlandes von tiefgreifendem Interesse und maßgebender Bedeutung ist.’¹³³ In addition to this, the newspaper rendered homage to the ‘gewaltigen Schaffenskraft, die der erste Kanzler des neuen Deutschen Reiches im Dienste des Vaterlandes bethätigt hat [...]’ and a song of praise for the German Empire:

So schreitet Hamburg, dessen Volkszahl in steigender Proportion anzuwachsen begonnen hat, auf allen Gebieten des staatlichen und communalen Lebens in der erfreulichsten Weise vorwärts und macht seiner Stellung als zweiter Stadt des deutschen Reiches alle Ehre. Das aber ist für jeden echten Hamburger ein ebenso beglückendes Gefphl, als er sich von gerechtem Stolze gehoben fühlt, ein Bürger des mächtigen Deutschen Reiches zu sein, über dessen Wohlfahrt die Hand Gottes im vergangenen Jahre so gnädig gewaltet hat.¹³⁴

On the whole, these statements leave absolutely no doubt about the profound impact of Hamburg’s accession. After all, the economic success of the accession left no room for any criticism of the measures taken by Bismarck. Instead, the former Reich Chancellor proved to have been right. In addition to this, as can be gathered from the quote above, economic unification – and primarily its success – also led to an increased sense of togetherness with the rest of the German Empire and an upsurge of pan-German patriotism.

¹³¹ StaH 314-6 A12, Hamb. Correspondent No. 329 v. 27. Novemb. 86. Mg.

¹³² StaH 314-6 A13, Hamb. Correspondent vom 1. Januar 1891

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

e. Hamburg and the Colonies

The beginning of the Empire's colonial venture and Hamburg's accession took place at roughly the same time. Hence, it is essential to examine whether Hamburg's accession influenced the mercantile community's stance on colonialism. Up to the point of agreeing to the accession, Hamburg unquestionably regarded itself as an advocate of free trade. Besides, it was also viewed from outside as a stronghold of liberal economic policies in Germany. For example, in October 1847, Richard Cobden, one of the central promoters of Manchester Liberalism, visited Hamburg as part of a tour through Europe.¹³⁵ Cobden's views on free trade and liberalism were acknowledged by Hamburg's ruling elites – seven hundred people were present for the banquet. By the time of the German Empire, this predisposition towards and belief in free trade and liberalism had not vanished, as is demonstrated by the protests against protectionism. However, liberalism in general, and Cobden's interpretation in particular, were in conflict with the idea of colonial ventures.¹³⁶ What needs to be examined therefore are the responses to the *Samoa-Vorlage* and, secondly, to Bismarck's enquiry about colonial demands in 1883.

The *Samoa-Vorlage*, it is worth recalling, envisaged bailing out a *Hamburg* trading house involved in the South Seas trade. Its owners, the Godeffroys, had run into financial difficulties. In the end, shares of the *Deutsche Handels- und Plantagengesellschaft der Südsee-Inseln zu Hamburg* had to be hypothecated to a London bank company. In order to keep the company in German hands, the banker Adolph von Hanseemann and others formed a consortium. This was intended to continue the trading house under the condition that the imperial government offered a payment guarantee. This payment guarantee was put before the imperial legislators in the form of a bill. While the Federal Assembly agreed to the bill, the Reichstag rejected it.

In Hamburg, the bill was not received favourably – irrespective of the fact that a Hamburg trading house was at stake. In the city's press, the bill was largely

¹³⁵ John Breuilly, 'Ein Stück Englands? A contrast between the free-trade movements in Hamburg and Manchester', in: Andrew Marrison (ed.), *Free Trade and its Reception 1815–1960: Freedom and Trade, Volume I* (London, 1998), pp. 105–126

¹³⁶ See for example, Hendrik L. Wesseling, *The European Colonial Empires, 1815–1919* (Abingdon, 2013), p. 76

condemned. The two most significant arguments were, firstly, the fact that the government should not get involved with the bankruptcy of a private firm. Secondly, there were concerns about further consequences this could have for the introduction of a colonial programme.¹³⁷ Hamburg's government also had reservations about the feasibility of the bill. For example, in the *Deputation für Handel und Schiffahrt*, headed by Kirchenpauer, it was argued that, on the basis of Hamburg's established principle of open competition, any state support would have to be rejected.¹³⁸ Similarly to Bremen, Hamburg's senate was against the project but informed Minister Resident Krüger that a rejection of the bill could have far-reaching repercussions on the city's relationship to Bismarck. Therefore, Krüger was first instructed to abstain from voting. Eventually, Hamburg's senate decided not to stand in the way of Bismarck's will. Krüger, in particular, seems to have played a major role in persuading Hamburg's Senate not to vote against the bill – the same process as in Bremen. The Senate argued that it 'mit Rücksicht auf die Stellung, welche die Reichsregierung der Samoa-Angelegenheit gegenüber nun einmal eingenommen habe, sich entschlossen, die in Hamburg vielfach bestehenden auch dem Bevollmächtigten bekannten Bedenken fallen zu lassen [...]'.¹³⁹ Therefore, as in the case of Hamburg's forced accession, the city's supposedly liberal convictions had to make room for straightforward political realism. The early 1880s were thus absolutely vital for Hamburg's integration into the German Empire. There was now a realisation in Hamburg that the city's actual ability to influence the German Empire's politics was extremely limited.

However, it was not only Hamburg's senate that was not convinced of state-run colonial ventures. With regard to the Chamber of Commerce, Washausen has pointed to the fact that '[von] einer Begeisterung für Kolonien kann aber auch in den Jahren nach 1874 keineswegs die Rede sein.'¹⁴⁰ In Hamburg, the agitation for colonialism was viewed with scepticism and evaluated from a practical point of view. It was not until 1881, prior to the Reichstag election, that the colonial question became increasingly pressing. For this reason, the matter was discussed in the Chamber of Commerce in October 1881 – at this point Hamburg's fate regarding an accession had been sealed. Now, Adolph Woermann, who later

¹³⁷ Washausen, *Kolonialpolitik*, p. 29

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 32

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 33

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 139

became a central figure in colonialism, came to the fore. Having been a member of the Chamber for merely two years, Woermann openly advocated the establishment of colonies as long as these were not projected to function as colonies for emigrants. In this regard, another member of the Chamber, Hermann Robinow, supported Woermann.

Still, it was felt that answering the colonial question was not part of the Chamber's responsibilities. Instead, it would have to concentrate on the economic utilisation of future colonies. Additionally, it was emphasised in the meeting that the Chamber had never assumed the role of promoting colonialism. At the time, there were still resolute opponents of colonial ventures. For example, Lippert, who was doing business in Southern Africa, argued that the only way to make profit out of colonies was to introduce protective duties in order to deter other nations from trading with those colonies. As rightly pointed out by Washausen, this ' – so ware der Gedankengang Lipperts fortzuführen – würde eine Einschränkung der Handelsfreiheit, eine Rückkehr zu merkantilistischen Wirtschaftsmethoden bedeuten, die den hanseatischen Handel an zahlreichen Punkten der Welt empfindlich stören würden.'¹⁴¹ Subsequently, there was a debate about whether or not to speak out against colonialism in general. While the Chamber's president, Lutteroth, favoured the rejection of colonialism, there was also a large group of members that argued for a more reserved approach. Colonialism would not be excluded altogether. So, at this point, opinions over the issue of colonialism were certainly already divided amongst the members of the Chamber of Commerce. There was definitely no longer a unanimous rejection of colonialism, as one might expect with regard to Hamburg's position as a stronghold of economic liberalism. Nonetheless, in 1881, Hamburg's senate, as demonstrated in the *Samoa-Vorlage*, together with the Chamber of Commerce were still in disagreement about the idea of state-led colonialism.

In April 1883, Hamburg's Burgomaster, Carl Friedrich Petersen, received the same enquiry from Otto von Wentzel as Bremen. Hamburg was also asked to inform the Prussian envoy about interests Hamburg's merchants had on the West African coast. To this end, Adolph Woermann, who had taken over his father's shipping company *C. Woermann*, produced a memorandum. Interestingly, Adolph

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p. 140

Woermann had previously been an outspoken opponent of Hamburg's accession to the customs union and of Bismarck's measures to achieve this. For example, in June 1880, Woermann had exclaimed in a confidential meeting of the Chamber of Commerce that the pressure put on Hamburg would not make him change his mind in the matter. Furthermore, Woermann pointed out that negotiations would lead to nothing, as the negotiating partner could not be trusted to keep his promise: 'Die Frage ist eine Personenfrage, mit einer Personaländerung würde auch eine Systemänderung verbunden sein. Dann würden die Freihandelsprinzipien wieder obenauf kommen, und dann werde auch diese Frage einschlafen.'¹⁴² While Woermann did not want to put any trust in Bismarck regarding Hamburg's accession, he was suddenly able to put trust in him when it came to the foundation of German colonies.

Hamburg's Chamber of Commerce adopted Woermann's memorandum after a few changes had been made. It was then submitted to the *Deputation für Handel und Schiffahrt* as a response to the Prussian enquiry from April 16 1883.¹⁴³ With regard to the Chamber's dedication to economic liberalism prior to Hamburg's accession, in particular, it is worth looking at the position taken by the Chamber. Naturally, the report points to the diverse interests that Germany had in the trade with West Africa. For this purpose, the report compared the volume of trade between Hamburg and West Africa and England and West Africa. This was done by looking at the register tons of incoming and outgoing vessels.¹⁴⁴ While Hamburg's trade with West Africa was certainly not as high as Britain's, it was still growing constantly. Between 1873 and 1881, the volume of incoming vessels from West Africa had increased from 5,888 to 24,470 register tons. Similarly, for outgoing vessels the numbers had risen from 8,668 to 36,028 register tons during the same time frame. This compared to the following numbers for England's trade with West Africa in 1881 – arriving vessels: 92,116 register tons; departing vessels: 210,389 register tons. Thus, there was definitely still a gap between Hamburg's trade with West Africa and England's trade with West Africa. Still, Hamburg's mercantile community had managed to significantly increase trade

¹⁴² Stein, 'Interessenkonflikte', p. 71

¹⁴³ AdHH 84.A.1.3, An die Deputation für Handel und Schiffahrt, Hamburg, den 6. Juli 1883. Die Handelskammer

¹⁴⁴ See Anlage I. of AdHH 84.A.1.3, An die Deputation für Handel und Schiffahrt, Hamburg, den 6. Juli 1883. Die Handelskammer

with West Africa within not even a decade. Similarly, the value of imports was also becoming more significant. While in 1871 the total value of imports amounted to 4, 620, 300 Marks (a total of 84, 338 quintals), by 1882 this number had risen to 8, 588, 000 Marks (and a total of 223, 659 quintals). This underlines the growing importance of trade with West Africa for Hamburg. It goes without saying that *C. Woermann* of course also possessed factories on the African West Coast.

Overall, the report looked favourably upon German treatment in French and English colonies. Yet, while the involved trading firms had generally always been content with French and English colonial administration, there were some recent incidents that were said to trouble the involved parties. One of these incidents was the fact that the French commandant of Gabon imposed the prohibition of the arms trade, which badly affected colonial trade overall. This led to the following conclusion: 'Es dürfte aber nicht mehr der Stellung des deutschen Reiches entsprechen, dass seine Angehörigen im Auslande auf den guten Willen und die Geneigtheit fremder Mächte angewiesen sind [...]'.¹⁴⁵ Consequently, it was argued that it was necessary for the German Empire to provide protection for the German interests in the area.

For this reason, one of the overall eight demands expressed in the report was the acquisition of Fernando Po, an island off the West African coast, from the Spanish. Here, a naval base would be built. Furthermore, Hamburg's trading firms recommended the acquisition of a coastal strip opposite Fernando Po from the Cameroons to Corisco Bay, which is part of present-day Gabon. The purpose of this acquisition was the establishment of a trading colony, rather than using this land for cultivation or as a settlement for German emigrants. This was a point that was made particularly clear in the Chamber's report to the deputation. The involved trading firms also urged that 'wenn Deutschland nicht für immer auf den Besitz daselbst verzichten wolle, jetzt gewissenmassen der letzte Augenblick sei, um solche zu erwerben'.¹⁴⁶ The Chamber of Commerce affiliated itself to this view. In addition to this, the Chamber also emphasised that it attached great importance to the recommendations of involved trading firms due to the fact that 'Manche derselben bis vor Kurzem die Erwerbung deutschen Kolonialbesitzes für überflüssig und bedenklich gehalten haben, und erst durch die erwähnten

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 5

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 8

neuerlichen Vorgänge und Rückwirkungen [...] zu anderer Ansicht gelangt sind.¹⁴⁷ These recent processes referred, for example, to the expansion of France's sphere of influence and the new Portuguese differential duty.¹⁴⁸ It was also emphasised that there were no private interests connected to the foundation of colonies, since the proposed areas would not lead to direct advantages for Hamburg's trading firms. Instead, German interests in general were said to be at stake in this matter.

In view of the Chamber of Commerce's promotion of German colonialism, one has to wonder how this fitted in with its previous dedication to economic liberalism. During Bismarck's turn to protectionism in the late 1870s, Hamburg had sent warnings that 'Deutschland wird seinem Berufe als Culturstaat abwendig und Hamburg büsst seine Mission als Stätte des Welthandels ein [...].'¹⁴⁹ Now, the new German colony would be financed by introducing import tariffs. In Lagos, it was pointed out, these tariffs yielded significant surpluses for the British colonial administration. Certainly, it must be emphasised that Hamburg's merchants were not against financial duties, not even in the 1870s. However, the fact that the Chamber of Commerce was now actively promoting the introduction of customs duties indicates a remarkable change in fundamental values amongst Hamburg's merchants.

This point was proven during the meeting that took place in the Chamber of Commerce in order to discuss Woermann's initial memorandum.¹⁵⁰ During the debate on adopting Woermann's call for a colonial venture of the German Empire, two of the attendees, Witt and Gütschow, rejected the idea of the Chamber's affiliation to Woermann. One of them, Witt, later gave in to Woermann, Hertz, Mestern, Ahlers and Robinow, who 'entschieden für die Festsetzung Deutschlands

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 9

¹⁴⁸ Indeed, in the early 1880s, French expansionism in West Africa, for example, under Pierre de Brazza, was not only feared by Woermann but also by British colonialists. The main reason for this was that the French, just like the Portuguese, introduced discriminatory tariffs in their colonial territories. Woermann argued that the French acted eagerly and ruthlessly in the interest of their own trade in West Africa. With respect to the Portuguese, Woermann's memorandum also pointed to the fact that 'unter portugiesischer Verwaltung jeder Handel, der fremde wie der eigene, verkümmert.' AdHH 84.A.1.3, An die Deputation für Handel und Schifffahrt, Hamburg, den 6. Juli 1883. Die Handelskammer, p. 7; see also Wehler, *Bismarck*, pp. 300–302

¹⁴⁹ AdHH, 20.B.1.3.1, Petition der unterzeichneten Hamburgischen Kaufleute

¹⁵⁰ AdHH 84.A.1.3, Montag, den 18. Juni 1883, Nachmittags 2 ½ Uhr. Anwesend die Herren Refardt, Woermann, Hertz, Robinow, Witt, Ahlers, Mestern, Dr. Jürgens, Dr. Gütschow

auf dem Lande eintraten.’¹⁵¹ This group brought forward the argument that the matter had to be viewed from a practical and not a theoretical perspective. Due to the fact that all interested parties were in favour of German involvement in West Africa, the practical solution was considered to be Woermann’s project. In this context, the importance of pointing to the need of establishing a trading colony was indicated. The Chamber’s attitude towards Woermann’s project was justified with the circumstance that ‘zu diesen [Handelskolonien] habe die Kammer überhaupt noch keine Stellung eingenommen [...]’.¹⁵² Indeed, in the matter regarding Samoa, of which the Chamber had disapproved, ‘ganz besondere Verhältnisse’ were purported to have been prevailing.

Noticeably, those attendees disagreeing with Woermann’s project did not put forward ideological concerns. Instead, three main reasons were cited. Firstly, the fact that the climatic conditions in the relevant districts was unhealthy. While those people currently living in the area did so of their own free will, it was a different matter when people, such as government officials, would have to be sent to the area. Secondly, opponents of the project pointed to the high costs associated with acquiring overseas territory. In addition to administration costs, there would also be costs for the enhancement of Germany’s naval forces in order to be able to defend the new territories. Thirdly, the disapproving members of the meeting warned about the long-term effect that this colonial venture could have for the German Empire. It was highlighted that up to that point it had been Germany’s role to defend and strengthen its position on the European continent. If the Empire now wanted to acquire overseas territories, its naval forces would need a completely different type of training and so on. Last but not least: ‘Für die Verwickelungen, zu denen eine solche Politik führen könne, böte gerade die neueste Zeit (Afghanistan, Zulu, Boers, Tums, Tonking) zahlreiche Beispiele.’¹⁵³ Still, the majority of attendees overruled these objections. One counterargument, for example, underlined the fact that it was preferable to send German government officials overseas. Like this, ‘ein neuer Geist [würde] in die jetzige Verwaltung gebracht werden.’ The government would be induced to look at the trading

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

business in a different light, 'als es jetzt leider der Fall sei [...].'¹⁵⁴ There was obviously a feeling amongst some attendees that Hamburg's trade with Africa did not receive enough support from Berlin.

The report was sent to the senatorial deputation in July 1883. In November 1883, the Chamber of Commerce then got in contact with the *Deputation für Handel und Schiffahrt* once again.¹⁵⁵ In this appeal, the Chamber argued that the implementation of the whole project would unquestionably take some time. However, it urged the Senate to push for sending a German consul to the African West Coast. The reason for this was that the Chamber was increasingly scared of the expansion of the French sphere of influence in the area. Thus, here an internal German dynamic was partly driven by the actions of the French, a recurring feature of nineteenth-century German history, but one easily overlooked by a narrow focus on Prussian expansionism. Prior to this, and much to the regret of the Chamber, the deputation had raised concerns over the Chamber's project for a colonial venture. Still, the imperial government eventually agreed to the idea of establishing a consulate in West Africa, which would be instructed with concluding contracts 'mit anderen unabhängigen Negerstaaten [...].'¹⁵⁶ In addition to this, the stationing of naval vessels in the area was also envisaged. As it turned out later, these were the first steps towards the establishment of the German colonial empire.

In conclusion, what is absolutely striking about the late 1870s and the early 1880s in Hamburg is the fact that there was a noticeable change from agitation against protectionism and talk of Bismarck's violation of Hamburg to compliance with Bismarck. This change took place in a matter of merely five years or so. Breuilly, for example, has pointed to the limits of Hamburg's liberalism with respect to the notion of freedom. He has emphasised that the term "economic liberalism" was used more frequently following the 1860s. The reasons for this are 'on the one hand, a conflating of free-trade positions with more general policies of economic liberalisation; on the other hand, a distinction between economic and

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ AdHH 84.A.1.3, An die Deputation für Handel und Schiffahrt. Die Handelskammer, Hamburg den 5. November 1883

¹⁵⁶ AdHH 84.A.1.3, Königlich Preußische Gesandtschaft in Mecklenburg und den Hansestädten. Hamburg, den 26. Decbr. 1883

political liberalism.¹⁵⁷ Furthermore, in the eyes of Hamburg's merchants, free trade was an 'obvious necessity to preserve the autonomy and civilised forms of life they had managed to construct and defend in their city-state.'¹⁵⁸ Hence, in Hamburg, only one particularly ingredient of liberalism was prevalent, namely the one which best suited the economic interests of the city. While Breuilly argues that the end of this economic liberalism in Germany faltered with the beginning of the *Gründerkrise*, this is not true for Hamburg. Instead, as long as the city-state was able to maintain some of its autonomy as a free port city, economic liberalism remained crucial to the city. Once Bismarck set out determinedly to abolish Hamburg's special status in 1880, the adherence to economic liberalism also became void. Outside the restrictions of an economic liberal mindset, colonial ventures then turned out to be profitable alternatives. Therefore, in Hamburg, there was a direct link between coming to terms with Bismarck's protectionism and the promotion of colonialism.

Hence, it was the establishment of colonial empires in Africa in the 1880s, not least by the French, that signalled to the merchants of Hamburg that free trade would not prevail. A whole continent was effectively lost to the ideal of free trade. Under these circumstances, Hamburg did not regard itself capable of securing its trading links with Africa. At this point, Hamburg needed support from the German nation-states. There is some irony in the fact that the French, which had ended Hamburg's independence at the beginning of the nineteenth century, now drove Hamburg into the arms of Bismarck.

¹⁵⁷ Breuilly, 'Ein Stück Englands?', p. 122

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 122

V. Conclusion

This study has investigated the economic and cultural integration of Emden, Bremen and Hamburg into the German Empire. All these three seaports shared a history of trade and shipping dating back several centuries. While Bremen and Hamburg had maintained their position as major seaports for centuries, Emden had seen a period of stagnation after its golden age during the sixteenth century. Furthermore, the Hanseatic Cities of Hamburg and Bremen were at first not even part of the Empire's customs union. At the same time, this thesis has shown that there were also significant differences in the integration of Hamburg and Bremen into the German Empire. Although both were traditional overseas ports and, hence, exposed to similar degrees of cosmopolitan thought, their cultural and economic integration proceeded in different ways.

According to Article 34 of the Imperial Constitution, it was in the hands of Bremen and Hamburg to decide when to join the Empire's customs union. However, it was the Imperial government that actually made a move towards integration by approaching the two cities in 1879. Both Hanseatic cities were thus confronted with this issue at the same time. Bismarck's approach was explained by wanting to make the two cities act in the interest of the national economy. However, as demonstrated in this study, particularistic tendencies were still prevalent in Hamburg and Bremen during the 1880s. The Reich Chancellor certainly realised that patriotic allegiance to Germany co-existed, at times a little uneasily, with a strong local patriotism in Hamburg and Bremen.¹ Identification with their respective cities and the tradition of being independent city-states was still an important factor in both Hanseatic cities, as can be gathered from the discussions around erecting monuments commemorating the Franco-Prussian War. It is unsurprising therefore that reactions to this enquiry were similar in the two cities. Bremen and Hamburg were in agreement about the need to maintain their free port status, which left the cities outside the Empire's protectionist tariffs. However, in Hamburg, disagreement with the *Zollanschluss* on the grounds of the

¹ Pflanze, *Bismarck: Der Reichskanzler*, p. 254

liberal ideology of its ruling elite was overcome earlier than in Bremen. In this regard, the substitution of Gustav Kirchenpauer with Johannes Versmann was definitely crucial. Versmann was willing to give in to Bismarck's will, which the Reich Chancellor was prepared to enforce by almost any means.

Hamburg's decision to give in to the Prussian supremacy in the German Empire was not simply a renunciation of its free port status according to Article 34. The decision also had wider implications. Once the hurdle of joining the protectionist customs union was cleared, liberal mindsets became subordinated to private interests, such as on the Western coast of Africa. It seems that the decision to become part of the customs union eroded traditional liberal opposition to colonialism. While Hamburg was still a notable outpost of resistance at the time of the *Samoa-Vorlage* (much as Bremen was), aversion to state-led colonial ventures began to decrease with the agreement to join the customs union. Hence, in Hamburg, the Reich Chancellor was indeed able to integrate the city economically and also culturally in the early 1880s. As soon as the accession was certain, Hamburg's traditional belief in economic liberalism effectively became compromised by private interests.

Bremen, on the other hand, took a different path to its eventual accession, which is why it has been important to look at the two Hanseatic cities separately in this thesis. While political realism quickly took the upper hand in Hamburg, Bremen's liberal mercantile community struggled to go along with the Reich Chancellor. Even the impact of the *Gründerkrise* in Bremen was not enough to destroy completely the city's traditional liberal mindset. In particular, Theodor Barth, who openly defended the free trade principle, played a central role in agitating against Bismarck. By the time Bremen was finally prepared to open negotiations with the Empire, it had manoeuvred itself into a distinct political corner. Hamburg had made the first step towards Bismarck, which made it necessary for Bremen also to try and come to terms with the Reich Chancellor so that Hamburg would not gain a permanent advantage over Bremen. Upon concluding negotiations with Hamburg, Bismarck tellingly lost interest in dealing with Bremen's accession – Bismarck was no doubt conscious of having already gained the upper hand. Eventually, Bismarck's dislike of Barth's opposition even made Barth lose his job in Bremen's Chamber of Commerce. In spite of all this, the belief in liberalism still seems to have been ingrained in the minds of

Bremen's ruling elite. It is worth noting, for instance, that Bremen's mercantile community refrained from demanding the acquisition of colonies, unlike Hamburg's Chamber of Commerce. In Bremen's Chamber of Commerce there had thus not occurred a complete Hamburg-style ideological volte-face. Yet it became obvious very quickly during the course of negotiations with the German Empire, that Bremen would not be able to resist assimilation into the newly founded nation-state, as the case of Barth's curtailed career demonstrates. The accession ultimately proved to be more important than holding on to liberal convictions. Significantly, a mere decade after Bremen's economic integration was put into effect, it was decided in Bremen to erect a monument to (the recently retired) Bismarck. In retrospect, it seems, earlier unease about the former Reich Chancellor was eclipsed by Bismarck's great feat of uniting the fatherland. Economically, Bremen's accession remained something of a side issue, since Bremen's trade statistics hardly changed after the accession. But by making Bremen join the customs union, Bismarck was able to end – or at least neutralise – the city's liberal opposition to his economic policies.

Overall, examining Hamburg and Bremen's accession has demonstrated that the integration of the Hanseatic cities was regarded as highly significant by the Reich Chancellor. Especially after the turn to protectionism, the accession of the two old strongholds of liberal thought, was vital for the nation-building process. Due to their opposition to the Reich Chancellor's protectionist economic policies and their special status outside the Empire's customs union, the two Hanseatic cities had stood in the way of completing the establishment of a German nation-state. In this respect, Hamburg and Bremen played a role not dissimilar to, for example, the Guelphs in (annexed) Hanover or the Catholic *Reichsfeinde* – the so-called "enemies of the Reich". That angle of the integration of Hamburg and Bremen has often been overlooked, even though it was obviously crucial for Bismarck at the time.

The economic and cultural integration of Emden into the German Empire was an entirely different matter. After the Austro-Prussian War, Emden reverted to Prussia, a fact which was not merely welcomed by the majority in Emden but met with enthusiasm. In Emden, Prussian rule was equated with the prospect of economic success. At the same time, there was no cosmopolitan mindset in place in Emden to counterbalance this, due to the town's lack of overseas trade. This meant

that, rather than supporting free trade, Emden was reliant upon, and eagerly sought, state support. This is why Emden continued to fixate on the familiar Kingdom of Prussia and not the new-fangled German Empire throughout the period. One reason for this was certainly also the fact that Emden lacked an extensive hinterland that went beyond the Ruhr area.

Emden's hopes for an economic upturn under Prussian rule were soon dashed, however. The example of the *Dortmund-Ems-Kanal* demonstrates that there was in fact no strategy by the Prussian Kingdom to support Emden's economy. The economic upsurge that had been expected after the Prussian annexation of the Hanoverian Kingdom proved elusive. Any progress made, such as connecting Emden to the industrial Ruhr area, was largely thanks to pressure groups and lobbying. In the face of Bismarck's problems with Hamburg and Bremen in the early 1880s, in particular, the fact that there was no plan to develop Emden as an overseas port is surprising. After all, Prussia had already managed to build a naval base in Wilhelmshaven from scratch. In any case, once Emden's port had been extended around the turn of the century, Emden's mercantile community failed to make use of the new opportunities. While Emden became a German alternative for overseas exports from the Ruhr area, centuries of economic stagnation had left a mark on the ability to connect to the rest of the world. It remained difficult for the city to establish new international shipping services to and from Emden. Competition from Hamburg and Bremen also played an important role in this. The Hanseatic cities were able to thwart to a significant degree Emden's commercial ambitions, particularly in the case of routing emigration through Emden. Overall, despite the fact that Emden's port traffic increased steeply from the late 1890s until the First World War, the city struggled to become a real competitor to Hamburg and Bremen. The concentration on the Prussian Kingdom might have had a part in this. Unlike Hamburg and Bremen, Emden never entirely embraced the German nation-state. Economic and cultural integration were two highly significant, interdependent factors for the investigated port cities during the period of the German Empire.

Even at the time of the foundation of the *Kaiserreich*, German history was still the history of different cities and regions. Although the result may have been the same everywhere, the road to becoming a German nation was strikingly different. In the end, there were two main factors that prevented the rise of lasting

resentment against the Reich Chancellor in the Hanseatic Cities. On the one hand, Bismarck's iron will to integrate Hamburg and Bremen and the preparedness to grant concessions for those who cooperated. On the other hand, the erosion of free trade principles by the old European colonial powers, which ruthlessly pressed ahead with the acquisition of colonial territories. Under these circumstances, even Germany's strongholds of free trade longed for the protection of the new Imperial flag.

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