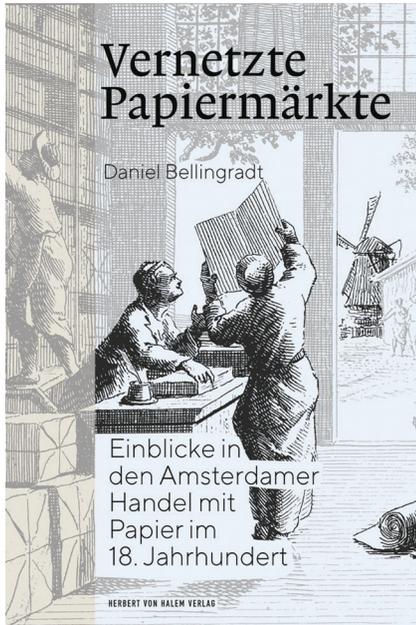


Review

Daniel Bellingradt, *Vernetzte Papiermärkte. Einblicke in den Amsterdamer Handel mit Papier im 18. Jahrhundert*, Cologne, Herbert von Halem Verlag, 2020, 252 pp. ISBN 9783869624969.



In his recent book, Daniel Bellingradt draws attention to the topic of the early modern paper trade. While scholars have acknowledged the early modern period as a paper age, in which vast quantities of rag-based paper were produced and used, Bellingradt points out that hardly any detailed research exists on paper as a material commodity and its trade. Millions of paper sheets were transported, bought, sold, and recycled annually throughout Europe, yet early modern scholarship has largely taken this huge trade for granted. In *Vernetzte Papiermärkte*, Bellingradt seeks to provide new insights into this transformative trade by zooming in on the interconnected market networks of paper dealers in Amsterdam in the eighteenth century. The monograph is a more than welcome investigation to an understudied topic.

The book consists of eight chapters that offer insights into the study of paper trade, including an introduction and an afterword. In the introduction, Bellingradt introduces the reader to the research on '[P]apierne Welten und Papier-Perspektiven', emphasises paper's economic dimensions, and positions the book within ongoing debates in the fields of book history, paper history, communication history, and economic history. The book has a twofold aim: first, to lay the groundwork for future investigations of the early modern paper trade by proposing an analytical framework and methodological approach, and second, to use eighteenth-century Amsterdam as a case study to exemplify the dynamics of the early modern paper trade in Europe (12). Although the fields of book history, paper history, economic history, and communication history have neglected the topic of paper trade, Bellingradt argues that utilising concepts from these disciplines would be useful

for studying it. While his empirical focus is on Amsterdam, Bellingradt proposes that the methodological approach of the book is applicable to the whole of Europe. To underline the importance of the study of the paper trade, he also illustrates the sheer scale of early modern paper use with figures from the Dutch Republic. According to Bellingradt's own calculations, Dutch paper mills alone produced around two hundred million sheets of handmade paper per year, which were not only used for printing and writing, but also for packing goods (23).

Chapter two deals with the material diversity of paper as an artefact within the early modern trade. Bellingradt argues that scholars should take into account the varieties of paper as a commodity. Paper was never simply paper: Bellingradt shows that hundred variants of paper wares were transported, circulated, and sold in eighteenth-century Amsterdam (40). These paper materials varied in manufacture origin, in watermarks and brands, in colour, size, price, and quality. Paper traders and customers themselves had to be aware of the complexities and pluralities of paper. Bellingradt also shows that studying the paper trade is a challenging endeavour for researchers as the terms for paper variations as well as its trade units used to quantify paper amounts differed per region.

The third chapter makes the case for viewing the early modern period as an age of paper by taking into account its economic aspects. Bellingradt situates the early modern demand and use for paper within its historical context, exploring its three most common applications, namely printing, writing, and wrapping. He makes clear that purchasing paper was one of the largest expenses for early modern print shops. Furthermore, citing recent scholarly works, Bellingradt rightfully points out that printing was not the only application of paper use, as the early modern period witnessed the rise of organisations, bureaucracies, administrations, and trading companies that relied on writing paper for their record-keeping and communication. Moreover, individuals also required writing paper for drawing up letters. Bellingradt also underlines the importance of the study of packing and wrapping paper, which enabled the transportation and protection of textiles, foods, and other wares.

The fourth chapter focuses on Amsterdam bookshops as important locations for the purchase of paper and analyses the relationships between bookstores and paper dealers. Early modern bookshop owners not only specialised in books, but also sold a variety of paper products. They facilitated the availability of a wide variety of writing and printing paper to customers in Amsterdam.

In chapter five, Bellingradt establishes a sound theoretical framework for investigating the early modern paper trade, drawing on concepts from the fields of economics, market sociology, and economic sociology. He sees paper markets as social figurations that consist of human actors that interact with each other within trade networks (133). Central to Bellingradt's approach is also the concept of the materiality of paper trade, which entails an in-depth investigation of paper flows and the physical conditions of the production, transportation, storing, selling, and recycling of the wide varieties of paper (118). Another key concept Bellingradt puts forward is the sociality of the paper trade, calling for an investigation of paper dealers, their trade activities, networks, and social backgrounds (122).

The focus of the sixth chapter is the city of Amsterdam as a business location for paper trade. In this chapter, Bellingradt looks at why and how Amsterdam became the centre and

'hot spot' of the European paper trade, highlighting its favourable geographical position and its excellent infrastructure, as it was connected to international trade networks and Dutch paper production sites via both land routes and waterways (143). He also describes Amsterdam as a convergence point of material flows of paper and rags, a paper entrepôt where paper was accumulated in storage houses, transported, and sold internationally. The chapter therefore adequately positions Amsterdam as a city of paper.

Chapter seven introduces the case study of Zacharias Segelke, a paper merchant operating in Amsterdam in the late eighteenth century. The chapter provides an exemplary application of the book's proposed analytical framework. Based on the study of his account books, Bellingradt shows that Segelke bought and sold a variety of paper materials, including writing and printing paper. Segelke is a particularly intriguing case, since he was also engaged in buying old paper and selling it to paper makers for recycling. The chapter showcases Segelke's own commercial network, which includes his dealings with other paper merchants, paper makers, and bookshops, making it a fascinating example of paper dealers that contributed to the paper flows in Amsterdam.

In the afterword, Bellingradt envisions future research into the early modern paper trade and acknowledges upcoming dissertations and other publications that deal with the topic. In particular, he calls for a larger study of the paper trade that takes into account the individual history of European cities, maps out paper flows, and incorporates markets and actors. Moreover, he calls for research into the recycling of paper in its economic contexts, including an analysis of textiles, rags, and old paper.

Vernetzte Papiermärkte is a compelling work that fully lives up to its aims of providing a solid theoretical framework and a useful scholarly tool bag. It is a must-read for researchers who are interested in conducting a thorough study of the early modern paper trade. It also gives fascinating and well-researched insights into the workings of the paper trade in and around the city of Amsterdam, which make it a rewarding read for a broader audience as well. The book contains a pleasant variety of illustrations, including paintings, drawings of bookstores, maps, and account book pages that make the paper trade of the past tangible to the reader. It features rich footnotes and an impressive bibliography that refers to primary source materials and secondary literature, both from past and very recent scholarship.

While the author manages to grasp the reader with well-researched details and facets, the book would have profited structurally if the fifth chapter on the markets of the paper trade, with its discussion of key theoretical notions, would have been positioned earlier in the book, preferably directly after the introduction. An aspect that receives little attention by the author is the political component of the paper trade. Questions regarding the degree of governments' involvement in stimulating, regulating, and protecting local paper trade and paper industries are not addressed. This is a topic that Benjamin de Vries already discussed in his 1957 dissertation *De Nederlandse papiernijverheid in de negentiende eeuw*, when referring to the measures of the Dutch States-General on these matters. The book's temporal focus on the eighteenth century, the height of the paper trade in Amsterdam, leaves less space for European paper trade connections in earlier centuries, which have been analysed by Henk Voorn and more recently by Megan Williams. Their works do appear in the book's extensive bibliography, but are not explicitly discussed in the text.

The book is primarily aimed towards a German reading audience, but an English translation would be most welcome: it would surely aid the purpose of this book to make scholars aware of the relevance of the early modern paper trade and to initiate much-needed future research into the topic. Overall, Bellingradt's work is highly recommendable for advanced students and scholars within the fields of paper history, book history, economic history, and communication studies. It will undoubtedly inspire many new publications on the early modern paper trade.

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