Seventeenth-century virtual communities. Postal service and correspondence networks in the Swedish empire

Örjan Simonson

From 1696 to 1699, the assessor at the court of appeals (*Svea hovrätt*) in Stockholm, Lars Wadensten, sent letters to the Torstuna hundred's court announcing the transfer of land to him, registered as a mortgage. The debts amounted to 1,789 daler silver coins (about 850 Hamburg Reichsthaler).[1] Lars Wadensten had been present in court in the autumn of 1693 and saw to it that some of the debts were registered as mortgages.[2] Then he acted rather hesitantly as he let the process go on for more than three years. Maybe he had preferred another solution. The indebted ones happened to be his brothers, sisters and brothers in law.

Lars Thomasson Wadensten's father, the late Thomas Olofsson, had been the chair of the jury (*nämnd*) in Torstuna.[3] His brother Olof Thomasson was also a member of the jury and a brother-in-law was a local constable (*länsman*).[4] The family thus constituted a prominent part of the local law enforcement. As an assessor with a university education, Lars Wadensten had advanced even further to be a part of the judicial elite in the whole kingdom. The family owned a lot of land in the hamlet Vappby in Torstuna hundred, in the western part of the province Uppland. Lars Wadensten owned a farm in the hamlet, which his brother Olof Thomasson had as a leasehold.[5] This bonded the two brothers and they managed the property jointly. In 1696, Olof informed his brother Lars about a redistribution of

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[1] Hösttinget 1696 (§ 36), hösttinget 1697 (§ 8), vintertinget 1699 (§ 4), Domböcker vid ordinarie ting A I a:11, 1695–1704, Torstuna häradsrätt, The Regional Archives in Uppsala.
[2] Hösttinget 1693 (§ 3), Domböcker vid ordinarie ting A I a:10, 1691–94, Torstuna häradsrätt, The Regional Archives in Uppsala.
[3] Hösttinget 1693 (§ 2), Domböcker vid ordinarie ting A I a:10, 1691–94, Torstuna häradsrätt, The Regional Archives in Uppsala.
[4] Hösttinget 1696 (§ 36), hösttinget 1698 (§ 14), Domböcker vid ordinarie ting A I a:11, 1695–1704, Torstuna häradsrätt, The Regional Archives in Uppsala.
[5] Hösttinget (§ 37), Domböcker vid ordinarie ting A I a:10, 1691–94, Torstuna häradsrätt, The Regional Archives in Uppsala.

all land in Vappby.[6] Two years earlier, they had sided in a litigation against a third brother, Erik Thomasson.[7]

Erik, the third brother, refused to allow a new peasant to move in at one of the farms at Vappby, defying an agreement with his brothers.[8] The motives behind Wadensten's announcements from 1696–99, and whether or not he secured control over the property as a reaction to this particular conflict in the family, are not clear. His input of money in the preceding years must have been a powerful resource for further wealth and influence for his family. At the same time, they were all snared in dependence of their distant brother in Stockholm.

This family conflict over land, inheritance, and debts is representative of many court cases in Torstuna hundred in the 1690s, but it is also unusual since it involves a distant brother from the social elite who communicated by letters. The geographical distribution of people mentioned in court cases together with inhabitants from the hamlet Vappby from 1690–99 is demonstrated on map 1. Most of them lived within ten kilometres range from Vappby. They could attend court in person in the village Torstuna, a few kilometres east of Vappby. The map is an overview of a local community that settled its conflicts face-to-face. The court proceedings were based on the oral negotiations and on the local knowledge of the jury.[9] The Swedish jury consisted of twelve men sworn in as permanent members, which meant that the jury more had the status of a board that cooperated with the judge (*häradshövding*). The members of a Swedish jury thus can be looked upon as members of an elite of the local peasantry, such as Lars Wadensten's family.
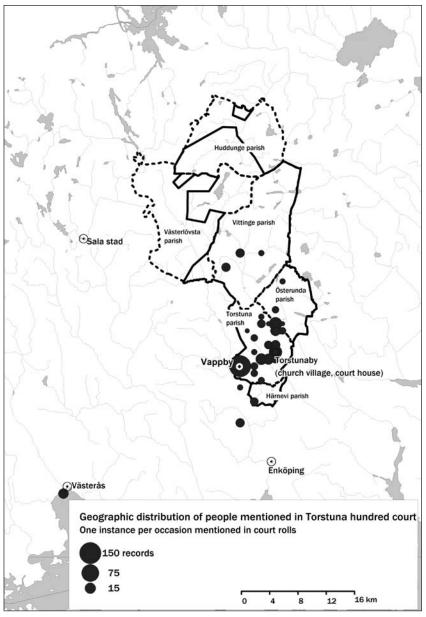
The local community was not left alone in its affairs, however. Lars Wadensten is exceptional because of his family bonds, but he is not alone in intervening from the outside into the lives of the inhabitants in Torstuna hundred through the court. Often, the relations to the inhabitants in Torstuna were more formal and institutionalized. Those intervening defended their interests as creditors, landholders or state officials. When doing so,

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[6] Hösttinget 1696 (§ 34), Domböcker vid ordinarie ting A I a:11, 1695–1704, Torstuna häradsrätt, The Regional Archives in Uppsala.
[7] Hösttinget 1694 (§ 37), Domböcker vid ordinarie ting A I a:10, 1691–94, Torstuna häradsrätt, The Regional Archives in Uppsala.
[8] Hösttinget 1698 (§ 14), Domböcker vid ordinarie ting A I a:11, 1695–1704, Torstuna häradsrätt, The Regional Archives in Uppsala.
[9] Gustaf Edvard Fahlcrantz, *Rättfärdighet i rättskipning: En historisk och jämförande framställning af några hufvudpunkter i vårt rättegångsväsende, 1* (Stockholm: Författ. förl., 1903), 256–257.

Map 1. Local community relations for the hamlet Vappby, Torstuna hundred, 1690–99.
Source: Court rolls 1690–99, Dombröcker vid ordinarie ting, A la, vols 9–11, 1688–1704,
Torstuna häradsrätt, The Regional Archives in Uppsala.

they also became agents for bringing spatially extended social institutions and power resources, such as the state or commercial institutions, into the local social fabric.[10] Sometimes they attended court, just like the peasants in Torstuna, but often they acted with letters addressed directly to the court or to entrusted people that could attend in court as their solicitors.

At the end of the seventeenth century, written communication mediated by the postal service was paramount for integrating the Swedish empire and connected it to the European scene. This was not a new manner of communicating, but the development of the postal service in seventeenth-century Europe was profound. This was especially the case in Sweden, where the Swedish Post Office was established in 1636 and developed during the following decades.[11] The flow of correspondence that was mediated by the postal network was a key to the integration of large-scale economic and political institutional projects, that increasingly had an impact on the everyday life in the local communities.[12] In itself, the postal network provided the means of correspondence that would transform the mechanisms of social networks within a local environment and face-to-face relations, such as trust, reputation, reciprocity, into the "virtual communities" that were taking shape as correspondence networks.

In this study, I will approach correspondence networks in the Swedish empire and their geographic extension. I will analyze the institutional frames given by the costs imposed on correspondence networks by the postage rates, and do some case studies of the geographical pattern of departed letters from post offices in Stockholm, Avesta, Reval (Tallinn), and Stralsund. The aim is to contribute with knowledge about the integration of the Swedish empire and of communities existing within the empire. I will do this from a finding in my previous research that the postal service did not provide good conditions for communication with the different parts of the Swedish empire, since the Baltic Sea worked as a barrier.

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[10] My theoretical approach, as well as my experiences of the local community in Torstuna hundred, has its origin from my dissertation. Örjan Simonson, *Den lokala scenen: Torstuna härad som lokalsamhälle under 1600-talet* (Uppsala: Historiska institutionen vid Uppsala universitet, 1999), 45–52.

[11] Nils Forssell, *Svenska postverkets historia, I, Kungliga Generalpoststyrelsen* (Stockholm, 1936), 41.

[12] "Project", in this case, is an analytical term used in time-geographical analysis. See Gabriel Bladh, *Finnskogens landskap och människor under fyra sekler: En studie av samhälle och natur i förändring*, Forskningsrapport 95:11 Samhällsvetenskap (Karlstad: Högskolan i Karlstad, 1995), 47–50, 150–152.

A maritime empire with an overland communications network

Surprisingly enough for a maritime empire, correspondence across the Baltic Sea was more problematic than correspondence transports on roads over the Swedish territory, both in terms of information costs and time-lags for information transfer. The postage rates for sending letters across the Baltic Sea where high using the Swedish Post Office. According to the Board of Chancery, a postage of 8–10 öre silver coins touched an upper limit above which a correspondent would only send the most important letters.[13] In many cases, this limit was in the Baltic Sea.[14]

The sea also caused considerably longer time-lags for communication. The boats generally performed at the same speed as mounted couriers, but sea traffic was more hazardous and exposed to weather conditions. The efficiency of the postal network did not only rely on fast transfer, but on co-ordination and regular traffic as well (something that wind-powered vessels never could master sufficiently). In the northern Baltic waters, sea traffic even paused completely for months during wintertime due to sea ice. Correspondence between the western and the eastern parts of the Swedish empire was especially troublesome. Conveyance between Stockholm and Riga over Åland Sea could take up to a month, and the time-lag between Stockholm and Åbo (Turku) was up to ten days, because of the passage across Åland Sea.[15] In contrast, the route Stockholm–Hamburg did not take more than one week, and the time-lag between Stockholm and the recently conquered Scanian provinces was no more than two and a half days.[16]

This must have had repercussions for the integration of the Swedish empire at the end of the seventeenth century. The development of the Swedish Post Office was a result of the imperial need to exchange information and orders within the growing administration and to receive news from abroad. At the same time as the postal system was a product of the maritime empire, however, it functioned much better in integrating the territories west of the Baltic, including the former Danish provinces in

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[13] [Nya taxor för brevporto till städerna] 13 December 1692, vol 1, 1656–95, Skrivelser till Kungl. Maj:t, Kanslikollegiet, Riksarkivet [RA].

[14] Örjan Simonson, *Information Costs and the Swedish 1693 Years Postage Tariff*, paper presented at the Swedish Economic History Conference in Uppsala, 5–7 March 2009.

[15] Hour pass, Stockholm-Riga-Stockholm, March 6–April 28, 1688, Kontrollören J Langes visitationsberättelser, Kanslikollegium, vol. G2F:1, RA.

[16] Örjan Simonson, "The Swedish Empire and Postal Communication: Velocity and Timekeeping in the Swedish Post Office, ca. 1680–1720", Manuscript (Huddinge, 2009). The manuscript is to be published in a planned anthology about the postal service in the Baltic area in 2010, editor Heiko Droste, Södertörn University, Huddinge.

contemporary southern Sweden. Even if Estonia, Livonia, and Finland had better access to the imperial core in Stockholm and its surroundings at the end of the seventeenth century thanks to the postal service, the 'time-space convergence' (the process of shrinking of distance over a period) that was a result of the Post Office was a lot more dramatic over land.[17] For the central government in Stockholm, the Estonian and Livonian provinces appeared very distant. The communication problems meant that much of the reported events were over by the time the government in Stockholm learned about them.

The position of Finland in the Swedish kingdom has been a theme in both Swedish and Finnish historiography since the 1980s, mainly with an aim to deconstruct an anachronistic image of the contemporary nation-states as two distinct units before the cession of Finland, when it was conquered by Russia in 1809.[18] This revision has been useful, since a discourse of two separate nations has been much entrenched on both sides of the Bothnian Bay.[19] One common argument is challenged by evidence from the postal network and the distribution of letters, however, and that is that communication over the sea was superior to that over land.[20] The distribution of letters that departed from the Stockholm post office in 1698 confirms the image of a postal network with restrained interaction across the sea (map 4). Only about 10% of all letters went eastwards over Åland Sea to Finland, Estonia, and Livonia, despite Stockholm being a port connected with this part of the Baltic Sea. Instead, 76% of the letters were directed to post offices within Sweden's contemporary borders.[21] In this respect, Åland Sea divided rather than connected people.

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[17] The concept is used by Allan R. Pred, *Urban Growth and the Circulation of Information: The United States System of Cities, 1790–1840* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1973), 175, 182–183. It was later adopted in a more theoretical vein by Anthony Giddens, *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism, Vol. 1: Power, Property and the State* (London and Basingstoke: MacMillan Press, 1981), 40.

[18] For a comprehensive presentation of the historiography, see Jan Samuelson, *Eliten, riket och riksdelningen: sociala nätverk och geografisk mobilitet mellan Sverige och Finland 1720–1820*, Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland, 705 (Helsingfors [Helsinki], 2008), 17–23.

[19] Per Olof Sjöstrand, *Hur Finland vanns för Sverige: En historia för nationalstater*, Opuscula Historica Upsaliensis 16 (Uppsala: Historiska Inst., 1996).

[20] Matti Klinge, *Östersjövälden: ett illustrerat historiskt utkast* (Borgå [Porvoo]: Askelin & Hägglund förlag, 1985), 174–182. See a critique against this view in Jonas Nordin, *Ett fattigt men fritt folk: Nationell och politisk självbild i Sverige från sen stormaktstid till slutet av frihetstiden* (Stockholm: Brutus Östlings bokförlag Symposion , 2000), 321–327.

[21] Figures used from Yngve Nylander, *1698 års prickebok: En postal-statistisk studie*, Meddelande från Postmuseum, 9 (Stockholm: Postverket, 1928), 16–17.

The correspondence patterns turn the focus from how the kingdom was perceived to how the subjects interacted within the kingdom. A recent contribution by Jan Samuelson to the theme of Finland's position investigates social networks among the social elite (the nobility and the clergy) in the three parts Finland, Svealand (central Sweden), and Götaland (southern Sweden) from 1720–1820. Samuelson concludes that social network contacts transgressing those three parts of Sweden were all weak, and that Götaland's elite especially was self-sufficient in recruitment to public offices and in finding proper marriage partners. Samuelson reveals a process of strengthened regionalization of elites, rather than a kingdom divided by the Bothnian Bay. The Finnish nobility was most inclined to find a partner or make a carrier on the opposite side of the Bay.[22]

Samuelson's results are only partly in agreement with the correspondent patterns for Stockholm in 1698, suggesting a more intensive interaction with southern Sweden than with Finland. However, the correspondence pattern in 1698 gives support to the process of regionalization in one respect. More than 50% of the letters from Stockholm were addressed to post offices in the neighbouring provinces, to towns surrounding the lake Mälaren, to the mining districts in Västmanland, Uppland, and Dalarna (Bergslagen), and the provinces Södermanland, Östergötland, and northern Småland south of Stockholm. The distribution of letters does show a correspondence pattern that more or less integrated the Swedish empire, but even more it shows a pattern of regional correspondence networks.

Social power, integration, and communities
– theoretical approaches

In the analysis of the integration of the Swedish empire, I have utilized three resources for social power and their respective relation to communication: administrative power, commercial power, and ideological power.[23] Administrative power and commercial power were both dependent on fast transmission of information and of interaction over space. One important difference for the Swedish empire was that while transport of goods on ships was of profound importance for commercial networks, administrative power was most dependent on information exchange, mediated through

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[22] Samuelson, *Eliten, riket och riksdelningen*, 186–189.
[23] I have been theoretically inspired to the analysis and concepts by Innis in 1950 and Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power, 1: A History of Power from the Beginning to A.D. 1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

the postal service. Its bias towards depending on information transfer was even more stressed as, at the end of the seventeenth century, the Swedish state administration operated in a fairly pacified environment that only occasionally needed massive support from military troops on the move. The legitimacy of the rule through religion, the judicial system, and the participation of commons in local government contributed to the domestic pacification, and this ideological power was equally important to administrative resources for the maintenance of the empire. This ideological power, however, relied more on embedded practices of local communities and thus was less dependent on the constant information flow managed by the postal system.[24]

Local and imagined communities

Here, I will turn my focus from resources for social power to the integration of communities, although there will be affinities, as political, economic, and ideological power resources operated within communities. I will distinguish between three understandings of community – local, imagined, and virtual – and associate the correspondence networks studied in this article to the third one.

There is a large volume of empirical research about, as well as different theoretical approaches to local communities.[25] Local communities in their relation to a larger society has a central place in dichotomies in classic sociological grand theories, as *Lebenswelt* and *Systemwelt* in Jürgen Habermas *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns*, *Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft* in Tönnies sociology or Emile Durkheim's concepts mechanical and organic solidarity.[26] I will use the sociologist Anthony Giddens solution as a guide. He departs with the concept integration and defines it as reciprocity of practices, meaning that different human practices correspond to each other. Giddens discriminates between social integration of individuals in direct and everyday face-to-face interaction, and system integration, which is integration between collectives.[27]

Social integration is thus necessarily connected with relations in small-scale societies, which with Giddens' conceptualization has a high

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[24] Simonson, "The Swedish Empire and Postal Communication".
[25] See a somewhat dated summary of the state of research in Örjan Simonson, *Den lokala scenen: Torstuna härad som lokalsamhälle under 1600-talet* (Uppsala: Historiska institutionen vid Uppsala universitet: Distributionen, Uppsala University Library, 1999), 23–44.
[26] Giddens, *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism*, 157–158.
[27] *Ibidem*, 28–29.

presence-availability in social interaction (that is, they are living together in a household or close by in a neighbourhood). In these milieus, in local communities of different kinds, socialization of individuals is going on as a result of day-to-day practices.[28] System integration, then, is the impact of wider societal systems onto human practice. It could be the penetration of state power or systemic economic dependence, interactions with low presence-availability.[29]

In Torstuna hundred, an inhabitant's neighbourhood in the seventeenth century consisted of its own and the surrounding hamlets at a radius of about 6–7 kilometres. There were no sharp limits though. The interaction gradually declined with increasing distance, up to 25–30 kilometres, or a day's walking distance.[30] Torstuna hundred was probably representative of the interaction pattern in the Swedish countryside, but spatially more extensive compared to other European regions with a higher population density and where daily life was gathered in villages.[31] The network of interaction was face-to-face between individuals, and it was oral when not even more physical. Meeting places were thus important for the interaction. People met at the parish church on Sundays, at celebrations, at frequent visits at each others homesteads, or on the more confined spaces determined by the daily work on the fields and at the well.

Non-capitalist societies and especially the ancient empires, Giddens argues, had a segmented character. Social integration based on kinship and tradition took place in the daily activities in local communities. The system integration within empires affected the communities only occasionally through use of coercion in tax collection, or indirectly through legitimation of the rule within the ruling elites. Economic interdependence had little importance: the local communities were to a large extent self-sufficient.[32]

This view applies best to the large ancient empires and runs the risk of underestimating the diffused system-integrating character of ideological elements embedded in local community practices such as religious practice. Benedict Anderson's concept "imagined communities" describes the created feelings of collective belonging. The community is imagined because its fellow members would in most cases never meet or even hear of each

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[28] Giddens, *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism*, 66–67, 160–162.
[29] *Ibidem*, 159.
[30] Simonson, *Den lokala scenen*, 148–150, 238.
[31] Fernand Braudel, *Civilisationer och kapitalism 1400–1800, 1: Vardagslivets strukturer: Det möjligas gränser* (Stockholm: Gidlund, 1982), 48–49.
[32] Giddens, *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism*, 102–104.

other. Nations and other communities larger than villages (with regards to their face-to-face relationships) are all in a way imagined, Anderson argues.[33] Anderson points out the impact of newspapers as constitutive for nationalism as an imagination of a community.[34] An awareness of temporal coincidence links nationalists together, promoted by the development of more rapid communication.[35]

For the seventeenth-century Swedish empire however, religion and membership in the Swedish Lutheran church, rather than nationalist feeling, were the most important grounds for an imagined community. Anderson emphasizes the importance of the holy scriptures and sacred languages on the one hand and the accepted role of the clerical order as interpreter on the other hand.[36] With Reformation, the communion of true Christians became confined to the members of the Swedish church. Swedes became the chosen people, the Israelites of the north.[37]

The use of holy scriptures and written interpretations ensured both the coherence of actions and beliefs over extended space, and the durability over time. At the same time, it became deeply embedded in the local communities. In Sweden, as elsewhere in Europe, the community and shared religious practices became one. People on the countryside were members of a parish and regularly visited their parish church. The parish clergy practised their knowledge when preaching the gospel in a local context. The ministers and the local communities were comparatively independent of constant interaction to maintain a coherent message that united the people. The faith was spread as part of the social integration in the local communities.

Correspondence networks as seventeenth-century virtual communities

In his dissertation about merchant houses in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Stockholm, Leos Müller stresses the importance and nature of business information exchanged in the merchant house networks. Often, the information was about market prices on the spot. But this correspondence

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[33] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Second revised edition: London; New York: Verso, 1991).
[34] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 33–36.
[35] *Ibidem*, 24, 36.
[36] *Ibidem*, 12–16.
[37] Nils Ekedahl, "'Guds och Swea barn.' Religion och nationell identitet i 1700-talets Sverige", *Nationalism och nationell identitet i 1700-talets Sverige*, ed. by Åsa Karlsson, Bo Lindberg (Uppsala: Univ.: Swedish Science Press [distributör], 2002), 53–55.

also had the function of establishing trust in relationships. This was important in order to trust the accuracy of the market information, but also in order to get involved in any economic exchange conducted within the networks. According to Müller, the correspondence networks had two temporal characteristics as part of establishing trust: durability and frequency of interaction.[38] Similar networks were to be found within the bureaucracy and the diplomatic circles. In the dynastic states of the time, it was natural for kinship to be decisive for political decisions. Diplomatic correspondence was dressed in a language referring to love and friendship.[39]

Müller distinguishes between the concept of "social network" for relationships sharing these characteristics and of "correspondence network" merely referring to his chosen object of research and to the method of network analysis.[40] Here, I will use correspondence network as an analytical term but stress its distinguishing characteristics, its ability to mediate relations over long distances, compared to network relations mediated through face-to-face interaction. Correspondence networks had the capacity of maintaining "virtual communities" – social networks mediated over an extended space.

The concept of "virtual communities" is part of our understanding of the emerging information age in the late twentieth century, and our own very novel behaviour regarding new media in cyberspace.[41] I deliberately make use of the anachronism of this concept to stress the resemblance with early modern Europe, which also was perceived as an age of fundamental change of communication capacities, with printing and reformed postal systems.[42]

The point here is that correspondence networks linked the social integration in the local communities with the system-world. It extended the social relationships in space, not by real, but by virtual communication

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[38] Leos Müller, *The Merchant Houses of Stockholm c. 1640–1800: A Comparative Study of Early-Modern Entrepreneurial Behaviour*, Studia Historica Upsaliensia, 188 (Uppsala, 1998), 224, 240–251.

[39] Heiko Droste, *Im Dienst der Krone: Schwedischen Diplomaten im 17. Jahrhundert*, Nordische Geschichte (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2006), 252–253.

[40] Müller, *The Merchant Houses of Stockholm*, 33, 222–223.

[41] Howard Rheingold, "Introduction", *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier*, [rev. paper edition, 2000], <http://www.rheingold.com/vc/book/intro.html> (16.6.2009).

[42] Asa Briggs and Peter Burke, *A Social History of the Media: From Gutenberg to the Internet* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002), 17–23; Wolfgang Behringer, *Im Zeichen des Merkur: Reichspost und Kommunikationsrevolution in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), 18–20.

mediated through letters – the interface of the seventeenth century. Much commercial and political interaction happened in the virtual communities, which mediated those system-integrative power resources into local communities.

Virtual communities were unlikely to appear as exclusively virtual, however, without face-to-face meetings. Anthony Giddens has underlined the importance of such meetings for the re-embedding of disembedded social relations in the modern world.[43] For the networks of industrialists in nineteenth-century Dalarna, funerals and weddings were important occasions for maintaining, defining, and restructuring social networks – an important part of their "social economy".[44] They were bound together by centres for elite societies in the towns as meeting points, hospitality and travelling between the industrial spots, and with a large correspondence mixing business, family matters, and gossip.[45]

This draws the attention to regional clusters, where it was possible to re-embed social relations in meeting places on certain occasions, and with a postage rate that facilitated the "virtual" meetings by means of correspondence between these occasions.

Competitive and cohesive correspondent strategies, and the elasticity of demand

When the objective with correspondence was to gain an information edge in a commercially or politically competitive environment, this would lead to a price-inelasticity of demand of news together with an urge for fast transfer of information. The correspondents were ready to pay dearly for information. When designing the postage tariffs in 1692, the Board of Chancery could count on such a continued use of the postal service by correspondents involved in commercial enterprises and politically-important intelligence. This enabled the Post Office to set high postage rates on the routes to the information centres of Hamburg and Amsterdam, at the same time it necessitated special efforts to improve transfer speed on those routes.[46]

Correspondence with the objective to keep social networks together is likely to show a more elastic demand on postage rates. The velocity in

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[43] Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), 79–80, 87.
[44] Ylva Hasselberg, *Den sociala ekonomin: Familjen Clason och Furudals bruk 1804–1856*, Studia Historica Upsaliensia 189 (Uppsala: S. Academie Upsaliensis, 1998), 89.
[45] *Ibidem*, 93–101.
[46] Simonson, *Information costs and the Swedish 1693 years postage tariff.*

information transfer did have importance. Time-lags limit the ability to interact socially – to take part in grieving the deceased or greeting a bride. However, it was less urgent to receive news fast and become the first to know. Although social networks were not wholly depleted of competitive elements, a more important function of the correspondence was to share information as a means of keeping networks together, or in plain language, to gossip.[47] It was of course important to include the right people and exclude others in the networks, but in the view of an individual engaged in networking, a general strategy was to keep in touch with as many as possible, as often as possible, and thus be able to get more out of the resources inherent in the network. A possible upper limit would be about 200 individuals, depending on the human capacity to develop friendly relations with people and the time consumed to maintain social relations.[48]

The need of maintaining social networks with the help of correspondence potentially included everyone who could write and had any social connections beyond the immediate neighbourhood. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, a majority of the adult population in Sweden was able to read a book, while local studies suggest that between 5% and 15% of the rural population was able to write.[49] In his diary, Johannes Julinus recorded that he had sent forty-five letters and received sixty-five during his time as a student in Uppsala in the 1660s. Most of the correspondence was with members of his family in Nyköping, about 150 kilometres south of Uppsala.[50]

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[47] Robin Dunbar, *Samvaro, skvaller och språkets uppkomst* [*Grooming, Gossip and the Evolution of Language*] (Stockholm: Norstedts, 1997), 85–86.
[48] In the Grill merchant house in the eighteenth century, the correspondence network included close to 200 individuals (Müller, *The Merchant Houses of Stockholm*, 233). Robin Dunbar shows how the number 150–200 individuals repeats as a size on a social group before the need arises of more formal hierarchies (Dunbar, *Samvaro*, 76–85).
[49] Egil Johansson, "The Postliteracy Problem – Illusion or Reality in Modern Society?", *Time, Space and Man: Essays on Microdemography*, Reports from the Symmposium Time, Space and Man in Umeå, Sweden, June 1977, ed. by Jan Sundin, Erik Söderlund (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1977), 200–201; Loftur Guttormsson, "The Development of Popular Religious Literacy in Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries", *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 15 (1990), 16–17.
[50] Gunnar Tilander, "Samuel Åkerhielms första lärospån som blivande postdirektör och uppgifter om postbefordran i gamla dagböcker från 1659–1664", *Postryttaren* (Stockholm: Postmuseum, 1965), 24.

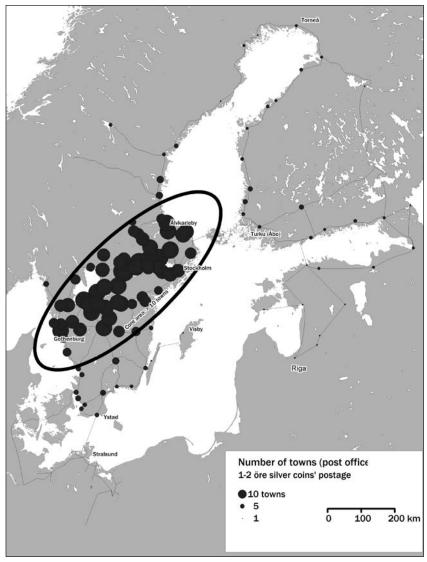## Postage rates and potential correspondent networks

The general postage tariff from 1693 included all post offices in the Swedish empire, with the exception of the German provinces. When presenting to the king, the Board of Chancery argued that a postage of two öre silver coins would be regarded as such a low rate that it would not discourage anyone from correspondence.[51] I assume from this that a postage between 1–2 öre silver coins would offer a beneficial infrastructure for maintaining social networks. Analyzing two öre silver coins' postage clusters would reveal regions with better or worse potentials for forming regional correspondence networks.

A cluster analysis of the general postage tariff thus shows the *potential* for maintaining virtual communities in different regions.[52] The heuristic nature of the limit of two öre silver coins has to be emphasized. Rather than being an absolute border for virtual communities, they are likely to gradually decrease in intensity with rising postage rates. What the survey does tell is how the design of the general postage tariff provided different preconditions for correspondence networks in different parts of the Swedish empire.

The results single out central Sweden around the great lakes as a core where the towns generally had the best access to virtual regional interaction (map 2). It stretched from Gothenburg in the southwest to Gävle in the northeast, a distance of about 600 kilometres (somewhat depending on the post route chosen). The region also coincided (fairly) with the old political and agrarian centre in Sweden. It contained the provinces of Uppland, Västmanland, Södermanland, Närke, Östergötland, Västergötland, southern Dalarna, parts of Bohuslän and Halland (Gothenburg and surrounding towns), the towns in southeast Värmland and the north of Småland (Jönköping, Eksjö, Vimmerby, Västervik). All the post office sites within this core had access to ten or more towns at the postage rate of 1–2 öre silver coins, with an average of sixteen towns. Outside this core,

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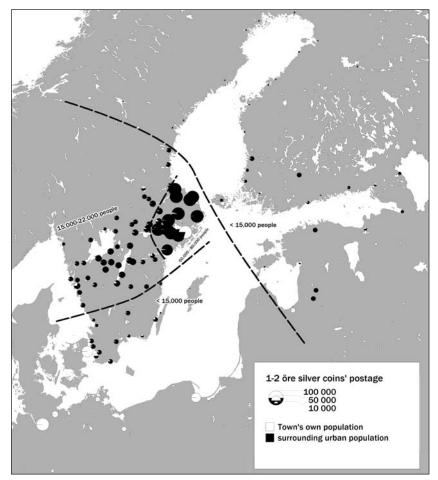[51] [Nya taxor för brevporto till städerna] 13 December 1692, vol 1, 1656–95, Skrivelser till Kungl. Maj:t, Kanslikollegiet, RA.

[52] Towns that are mentioned in some of the tariffs, but didn't have a tariff of their own, are excluded from the survey. They are often only mentioned occasionally and not systematically in the tariffs. Sigtuna, in the vincinity of Stockholm, is one example. Towns outside the Swedish possessions – like Mitau in Courland, Elsinore in Denmark, and Hamburg – are excluded, as are the towns in Sweden's German possessions, which are not integrated in the tariff system. "Underrättelse om Postgången uti Kongl. Recidensen Stockholm, med hosfogad Breftaxa" and "Utdrag af Kongl. Maj:ts underskrefne Posttaxor och andra förordningar [...]".

Map 2. Access to towns within two öre silver coins' postage, ca 1700. Source: "Under-rättelse om Postgången uti Kongl. Recidensen Stockholm, med hosfogad Breftaxa" and „Utdrag af Kongl. Maj:ts underskrefne Post-taxor och andra förordningar […]".

the average was four towns and no post office site had access to more than eight towns.

The towns in Sweden and Finland were small. Apart from Stockholm with its 57,000 inhabitants in 1690, only a few towns reached a population

Map 3. Access to urban populations within two öre silver coins' postage, ca 1700. Sources: Lilja, *Tjuvehål och stolta städer*; Palm, *Folkmängden i Sveriges socknar och kommuner 1571–1997*; *Baltic Towns: Historical towns of the Baltic and Scandinavia* (Danish Centre for Urban History, University of Århus, Denmark, Dept. for Multimedia and Data Handling, Historical Institute, University of Rostock, Germany, Institute of Urban History, University of Stockholm, Sweden, 2005), <http://www.baltictowns.com> (20.9.2009); "Underrättelse om Postgången uti Kongl. Recidensen Stockholm, med hosfogad Breftaxa" and "Utdrag af Kongl. Maj:ts underskrefne Post-taxor och andra förordningar [...]".

of about 5,000 (Åbo, Gothenburg, Norrköping, Falun, and Karlskrona).[53] The cluster of towns where the inhabitants could correspond at the cost of

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[53] Sven Lilja, *Tjuvehål och stolta städer: Urbaniseringens kronologi och geografi i Sverige (med Finland) ca 1570-tal till 1810-tal* (Stockholm: Stads- och kommunhistoriska institutet, 2000), 404–406.

two öre silver coins increased the size of the accessible population considerably. Map 3 shows the distribution in Sweden and Finland between the population in a town, its local community, and population accessible with a postage of two öre silver coins – the potential virtual community (this measure ignores the surrounding rural population, which is harder to delineate, but with social segments very likely to have active correspondents). Reliable population figures for the towns in Sweden and Finland are available in two recent monographs.[54] As a comparison, the map also shows population figures in some towns in the foreign provinces and the towns Hamburg, Copenhagen, Lübeck, and Danzig (Gdansk).

Outside the Stockholm zone, the numbers drop significantly. But the rest of the core identified above is still distinguished as one region where a bigger urban population was accessible. All of the post office sites in the Swedish postal network were located in the range 15,000–22,000 town dwellers and belonged to the core. Only five towns inside the core (Hedemora, Strömstad, Falun, Karlstad, and Västervik) had a number below the average of 10,000 and belonged to the outskirts of the region. The size of the clusters equals the population of prominent towns as Stettin, Riga, Reval, and also Lübeck.[55]

Especially surprising are the figures for the province Västergötland. Even by Swedish standards, those towns were small with an average population of 440 inhabitants in 1690.[56] But an inhabitant could reach an average of 18,000 town dwellers with a letter at a postage cost of two öre silver coins. One of the towns that was within the range was the important port town of Gothenburg. But with its about 5,000 inhabitants, Gothenburg did not have the same dominant position in this cluster as Stockholm in the Mälar valley. It consisted to a large extent of a cluster of the small towns in the province.

Outside the core, the number of town dwellers within reach with a two öre silver coins' postage were fewer. In southern Finland and southern Sweden, fairly urbanized regions by Scandinavian standards, the range was 6,000–10,000 people. The numbers round the Bothnian Bay in the north did not exceed 5,000 people.

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[54] Lilja, *Tjuvehål och stolta städer*; Lennart Palm, *Folkmängden i Sveriges socknar och kommuner 1571–1997: med särskild ähnsyn till perioden 1571–1751* (Visby: Palm, 2000).
[55] *Baltic Towns: Historical towns of the Baltic and Scandinavia* (Danish Centre for Urban History, University of Århus, Denmark, Dept. for Multimedia and Data Handling, Historical Institute, University of Rostock, Germany, Institute of Urban History, University of Stockholm, Sweden, 2005), <http://www.baltictowns.com> (20.9.2009).
[56] Falköping 19376 / 179, Hjo 18420 / 261, Skövde 18339 / 342, Skara 18274 / 465, Mariestad 19398 / 500, Lidköping 18274 / 374, Vänersborg 14114 / 976.

In contrast to the rest of the country where most of the towns were coast towns, the central part of Sweden had many inland towns. This was also the case with the relatively urbanized parts in southern Sweden, southern Småland, and the former Danish provinces Scania, Halland, and Blekinge. With tariffs set according to distance, regions with a chain of towns along the coast were at a disadvantage compared to regions with a cluster of inland towns. Again, the postage tariff favoured inland communication and inland integration.

Southern Sweden is also a contrast to the Stockholm zone despite being close to Copenhagen on Zealand. As intimated above, the Sound served more as a divide than a medium for correspondence. The postage for sending a letter from the Swedish towns on the eastern shore of the sound to Elsinore on the western shore was four öre silver coins. A town dweller in Ystad had to pay six öre silver coins to send a letter across the Sound to Elsinore, plus an additional sum to the Danish Post Office. It was even more expensive to send a letter on the route Ystad-Stralsund: eleven öre silver coins. The postage from Ystad to Stockholm 600 km away was also six öre silver coins, but the postage to Visby was only five öre silver coins (460 km distance, of which 80 km was across the water). A town dweller in Malmö, who could actually see Copenhagen across the Sound, also had to pay six öre silver coins to send a letter there.

Even though I have no direct evidence that the Board of Chancery deliberately used the postage rates to impede contacts between Denmark and its former provinces, the suspicion arises. The southern provinces Scania, Halland, and Blekinge had been conquered from Denmark in three wars (1643–45, 1657–58, 1658–60) and almost lost in a fourth (1676–79). The last war had proved that the new subjects in Scania lacked feelings of loyalty and devotion toward the Swedish king. The government reacted with a policy of intensified assimilation that also aimed to change the feelings of collective belonging. Frequent contacts across the Sound were not in the interests of the government. An example of a restrictive policy is the mandatory passports that were introduced for crossing the Sound in the 1680s.[57]

Imposing restrictions for communication across the Sound also suited the economic interests of the empire. The agrarian historian Janken Myrdal has proposed an interpretation of the Swedish imperial enterprise as a response to a food shortage in Sweden. The Swedish conquests of rich grain-producing regions, such as the Baltic provinces and Scania, was followed

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[57] Hanne Sanders, *Efter Roskildefreden 1658: Skånelandskapen och Sverige i krig och fred* (Göteborg & Stockholm: Centrum för Danmarksstudier, Makadam förlag, 2008), 119.

by a policy of redirecting the grain flow to central Sweden, which increasingly engaged itself in industrial production. Large granary export from Scania to Germany was forbidden and redirected to Sweden proper after the conquest in 1658.[58]

But the government had also shown caution in its policy of incorporation when it risked hurting commerce. Swedish customs rates were introduced in Scania in the 1660s but adjusted when the merchants protested against customs impeding former domestic trade between Scania and the Danish islands.[59] Complete isolation was not an interest of the Swedish state, and contacts and travels across the Sound continued after the Swedish conquest. Recent research has challenged an older view of an "iron curtain" dividing the Sound.[60] The general postage tariff may be interpreted in the same vein: as a softer "cloth curtain". It did not inhibit contacts, but neither did it promote them.

The Post Office organization did not of course exhaust the possibilities for people to communicate. As the Post Office constructed price constraints to communication between Swedish Helsingborg and Danish Elsinore, women in Helsingborg habitually travelled across the Sound to sell their products on the market square in Elsinore.[61] An existence of regional social networks must also have offered more alternatives of the kind the Uppsala student Julinus used in his correspondence with his family in Nyköping. His diary reveals that he often used friends and servants as conveyors as they passed by a destination.[62] The church and the provincial governors also used alternative postal organizations (*klockarpost*, *häradspost*), which remained in use until the introduction of postmen and post offices on the countryside in the second half of the nineteenth century.[63]

The effects of information costs and access to information for the maintaining of correspondence networks is hard to detect, and dependent of

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[58] Janken Myrdal, "Food, War and Crisis: The Seventeenth-Century Swedish Empire", *Rethinking Environmental History: World-System History and Global Environmental Change*, ed. by A. Hornborg, J. R. McNeill and J. Martinez-Alier (Lanham: Altamira Press, 2007), 88.

[59] Sanders, *Efter Roskildefreden 1658*, 79–80.

[60] *Ibidem*, 118–121; Stig Alenäs, Karl Bergman, Harald Gustafsson, Jens Lerbom, "När Östdanmark blev Sydsverige: Integration, interaktion och identiteter", *Vid gränsen: Integration och identitet i det förnationella Norden*, ed. by Harald Gustafsson and Hanne Sanders, Centrum för Danmarksstudier, 10 (Göteborg & Stockholm: Makadam förlag, 2006), 134–139.

[61] Solveig Fagerlund, *Handel och vandel: Vardagslivets sociala struktur ur ett kvinno-perspektiv, Helsingborg ca 1680–1709*, Studia Historica Lundensia (Lund, 2002), 76–79.

[62] Tilander, "Samuel Åkerhielms första lärospån", 24–27.

[63] Forssell, *Svenska postverkets historia, I*, 307–308.

day-to-day individual decisions among many people, over a long period of time, about whether the contact is important enough to be worth the cost. The assumption here is, following the basic economic theoretical model of supply and demand, that people facing the rising costs would to a larger extent decide not to use the postal service for communication, whereas declining costs would promote the decision to use the postal service.
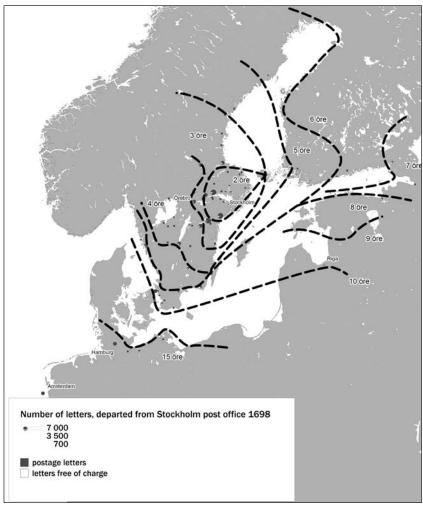
Stockholm: the first ranked central place in the Swedish empire

The distribution of letters dispatched from Stockholm in 1698 can be reconstructed thanks to a surviving log-book systematized by the postal historian Yngve Nylander.[64] It is presented on map 4, together with isometric lines that demonstrate the zones of different postage rates. Out of a total of 115,837 letters, 28,203 were sent to post offices within the two öre silver coins' zone, and 54,652 were sent within the three öre silver coins' zone. Above the three öre silver coins' postage, the increase of letters was slower, with about 10,000–14,000 letters' growth per öre silver coins up to six öre silver coins, before the growth decreased (figure 1). These figures thus confirms the assumption that most correspondence was regional, although the more dense correspondence networks corresponds better to the three öre silver coins' zone. This is not a strong tendency, however, and the figures also reflect a distribution, with a clustering of towns in approximately the same region that is covered by the three öre silver coins' zone. The inhabitants in Stockholm corresponded with the whole empire and beyond, both with private letters and in state service. The Åland Sea was an impediment, but this must have been caused more by the insecure transportation and the time-lags that appeared, than with the postage rates as such.

The Swedish historian Sven Lilja has reconstructed Swedish town systems, making use of Walter Christaller's central place theory and ranking the towns from the evidence of their relative population size and geographic pattern. At the end of the seventeenth century, Stockholm had a primary position, but the hierarchy of towns was not distinct enough to signal a mature central place system.[65] One hundred years later, the integration of the towns into a central place system had come further. Besides the

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[64] Yngve Nylander, *1698 års prickebok: en postal historisk-statistisk studie*, Meddelanden från Postmuseum, 9 (Stockholm, 1928).
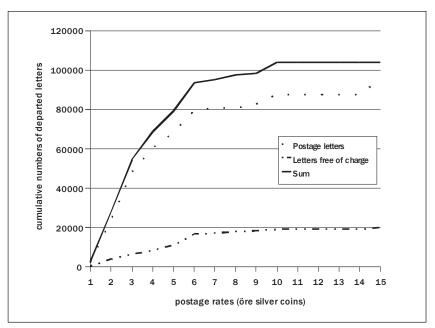[65] Lilja, *Tjuvehål och stolta städer*, 194.

Map 4. Destination of letters departed from Stockholm post office 1698 and postage rates (isometric lines). Sources: Nylander, *1698 års prickebok*, 16–17; "Underrättelse om Postgången uti Kongl. Recidensen Stockholm, med hosfogad Breftaxa" and "Utdrag af Kongl. Maj:ts underskrefne Post-taxor och andra förordningar [...]".

primary metropolis Stockholm, there were more distinct regional urban systems, centred around a second ranked town.[66]

The correspondence pattern revealed in the 1698 log-book supports Lilja's conclusion of the primary position of Stockholm. Stockholm as the

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[66] Lilja, *Tjuvehål och stolta städer*, 226–227, 230.

Figure 1. Postage rates and frequency of letters departing from the Stockholm post office, 1698. Sources: Nylander, *1698 års prickebok*, 16–17; "Underrättelse om Postgången uti Kongl. Recidensen Stockholm, med hosfogad Breftaxa" and "Utdrag af Kongl. Maj:ts underskrefne Post-taxor och andra förordningar [...]".

only first ranked town in a central place system that comprised the whole empire would also explain why the correspondence pattern was relatively price-inelastic and extended beyond its regional surroundings. The reconstruction of a central place system after population size, as in Lilja's analysis, is an indirect methodical approach from the assumption that the size of the towns reflects its position in a system, which presumes an interaction between the towns that are difficult to trace.[67] The postal network, I would argue, was part of the growth of an integrated central place system, as it provided the medium for interaction. At the end of the seventeenth century, though, it was not developed enough to support a more thorough integration. Hence, the immaturity of the central place system.

Stockholm's position as a centre of information was secured in the seventeenth century as the central bureaucracy grew. The bureaucratic demand of correspondence was immense and the price-inelasticity could be higher

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[67] It is telling that Christaller chose the density of telephones as a suitable measure to rank the centrality of cities. Peter Haggett, *Geography: A Modern Synthesis* (New York *et al*: Harper & Row, 1979), 360–361.

than what any merchant could find commercially reasonable. Diplomatic correspondence was regarded as the very spirit of good government.[68] The share of letters free of charge to different destinations reveals something of the relative importance of bureaucratic correspondence. There is evidence of a greater price-inelasticity, as the share of letters free of charge rises from 14% within a postage range of 1–5 öre silver coins, to 19% within a 6–15 öre silver coins' postage range. A few towns with high postage rates and outside the Swedish empire had a small share of free of charge letters, like Hamburg (6%), Amsterdam (<1%), Lübeck (<1%) and Elsinore (3%). For the towns with 6–15 öre silver coins within the empire, the share could supersede the average 19% considerably, especially when they were residential towns for governors. For Riga, 57% of the letters were free of charge. The Marine base Karlskrona in Blekinge also got a high share of free of charge letters, 37%, and Viborg in Carelia got 35%.

An interpretation of these figures is that distant correspondence from Stockholm within the empire reflects a network between civil and military state servants and with their families. The postage letters were to a large extent exchanged with their friends and family members, when they couldn't make use of their free of charge rights. In the first half of the seventeenth century, the more distant Stockholm trade was directed more to Bothnia in the north and to the Baltic ports, than to the southern parts of Sweden.[69] The grain trade from Estonia and Livonia in the 1680s was extensive. Together with other foodstuff, the value of the import reached 235,000 Riksdaler in 1685.[70] Such a trade pattern, however, is not traceable in the log-book from 1698. This is an indication that a commissionary trade, or a correspondence pattern for trading relations, was less developed between Stockholm and the Baltic ports.[71] The conveyance may have been too slow or the terms of trade too firmly regulated and compulsory

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[68] Heiko Droste, "Information Flow in a New Era of Postal Services", *Information Flows: New Approaches in the Historical Study of Business Information*, ed. by Leos Müller and Jari Ojala (Helsinki: SKS, 2007), 221.

[69] Åke Sandström, *Mellan Torneå och Amsterdam: En undersökning av Stockholms roll som förmedlare av varor i regional och utrikeshandel 1600–1650*, Stockholmsmonografier utgivna av Stockholms stad, 102 (Stockholm, 1990), 299–302.

[70] Sven-Erik Åström, "The Swedish Economy and Sweden's Role as a Great Power 1632–1697", *Sweden's Age of Greatness 1632–1718*, ed. by Michael Roberts (London, Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1973), 70.

[71] Compare Jan Willem Veluwenkamp, "International Business Communication Patterns in the Dutch Commercial System, 1500–1800", *Your Humble Servant: Agents in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Hans Cools, Marika Keblusek and Badeloch Noldus (Hilversum: Uitgiverij Verloren, 2006), 121–123.

to induce a development towards commissionary trade. In part, the trade was managed by Swedish aristocrats with estates both in Sweden and in the Baltic provinces, and repeatedly violated the privileges of the towns.[72] Rather than merchants involved in commissionary trade and making use of the Swedish Post Office, the Board of Chancery points out that shippers were competitors when correspondents were not ready to pay the postage between Riga and Stockholm.[73]

Instead, the large share of postage letters to Elsinore, Hamburg, Amsterdam, and Lübeck, together with large volumes of letters sent within the regional three öre silver coins' zone, suggest a commercial correspondence network connected with the production and export of iron and copper. With the exception of Uppsala, which had nearly as large a percentage of letters free of charge (54%) as Riga,[74] most of the letters are conveyed against postage. Places connected with the mining industry received 90% postage letters or more, like the copper town Falun (90%), the silver town Sala (93%) and the post office in Älvkarleby in the iron producing region in northern Uppland (90%). Leos Müller has described how the merchant house Momma-Reenstierna in Stockholm maintained a correspondence network that on the one hand included business contacts in Amsterdam, Hamburg, Danzig, Lübeck, and London, and on the other included contacts in the iron-producing region north-west of Stockholm.[75] In his analysis of the Swedish urban system, Lilja also observes a shift from a system centred on the Baltic sea, to a more southwest centred system, which put the Swedish urban system closer to the important northwest European market.[76]

The mining districts and correspondence networks

The size of the potential virtual community in the vicinity of Stockholm is singled out as a consequence of Stockholm's dominating position in the Swedish urban system. Within a radius of about a hundred kilometres from Stockholm in the provinces Uppland, Södermanland, and the
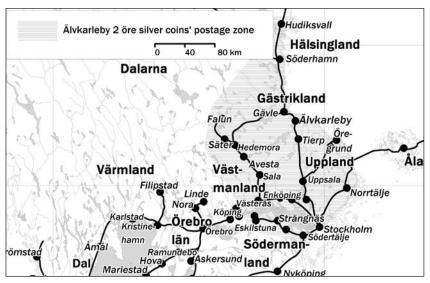
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[72] Juhan Kahk, Enn Tarvel, *An Economic History of the Baltic Countries*, Studia Baltica Stockholmiensia, 20 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1997), 45.
[73] Nya taxor för brevporto till städerna] 13 December 1692, vol 1, 1656–95, Skrivelser till Kungl. Maj:t, Kanslikollegiet, RA.
[74] Between Uppsala and Stockholm, a private enterprise with scheduled boat traffic on Mälaren was an alternative way of conveying letters, which may have had an impact on the proportion of postage letters. Johannes Rudbeck, *Svenska postverkets fartyg och sjöpostförbindelser under tre hundra år* (Stockholm: Postverkets tryckeri, 1933), 297–299.
[75] Müller, *The Merchant Houses of Stockholm*, 230–231.
[76] Lilja, *Tjuvehål och stolta städer*, 194.

Map 5. Älvkarleby two coins' postage rate cluster. Source: "Underrättelse om Postgången uti Kongl. Recidensen Stockholm, med hosfogad Breftaxa" and "Utdrag af Kongl. Maj:ts underskrefne Post-taxor och andra förordningar [...]".
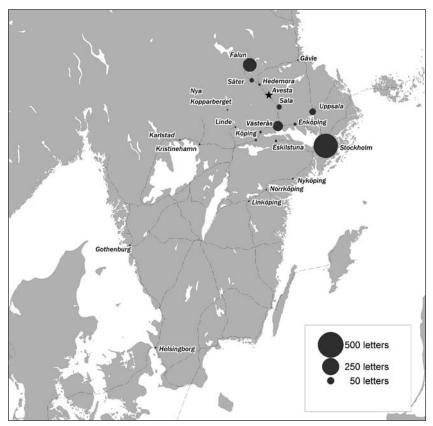
eastern part of Västmanland, it was possible to reach between 60,000 and 80,000 town dwellers with the postage of two öre silver coins – among them 57,000 living in Stockholm.

Älvkarleby in Uppland, near the border of the province Gästrikland, had the highest figure: 79,343 persons (map 5). It was not even a town, but a parish with 1,174 inhabitants 1699.[77] It had an important ferry berth over the river Dalälven and was the place where goods transported on the roads in Uppland were loaded onto boats for further transport to the North. The fairs in Älvkarleby had been big in the sixteenth century.[78] In the middle of the seventeenth century, mining industries were established in Älvkarleby.[79] Subsequently, the postal services opened up a multitude of contacts outside the community, most of them in Stockholm though. This virtual

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[77] Palm, *Folkmängden i Sveriges socknar och kommuner*, 327.
[78] Nils Friberg, *Stockholm i bottniska farvatten: Stockholms bottniska handelsfält under senmedeltiden och Gustav Vasa: En historisk-geografisk studie i samarbete med Inga Friberg,* Stockholmsmonografier (Uppsala: Liber Förlag, Almqvist & Wiksell, 1983), 255–256.
[79] Marja Erikson, *Älven, skogen, bruken: Älvkarleby genom tiderna*, *Kulturmiljöprogram för Älvkarleby kommun* (Älvkarleby kommun, 2002), 28.

Map 6. Destination for letters departed from Avesta, January–March 1681. Source: Post-protokoll, Avesta 1681, Postverket, vol. 5, Kammarkollegiet, RA.

community had population figures that equal the biggest towns in the Baltic region: Hamburg, Danzig and, Copenhagen.[80]

Some ninety kilometres southwest of Älvkarleby, in the southern part of the province Dalarna, was the town Avesta, with a copper industry and also the responsibility for the important coinage of the Swedish copper coins.[81] A post-journal (*postprotokoll*) from Avesta in 1681 has survived, giving an opportunity to reconstruct the correspondence network of the town. In post-journals, the postmasters kept accounts of the dispatched letters, with records of days of departure, name of the sender, name of the

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[80] *Baltic Towns: Historical towns of the Baltic and Scandinavia.*
[81] Helena Kåks, *Avesta: Industriarbete och vardagsliv genom 400 år*, DFR-rapport (Falun; Dalarnas forskningsråd, 2002), 43.

post office site to which the letter was destined, the weight of the letter, and, finally and most important for the accounts, the postage rate. Later post-journals (but not from Avesta in 1681) also differentiate between letters free of charge and postage letters and record the postage rates for both categories. For analyzing correspondence networks, post-journals are a source with good potential, but few of them have survived. The distribution of letters departing from Avesta from 26 January to 27 March in 1681 are presented on map 6. In total, 862 senders are registered.

The geographic extension of Avesta's correspondence network is more regional than Stockholm's. It almost coincides with the three öre silver coins' zone in the correspondence network for Stockholm in 1698 (map 4). In the post-journal for Avesta, Stockholm is the dominating destination with 455 letters (53%), followed by the copper town Falun with 170 letters (20%), and Västerås, the residence town for the governor of the province Västmanland and port town for the sea traffic on lake Mälaren, with 91 letters (11%). A few years later, in 1688, Avesta lost its town privileges and was administered as an industrial plant-village (*brukssamhälle*) by the magistrate in Falun. From the beginning, Avesta's town privileges worked like a satellite to Falun. The copper industry belonged to the Falun mining association (Falu bergslag) and was included when Falun first received its town privileges in 1641.[82]

Uppsala, and Avesta's two neighbours Sala and Säter, received between 3% and 5% each of the correspondence from Avesta. In the 1640s, much of the copper industry in Säter had been directed to Avesta.[83] Sala was the most important silver mine in Sweden. The other destinations, with just a few letters to each post office, are mostly in the same region, apart from a few letters to the west and southwest (Karlstad, Kristinehamn, Gothenburg). The main picture is of a communication network that connects the mining industry, with a stress on the copper mining industry, with the Mälar valley and the first ranked central place, Stockholm.

This geographic pattern is not unique for Avesta. A similar pattern appears in the court records from Torstuna hundred in 1690–99, the court district where Lars Wadensten had his brothers and sisters. Stockholm and Falun were the most important nodes, the more proximate towns Sala, Västerås, and Uppsala were second rated but important as well.[84]

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[82] Kåks, *Avesta*, 26, 47–49.
[83] *Ibidem*, 26–27.
[84] Simonson, *Den lokala scenen*, 94–95.

The Swedish historians Anders Florén and Göran Rydén have outlined an understanding of the mining districts north and west of Stockholm (Bergslagen) as an example of an economic region produced by the iron industry, with flows of goods and information. It was a region that was reshaped in the seventeenth century, as it became more centred around the established large-scale iron industrial plant-villages and connected to the international market via Stockholm and Gothenburg, sidestepping the smaller towns in the region.[85] As mentioned above, Leos Müller has analyzed the Stockholm merchant house Momma-Reenstierna and presented a correspondence pattern that on the one end included Amsterdam and London and the mining and iron industrial districts in the other end. Chris Evans and Göran Rydén analyzed the connection between the English market and the iron industry in northern Uppland some decades later. The same pattern appears, with local merchants in Stockholm acting as commissioners for English merchants and communicating the English orders and demands on the quality of goods to the iron industrial plants in northern Uppland. The brand "Orgrund" worked as a quality mark in England.[86]

Vital social networks of ironwork industrialists have been identified for the early nineteenth century in the mining district. They were prevalent in Dalarna, Västmanland, and Uppland. The Swedish historian Ylva Hasselberg analyzed one of those networks centred around the owners of the ironwork in Furudal in Dalarna and stretched across parts of the provinces Västmanland and Uppland as well. Hasselberg points out the "social economy" inherent in the functioning of those social networks. The networks provided necessary resources for the production and reproduction of the ironworks industrialists' households: credibility, information exchange, and access to technical innovations among others.[87]

The general postage tariff from 1693 provided an infrastructure at comparatively low costs for regional information exchange in the central part of Sweden — useful for maintaining social networks. When the Board of Chancery recommended a moderation of increased postage due to higher weights, it especially mentioned letters about weddings and funerals,

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[85] Anders Florén and Göran Rydén, *Arbete, hushåll och region: Tankar om industriali-seringsprocessen och den svenska järnhanteringen*, Uppsala Papers in Economic History, Research Report, 29 (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 1992), 92–95, 102.
[86] Chris Evans and Göran Rydén, "Iron Marks as Early Brand Names: Swedish Iron in the Atlantic Market during the Eighteenth Century", *Information Flows: New Approaches in the Historical Study of Business Information*, ed. by Leos Müller and Jari Ojala (Helsinki: SKS, 2007), 194, 198.
[87] Hasselberg, *Den sociala ekonomin*, 98–99, 288–290.

bundled in packages. According to the postal historian Erik Swartling, such letters were common among the social elite.[88] This meant that the Board of Chancery was willing to facilitate a kind of correspondence that must have been of special importance for keeping social networks together.

Whether such regional social networks were flourishing already in the end of the seventeenth century is another matter. It would no doubt be the case among the nobility and the clergy, that for a long time already had geographically extended social networks.[89] In the Age of Liberty (1719–72), an extended social network was a part of the political life, as well as being used in often coinciding personal careers.[90] For the kind of social network among entrepreneurs in the mining industry focused on here, the prerequisites for extended social networks may have been less developed. The evidence from Avesta does not suggest extensive communication within the mining area. Contacts with the iron manufacturers in northern Uppland are invisible. This may reflect a more concentrated economic region that was determined by the organization of the copper production. There are reasons to suspect, however, that the iron-producing manufacturers would provide a similar peripheral dependence on correspondence within Mälar valley towns rather than a flourishing interaction within the Bergslagen region.

Probably, the development of such regional interaction was constrained, not by the information costs but by the lack of a more dense postal network providing fast intra-regional communication. Short distances did not necessarily mean small time-lags. Research into hour passes suggests that the time-lag in the information-circle of Älvkarleby-Hamburg may have not been longer than for the information-circle of Älvkarleby-Falun.[91] One may also suspect a process towards more regionalized networks in the same manner as Veluwenkamp describes for the Dutch communities in the Baltic towns. The communities of Dutch agents only gradually intermarried with local elites, and were originally enclaves more closely connected with Amsterdam.[92] When the Swedish mining industry was growing in the first half of the seventeenth century, entrepreneurs from the Netherlands,

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[88] Erik Swartling, "Moderation i postporto", *Postryttaren*, 1961, 6–8.
[89] Åsa Karlsson, "Enväldets politiska elit: släkt och äktenskapsband inom rådskretsen 1680–1718", *Svensk historisk tidskrift* (1997); Cecilia Ihse, *Präst, stånd och stat: Kung och kyrka i förhandling 1642–1686*, Stockholm Studies in History, 78 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2005), 159–171.
[90] The theme is more thoroughly discussed with references to research in Örjan Simonson, "Herraväldet i helgedomen: Uppsala domkyrkas förvaltning cirka 1530–1860", *Upplandsmuseets skriftserie*, 5 (Uppsala: Upplandsmuseet, 2008), 109–110.
[91] Simonson, "The Swedish Empire and Postal Communication".
[92] Veluwenkamp, "International Business Communication Patterns", 130–131.

such as de Geer and de Besche, were important. They controlled the whole chain from the production of pig-iron to export to the Netherlands. In parts of the mining districts, peasant-miners (*bergsmän*) remained an important category throughout the century. At the end of the seventeenth century, the entrepreneurs in the iron and copper industries were to an increasing extent of burgher origin from Swedish port towns. They often preferred to control the trade, leaving the production to book-keepers or the supervisors on the plants. The network of entrepreneurs residing in their manor houses in the vicinity of manufacturing plants, which Hasselberg has described for the nineteenth century, was only in its infancy in the seventeenth century.[93]
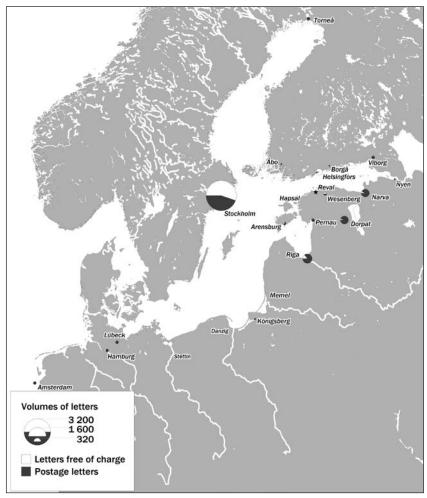
Reval and the Baltic provinces

On his mission to the Baltic provinces in 1687–88, the postal inspector Johan Lange collected post-journals from Riga, Reval, Dorpat (Tartu), Pernau (Pärnu), and Wesenberg (Rakvere). A summary of the Riga post-journal has been previously published by Pārsla Pētersone, and a summary of all post-journals will be published in a forthcoming overview of Johan Lange's mission by Enn Küng.[94] The post-journal from Reval is from 15–31 December 1687 and presents a total of 440 senders. The geographical distribution of letters from Reval is presented in map 7.

Also in this case, Stockholm had a dominant position in the correspondence network. 118 letters (27%) were sent there. Of them, fifty letters (42%) were free of charge. This result also corresponds to the large share of letters free of charge dispatched from Stockholm to the Baltic provinces. Enn Küng remarks that the Riga post office had an even higher proportion of letters free of charge.[95] The Reval correspondence network can be interpreted as consisting mainly of civil and military servants and their families. The officials communicated with the centre of the empire. Not a single letter was destined to any other town west of the Baltic Sea

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93 Maj-Britt Nergård, *Mellan krona och marknad: Utländska och svenska entreprenörer inom svensk järnhantering från ca 1580 till 1700,* Studia Historica Upsaliensia, 197 (Uppsala: Uppsala universitet, 2001), 244–283.
94 Pārsla Pētersone, "Riga als bedeutender Knotenpunkt im Schwedischen Post- und Verkehrsystem des 17. Jahrhunderts", *1. Symposium zur Postgeschichte Lettlands,* Riga, 11. August 2001 (Hamburg: Hofmann Verlag, 2001), 6; Enn Küng, "The Postal Order in Estland and Livland in the Seventeenth Century and Jacob Lange's Postal Inspection in 1687/1688". The manuscript is to be published in an anthology about the postal service in the Baltic area in 2010, edited by Heiko Droste, Södertörn University.
95 Küng, "The Postal Order in Estland and Livland".

Map 7. Destinations for letters departed from Reval, December 1687. Source: Revelsches Post-protocoll oder Journal von 15 bis ult: Desemb: 687, Kontrollören J. Langes visitationsberättelser, G 2 F:1, Kanslikollegium, RA.

(although one letter found its way to Tornio, north of the Bothnian Bay). Just twenty-seven letters (6%) were destined to the nearby Nyen and towns on the northern shores of the Finnish Gulf. Together with the results for Avesta and Stockholm, the post-journal from Reval supports the interpretation that the Swedish empire consisted of several regions that were divided by the sea. Stockholm was the connecting centre between those different parts of the empire.

A regional correspondence network is also evident, as 251 letters (57%) went to towns in Ösel (Saaremaa), Estonia, and Livonia: Arensburg (Kuressaare), Riga, Dorpat, Wesenberg, Narva, and Pernau. The proportion between postage and letters free of charge can be distorted in single cases because of the small volumes of letters departing from a town (three letters free of charge are 33% of all letters sent to nearby Wesenberg). Generally the proportion of postage letters, and hence of more private, non-official correspondence, was higher within the Baltic provinces.

Forty-two letters (10%) were sent south and west of Livonia, from Memel (Klaipeda) to Amsterdam. This includes two free of charge letters to the Swedish possession Stettin, but the remaining letters were destined outside the Swedish possessions and were postage letters. They reflect the commercial connections Reval had with the Baltic and Atlantic economy. Amsterdam, Hamburg and Lübeck received most of the letters. Apart from Stockholm, the Reval correspondents had their interests directed to the European commercial centre, rather than to the Swedish empire.

The figures from Reval resemble those found in the post-journals from Dorpat, Pernau, and Wesenberg (although the total amount of letters for Pernau and Wesenberg is too small to show a reliable distribution). Stockholm is important, otherwise it is the Estonian and Livonian towns that figure, however from Dorpat one letter each was sent to Åbo and Vekelax in Finland, and one letter to Jönköping in Sweden.[96]

The post-journal from Riga deviates from the pattern. Not with regard to Sweden: Stockholm is the only town in Sweden proper to receive letters from Riga, and just a few went to the Finnish towns, such as Vaasa, Åbo, Helsingfors (Helsinki), and Vyborg. Compared to Reval, however, Riga had more letters addressed to towns along the Baltic south coast, from Mitau (Jelgava) in Courland to Lübeck in the west, and further west to Hamburg and Amsterdam, which both received many letters from Riga. The geographical spread may be even larger, hidden in the post-journal under the labels "German post" and post "from Königsberg [Kaliningrad] and Memel". There were also several letters addressed to the Russian towns Moscow, Pskov, and Novgorod.[97]

Küng also observes that Lange in the case of Reval estimates the revenue in the summertime to be only half the amount of that in the wintertime, since letters were sent by ship in the summer. Lange does not count on the

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[96] Küng, "The Postal Order in Estland and Livland".
[97] *Ibidem.*

same seasonal differences in the case of Riga.[98] This may be interpreted as a different trust in the postal service, and as a consequence of a larger proportion of the intra-regional letters from Reval being addressed to Sweden with its expensive and unreliable postal routes.

Table 1. Two öre silver coins' clusters in Ingria, Estonia, Ösel, and Livonia[99]

	Viborg	Kexholm	Nyen	Narva	Wesenberg	Reval	Pernau	Arensburg	Dorpat	Wollmar	Wenden	Riga	sum
Viborg (Vyborg, Viipuri, Carelia)		x	x										2(3)*
Kexholm (Priozersk, Käkisalmi, Carelia)	x		x										2
Nyen	x	x		x									3
Narva			x		x		x						3
Wesenberg (Rakvere)				x		x			x				3
Reval (Tallinn)					x								1
Pernau (Pärnu)								x					1
Arensburg (Kuresaare)							x						1
Dorpat (Tartu)					x								1
Wollmar (Valmiera)											x	x	2
Wenden (Cēsis)										x		x	2
Riga										x	x		2

* In the Viborg tariff, the postage to Vekelax in Finland was two öre silver coins.

Table 1 shows "two öre silver coin's clusters" in Ingria, Estonia, Ösel, and Livonia. The figures have to be regarded with caution, since the postage tariff appears to ignore some of the towns within the postal network (notably Hapsal). Still, they allow for the conclusion that the postage rates did not give the same beneficial infrastructure for regional correspondence as in central Sweden. The urban population in the Baltic provinces could only correspond with two or three towns in the region at a cost of two öre silver coins per letter – which was an improvement compared to the situation when the postal inspector Johan Lange visited the provinces in 1687 and

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[98] Küng, "The Postal Order in Estland and Livland".
[99] Sources: "Underrättelse om Postgången uti Kongl. Recidensen Stockholm, med hosfogad Breftaxa" and "Utdrag af Kongl. Maj:ts underskrefne Post-taxor och andra förordningar [...]".

1688. The postage rates in 1693 had about the same relation to distance as in the core area in Sweden, but the "nearest neighbour", i.e. the nearest post office, was generally more distant.

Before the incorporation in the Swedish Post Office, the network was primarily built to serve the needs of the merchants in the bigger port towns, not to integrate the territory. The postal service in the Baltic provinces was first built by the Riga merchant Jacob Becker. From 1632 and onwards, it was a private enterprise under the auspices of the Swedish state. In his peak years during the Thirty Years War, Becker managed postal routes that covered large and important parts of Europe. From Riga one route went north into Livonia, Estonia, and all the way to Åbo and Stockholm, to the west another route went along the Baltic coastline to Hamburg, then south to Marburg and north to Copenhagen. A third route went south to Warsaw, and from there a branch went further south to Venice, while another one found its way to Berlin and Paris.[100] In the 1660s, Riga became the junction for the Russian Post Office, with a route between Riga and Moscow. Eventually, at the end of the seventeenth century, the Riga postal service (under Becker's son-in-law Statius Stein) saw its influence shrink. The postal services in Brandenburg and Courland restricted its reach, and the Swedish Post Office that was reorganizing in Stockholm took steps to incorporate the organization into the Swedish one.[101] Johan Lange's mission was one part of this incorporation, as was the general postage tariff that also included Estonia and Livonia a few years later. On his mission, Lange criticized the – in his view – unintelligible postage rates in the Baltic provinces.[102]

But the Baltic postal service also reflected a different urban structure. There was not the same pattern of small towns serving a local neighbourhood as in central Sweden. Instead, Estonia and Livonia had a few important towns which were involved in the Baltic trade. In addition, however, some estates also served as nodes in the postal system. The landowners were obliged to supply the postal service with inns as relay stations for changing horses.[103] Those inns also became a good source of income for the landowners and could function as post offices as well.[104] Johan Lange
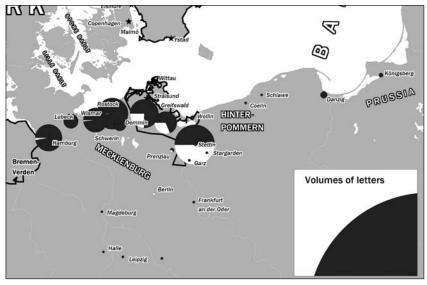
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[100] Pētersone, "Riga als bedeutender Knotenpunkt", 3–4.
[101] *Ibidem*, 9; Pārsla Pētersone, "Entstehung und Modernisierung der Post- und Verkehrs-verbindungen im Baltikum im 17. Jahrhundert", *Liber Annalis Instituti Baltici*, *Acta Baltica XXXV* (Königstein im Taunus, 1997), 212–214.
[102] Küng, "The Postal Order in Estland and Livland".
[103] Pētersone, "Entstehung und Modernisierung", 209.
[104] Kahk, Tarvel, *An Economic History*, 52; Gertrud Westermann, *Krüge und Poststationen in Estland und Nordlivland: vom 17. bis zum 20. Jahrhundert* (Lüneburg: Verlag

Map 8. Destination of letters departed from Stralsund, November 1694. Source: Stralsundisch post protocol con 28 Octobr: bis 17 Novembr: 1694, no 24, Documenta med allegata hvärja till i Pommern och Wismar förrettade visitationen åhr 1694, fol 75, Kontrollören J. Langes visitationsberättelser, G 2 F:2, Kanslikollegium, RA.

observed on his mission that postmen could take off from the main postal roads to deliver letters to single estates, a habit that annoyed Lange as it slowed down the conveyance.[105] Still, the conditions for virtual communities in Estonia and Livonia were less beneficial. They were also societies that were more segmented between different estates, between the urban and agrarian populations, and between German-speaking elites and a subordinate peasantry.

Stralsund and West Pomerania

On another mission in West Pomerania and in Wismar in 1694, Johan Lange also collected a post-journal from Stralsund, from 28 October to 17 November. On map 8, the destinations of 562 departing letters between 28 October and 10 November are displayed. The post-journal also contains

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Nordostdeutsches Kulturwerk, 1994), 8.
[105] "Underdåning Ödmiuk Deduction öfwer den till Est- och Liflandh förrettade resan och Commissionen ifrå d. 23 Novemb: 1687 till d 10de Martij 1688 [...]", dat. Stockholm 15 March 1688, in *Kontrollören J Langes visitationsberättelser*, vol. G 2 F:1, Kanslikollegium, RA, fol. 5v–6r.

records of arriving mail, since this generated revenues to the postmaster as well. These records are not presented on the map.

When interpreting the records in the Stralsund post-journal, one has to consider its function to give an account of the revenues for the postmaster. Not a single letter is recorded as sent from Stralsund to Sweden, but there are some notations that letters from Sweden arrived in Stralsund and would be further transferred to Frankfurt (an der Oder), Stettin (Szczecin), Königsberg, or some other place. Probably, letters to Sweden were regarded as belonging to the Swedish Post Office organization instead and recorded somewhere else. In contrast to Sweden and the Baltic provinces, the West Pomeranian postal service was not the only agent in the province. It competed with Brandenburg's and Hamburg's Post Office, and was partly dependent on the latter. Only in 1698 did Sweden and Brandenburg reach an agreement to respect the territorial integrity of each others' postal services, and to use Stettin as a junction for transit post.[106] It is not definite that the post-journal shows all letters going to Berlin or Königsberg or other places within Brandenburg's realm. The final destination may have been recorded as Stettin when the letter was further transferred by Brandenburg's post office.

In contrast to the dense Swedish postal network, only the four most important towns in West Pomerania had their own postmasters in 1994. Lange concluded that it was at least thirty *Mittel-* or *Amtstädte,* big enough to deserve its own post office, and consequently appointed postmasters in several towns during his mission.[107] In the beginning of the eighteenth century, however, the towns in West Pomerania petitioned for an abolition of the appointed postmasters, as they found the invention too expensive and in competition with the municipal *Fuhrdienste* (forwarding agencies), which transported letters when needed.108 The post-journal informs about two occasions of further transfer from Anklam to Wolgast and one from Greifswald to Demmin, probably with a *Fuhrdienst* (these instances are not presented on the map). Such further transfer could have been recorded ad hoc, since the final destination did not concern the postal service. However,

[106] H. v. Stephan, K. Sautter, *Geschichte der preussichen Post* (Berlin: R. v. Deckers Verlag - G. Schenk, 1928), 94.
[107] "Controlleuren Langes relation [...] ang. [...] postvisitation i Pommern och Wismar, åhr 1694", Kanslikollegium, Kontrollören J Langes visitationsberättelser, G 2 F:2, Kanslikollegium, RA, fol 10 and passim.
[108] Ad § 6, 1. April 1700, die Landstände an den Generalstatthalter und die Regierung. Sie wollen ein Memorial einschicken, zur Remedierung von Missständen usw. Präsentiert am 3. April 1700, Handschriften HS 654, Stadtarchiv Stralsund.

the fact that such events were worth recording, and the negative response to the "unnecessary" appointing of new postmasters, suggest that this postal traffic was not very frequent.

The three other towns in West Pomerania with their own post offices, together received 277 or 49% of the letters from Stralsund. Another twenty-two letters sent to Gustrau and Wollin (Wyspa), increased the share of letters sent within the realm of West Pomerania to 53%. Stettin was the most important destination, with an amount of 139 (25%) letters. Stettin also received the largest share of letters free of charge (52%), but a large share of letters free of charge was evident also for Anklam and Greifswald. On some occasions, Johan Lange expressed criticism against what he found to be too licentious privileges of letters sent free of charge, and one may suspect that they reflected more the position of the sender than the content of the letter.[109] Abuse of the right to send letters free of charge was a problem in Sweden as well, but there at least regarded as an abuse and subject to disciplinary sanctions.[110]

Fifty-eight letters were also sent to the Swedish possession Wismar. Only one was a letter free of charge, which indicates a correspondence pattern that had less to do with administrative networks. It is notable that the most western of the Swedish German possessions, Bremen-Verden, did not receive a single letter, which may indicate that it was beyond the reach of the West Pomeranian postal service. In 1683, the postal service in Bremen-Verden was contracted to the General Director of the Post Office in Braunschweig, Franz Ernst Platen, an entrepreneur who had built up a postal empire in northwest Germany in bitter competition with the Thurn and Taxis.[111] However, there are no other signals of contacts with Bremen-Verden in the post-journal. The connections between the two Swedish provinces in Germany appear to have been weak.

Outside the Swedish possessions, Stralsund was directed westwards and Hamburg (68 letters), Lübeck (25 letters), and Rostock (89 letters) west of West Pomerania were the most important destinations. The important trading towns Danzig and Königsberg in the east attracted less correspondence. It

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[109] Controlleuren Langes relation ang. postvisitation i Pommern och Wismar, bilaga 4-10, Fasc 1, pag 2v–3r, Kanslikollegium, Kontrollören J. Langes visitationsberättelser, G 2 F:2, RA.

[110] Magnus Olsson, "Kampen mot missbruket av fribrev. Fight against Abuse of Post-Free Letters", *Postryttaren*, 57 (Stockholm: Postmuseum, 2007), 83–86.

[111] Ludwig Kalmus, *Weltgeschichte der Post: Mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des deutschen Sprachgebietes* (Wien: Verlag für Militär- und Fachliteratur Amon Fran Göth, 1937), 283–284.

was almost exclusively postage letters, which indicates a business correspondence with the economic centres of both the traditional Hanseatic network in the Baltic Sea and the North Sea centred network, where Hamburg became ever more important at the end of the seventeenth century.[112]

An interimistic postage tariff was approved by King Charles XII for West Pomerania from 1 January 1700 (table 2). The tariff is similar to the postage rates in the post-journal from 1694 and probably comes close to earlier praxis.[113] The postage in the range of 1–5 Lübeck shillings (1 Lübeck shilling = 1.5 öre silver coins) had a higher price level than the Swedish general postage tariff, as the whole province was not larger than ca. 200 kilometres from Damgarten in the northwest to Stettin in the southeast. The postage for Damgarten to Stettin was not far from the postage rate defined as constraining in the Swedish context. This is especially noteworthy as the postmasters in West Pomerania also had an additional income from passenger traffic. The tariffs for West Pomerania appear to be aimed less at promoting a demand in the province. The postmasters in West Pomerania could probably count on an inelastic demand in the correspondence with Hamburg, Danzig, Lübeck, and the other important trade towns instead.

Table 2. Interimistic postage tariff for West Pomerania, 1700, rates in Lübeck shilling*[114]

	Stralsund	Greifswald	Anklam	Stettin	Demmin	Ukermünde	Wolgast	Bergen	Barth	Damgarten	Rostock
Stralsund		1	2	4	2	3	2	1	1	1.5	2**
Greifswald	1		1	3	1	2	1	2	2	2	3**
Anklam	2	1		2	1	1	1	3	3	3	
Stettin (Szczecin)	1	3	2		3	1	3	5	5	5	
Demmin	2	1	1	3		2	2	3	3	3	
Ukermünde	3	2	1	1	2		2	4	4	4	

*   1 Lübeck shilling = 1,5 Swedish öre silver coins.
** Half of the postage from Stralsund, and a fourth of he postage from Greifswald to Rostock was to be delivered to the postmaster in Rostock.

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112 David Ormrod, *The Rise of Commercial Empires: England and the Netherlands in the Age of Mercantilism, 1650–1770* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 127–129.
113 Post-journals from Stralsund, Greifswald, Wismar, Stettin, Anklam and other towns in "Documenta och Allegata hörige till den i Pommern och Wismar förrättade Postvisitationen åhr 1694", *Kontrollören J. Langes visitationsberättelser*, G 2 F:2, Kanslikollegium, RA.
114 Source: Taxa på det inländske bref-porto emellan någre städer i Pommern, interim och tills widare förordning, Afskrifter, postmästarstater 1673–1799, vol E 1 B:1, Överpostdirektören, Postkamrerarens arkiv, RA.

The level of rates in West Pomerania must thus have provided less fertile ground for correspondence networks. In addition, the postal network in West Pomerania did not have the same density as the Swedish one, which reached also the smallest towns.

The postal historian Ludwig Kalmus judges the Swedish postal system in the eighteenth century as one of the most backward in Europe.[115] This is justified in many respects, but not concerning the Post Office's ambition to provide a dense network, useful for regional correspondence. The policy of setting the postage rates according to distance, and the principle to supply also minor towns with a postmaster, was supportive of regional correspondence. The design of the general postage tariff represented a deliberate effort to provide a good infrastructure for communication within a region at low costs.[116] Entrepreneurial postal organizations, such as Jacob Becker's in Riga, and the postmasters in West Pomerania under protection of the Swedish crown, were more apt to profit from big information flows and more inelastic demand for news between "information highways" – the major trading towns on the eastern and southern shores of the Baltic sea.

Conclusions

The abstract figures of postage rate zones and geographic distribution of letters departing from a certain post office are evidence of interaction and human relations. The difference between many letters and few letters to a destination was a difference between a constant presence and an occasional visit. Frequent, continuous contacts shaped and maintained *virtual communities*. I have used this label to refer to something distinct from local communities with their face-to-face interactions, and imagined communities built on the construction of collective identities without a personal knowledge of every member of the community. Virtual communities mean the integration of social networks as in local communities, not face-to-face but virtual, and mediated over distance through correspondence.

Those involved in the correspondence networks often possessed a lot of political and economic power resources. Interaction meant an application of those resources within the virtual communities maintained by the correspondence networks. It also meant an intervention with power resources in local communities, as in the hamlet Vappby in Torstuna

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[115] Kalmus, *Weltgeschichte der Post*, 392.
[116] [Nya taxor för brevporto till städerna] 13 December 1692, Skrivelser till Kungl. Maj:t, Kanslikollegiet, vol 1, 1656–95, RA.

hundred, when the distant brother/assessor Lars Wadensten acted through letters, applying his superior social position and economic resources. The interaction going on in correspondence networks is an important key in understanding how societal systems, not least systems of commercial and political power, intervened and were integrated into local communities.

Previous studies have revealed that the seventeenth century Swedish Post Office had problems mastering communication across the Baltic Sea, and this study confirms that correspondence networks stretched over the Baltic Sea to a lesser extent. This also applies to the empire's capital Stockholm, which otherwise had a special correspondence pattern. Stockholm's correspondence was less regionally confined compared to the other towns in the study: Avesta, Reval, and Stralsund. Stockholm was the most important destination for correspondence from Avesta (in the mining district about 150 kilometres northwest of Stockholm), but also for correspondents in Reval who, apart from Stockholm, did not send any letters to Sweden west of the Baltic Sea. The survey of Stralsund in the Swedish province West Pomerania does not produce a certain answer as to the correspondence pattern with Sweden proper, but the correspondence from Stockholm and Avesta to West Pomerania was limited. A general conclusion is that the different regions in the empire did not have much inter-regional correspondence, but that Stockholm always was an important node for correspondence – at least for central Sweden and the Baltic provinces. Not surprisingly, there are signs that it was the administrative functions that motivated the correspondence on the imperial level. The class of civil and military servants in charge of the administration also maintained their social networks with their friends and families by post.

Central Sweden had the best potential to maintain regional virtual communities, at least concerning the level of information costs caused by the postage rates and the density of networks. Other limitations – such as the dominant position of Stockholm in the administrative and economic organization of the region, infrequent postal conveyance and, in the case of the mining district, a probable absence of a social elite interested in communication within the region apart from Stockholm – may have postponed the appearance of regional virtual communities. The pattern appearing for Avesta in 1681 shows a dependence on Stockholm and Falun. The regional networks existed and flourished a hundred years later, however, as important social networks for entrepreneurs in the mining industries. Already at the end of the seventeenth century, an inter-regional correspondence

network existed, connecting the iron and copper producing regions with the export markets in Hamburg, Lübeck, and Amsterdam.

The postal networks in the Baltic provinces and in West Pomerania were more adapted to meet the needs of business correspondence and less inclined to develop a dense regional network with low postage rates. The urban structure in Estonia and Livonia was also different from West Pomerania and central Sweden with fewer but more populated towns. Thus, there were less beneficial grounds for regional virtual communities than in central Sweden. It appears that the communication pattern rather was maintained between the more important commercial nodes. The connections with the commercial centres in Hamburg, Lübeck and Amsterdam were more important than other parts of the Swedish empire, save Stockholm.

Örjan Simonson (b. 1964) is Senior Lecturer of history, Södertörn University.

Kokkuvõte: *17. sajandi virtuaalsed kogukonnad. Postiteenus ja korrespondentsvõrgustikud Rootsi suurriigis*

Postiteenuse tariifitsoonide ja kirjade sihtpunktide geograafilise jaotuse kuivad arvud annavad tunnistust inimeste omavahelisest läbikäimisest. Erinevust ühte sihtkohta saadetud rohkete ja teisale saadetud väheste kirjade vahel võib võrrelda erinevusega pideva kohalolu ja juhusliku külastuse vahel. Sagedased kontaktid lõid ja säilitasid virtuaalseid kogukondi. Käesolevas artiklis on kasutatud seda mõistet eristamaks kirjavahetuse teel alalhoitud sotsiaalseid võrgustikke vahetul suhtlusel põhinevatest kohalikest kogukondadest ning kollektiivsetel identiteetidel põhinevatest kujutletavatest kogukondadest.

Varasemad uurimused on näidanud, et Rootsi postisüsteemil oli 17. sajandil raskusi postiteenuse korraldamisel üle Läänemere. Artiklis leiab kinnitust, et ülemereprovintsid jäid korrespondentsvõrgustikest suuresti eemale. See kehtib isegi pealinna Stockholmi kohta, ehkki sealne kirjavahetus oli vähem regionaalselt piiratud kui teistel vaadeldud linnadel: Avestal, Tallinnal ja Stralsundil. Stockholm oli olulisim sihtpunkt 150 km kaugusel asuvast kaevanduskeskusest Avestast tulevatele kirjadele, aga ka

Tallinnale, kust lääne poole Rootsi suurriiki ei saadetud ühtki kirja mujale kui Stockholmi. Ees-Pommeris asuva Stralsundi kirjavahetuse uurimine ei anna küll selget mustrit, ent märgatav on Stockholmist ja Avestast Ees-Pommerisse saadetud vähene kirjade hulk. Üldiselt saab järeldada, et Rootsi riigi erinevad regioonid ei suhelnud omavahel kuigi tihedalt; samas oli Stockholm alati oluliseks korrespondentsikeskuseks vähemalt Kesk-Rootsi ja Balti provintside jaoks. Pole üllatav, et regioonidevahelise kirjavahetuse põhimotiiviks oli haldusfunktsioonide täitmine, ent tsiviilteenistujate ja ohvitseride klass hoidis posti teel alal ka sotsiaalseid võrgustikke sõprade ja perekonnaliikmetega.

Kesk-Rootsil oli suurim potentsiaal regionaalsete virtuaalsete kogukondade tekkimiseks, arvestades postitariifidest tingitud informatsioonikulusid ning võrgustike tihedust. Avestas 1681. aastal jälgitav muster näitab sõltuvust eeskätt Stockholmist ja Falunist, ent juba 17. sajandi lõpul kujuneb välja ka regioonidevaheline korrespondentsvõrgustik, mis sidus rauda ja vaske tootvad Kesk-Rootsi piirkonnad eksporditurgudega Hamburgis, Lübeckis ja Amsterdamis. Balti provintside ja Ees-Pommeri postivõrgustikud olid välja kujunenud ärikirjavahetuse vajadusi silmas pidades ning ei soodustanud madalatel tariifidel põhinevate tihedate regionaalsete võrgustike toimimist. Eesti- ja Liivimaa linnaline struktuur oma väheste, ent rahvarohkete linnadega erines samuti Kesk-Rootsist ja Ees-Pommerist. Seega ei soodustanud kohalikud olud regionaalseid virtuaalseid kogukondi ja kommunikatsioon toimis eeskätt olulisemate kaubanduskeskuste vahel. Kontaktid kaubanduslinnade Hamburgi, Lübecki ja Amsterdamiga olid tähtsamad kui Rootsi impeeriumi teiste regioonidega, erandiks oli siinkohal Stockholm.