

INTRODUCTION

At a time when globalization is seen as one of the most important characteristics of our present-day world, it is not surprising that the debate on the roots of it takes a very prominent place in historical writing. A growing tendency to see one interconnected world today has created a need to write a history of such a world.

Two big issues dominate this field, and economic development plays a fundamental role in both. The first approach to world history looks for an explanation for global economic divergence. Economical, but also cultural and technological advantages have been incorporated into macro-historical accounts explaining the different speeds of growth of different regions. Rationalization, specific cultural, social or legal underpinnings of societies, religion, political systems and technological development all have been analysed as reasons why some regions of Western Europe were able to experience a unique economic growth.¹ A body of literature confirming European superiority has been questioned by opposing scholars who argue that the gap between the West and the rest of the world was not as wide as is sometimes assumed.² An important part of their analysis is that many of the qualities considered present in European societies were not as unique as they are sometimes made out to be. Part of this critique stems from the fact that the analysis of difference has too often been directed by a biased methodological point of view, complemented by a lack of empirical knowledge of non-Western source material.³ A second problem often attributed to global histories of divergences is that they depart from a too static comparative basis: 'a major difficulty ... has been the tendency to view civilizations as timeless essences whose fate is predetermined at the moment of inception by their constituent elements.'⁴ The second big question in world history opposes this comparative framework in which civilizations are looked upon as closed entities. It offers an analysis of the elements that tie the world together, and in this sense, it is dominated by the question of when globalization began. There are about as many definitions of globalization as there are historical narratives of it, and opinions about its relevance in different fields, such as politics, culture or economics, are divided. What does seem clear is that any definition needs to rely on the notion of global interconnectedness caused by human interaction. One of the forms of interaction that has been considered as one of the

strongest causal factors for a growing global interconnectedness is international trade and the question about the origins of globalization becomes a matter of analysing when the density of international trade circuits became high enough for them to serve as proof of an integrated world.

Out of a desire to explain the world we are living in today, globalized and regulated by free market exchange, historical discourse on trade has often taken a macro-perspective. It is clear that in the eighteenth century, the world was not the global village that it is often perceived to be today. Analyses of global interconnectedness based on hard economic terms, such as price convergence on international markets or the volume of international trade, has led to doubts about the existence of a pre-modern globalization.⁵ In recent years, and inspired by legal scholars, anthropologists and sociologists, economic historians have come to focus more on a micro-perspective of trade. Rather than seeing commerce as the main organizer of our modern world, explanation is sought in analyses of the organizational forms that make trade possible. This shift in perspective also means a change in methodology: a Weberian, structure-based approach is challenged by a Durkheimian type of economic analysis offering a more central place to human agency. One of the benefits of game theory in analysing economic behaviour has been that

Rather than assuming that individuals follow rules, it provides an analytical framework within which it is possible to study the way in which behavior is endogenously generated – how, through their interactions, individuals gain the information, ability, and motivation to follow particular rules of behavior.⁶

The insertion of the human aspect has in turn led to different schools of thought, relying on fundamentally different notions of what aspects of human behaviour are relevant when discussing commerce. Analyses of commerce that rely on social embeddedness and cultural norms often stand in contrast to narratives on trade that rely on the development of institutions as efficient and problem-solving instruments. While the first category of theories uses concepts such as networks, diasporas and commercial friendship as successful social vehicles to overcome problems of commercial trust, the second by-passes such concepts by considering the importance of self-interest and rational calculation. The central issue concerns cheating: why would a merchant trust another one, who he might have never met? New economic sociology, building on Mark Granovetter's work on social embeddedness, has concentrated on the importance of social ties in this regard. Cheating is avoided because the social price to be paid would be too high, such as excommunication from the community, or because social control is too strong. Others have focused on rational behaviour as the incentive for sustained commercial relationships: cheating is, in the long run, harmful to the self-interest of the cheater.⁷ In this sense, the concept of trust has been criticized

for being useless in explaining commercial relationships, as it can be considered to be a rationally created device to overcome the concrete problems of trade posed by long-term commitments between merchants living far away from each other. The argument made in this book will rely on a notion of commercial trust that is partially based on rational choice but also on non-rational elements that have origins in a socio-cultural setting that encompasses business alone.

The idea of a social embeddedness of commerce has been influential with regard to economic history and the macro-perspective of international trade. The role of widely dispersed diaspora communities is considered to be fundamental in the development of large-scale connections.⁸ Important in these studies is a focus on the human element as a basis for a growing interconnectedness. The ability of a trade diaspora to pass geographical and political boundaries gives it such a prominent place in global history. Diaspora communities are seen as offering a socio-cultural setting in which commerce can flourish and trade networks based on diaspora movements function by using communal control and the adoption of shared norms and values. A strong tendency towards intermarriage fortified such mono-cultural networks.⁹ But not all international trade connections resided within mono-cultural, mono-religious or mono-ethnic blocs. At some point, merchants belonging to a diaspora engaged in business with traders belonging to different communities. In this sense, international trade bears a strong cross-cultural mark. Commercial contact between merchants with different backgrounds becomes relevant if such contacts took place on a regular and stable basis. With regard to globalization, it is of vital importance to study the cross-cultural aspect of international trade. It shifts attention from the study of relationships between groups instead of an analysis of what made commerce work within one specific group.¹⁰

The definition of globalization through commerce can be refined to incorporate not only the density of international trade circuits, but also the degree of cross-cultural interaction. To support the claim for early modern globalization, a study of commercial networks is needed. This book is about a specific cross-cultural trade network of diamond traders who were active in the eighteenth century. It is a study of commerce as it took place between merchants who did not share the same religion, nationality or background, but who were all members of a commercial society, with its own logic, its own organization and its own language. The main question is micro-historical in scope: how was trade organized between merchants of different origins? The answer points to the use of reputational mechanisms. A merchant's reputation was his most important asset. It was built upon past conduct in trade, creditworthiness and the regularity of his commercial correspondence. The relevance of personal reputation in commerce should not be underestimated. History has a large tradition of explaining certain developments in terms of the personality of actors, but such human-based

analysis always seems to have held more power when analysing the roles played by rulers or thinkers than when considering the role played by groups such as merchants. By asserting the importance of formalized personality-based criteria in commercial society, a larger agency is given to the human element in the historical development of international trade. Reputation plays a role both in the construction of privileged network relationships and in a merchant's valuation in a larger business community. The international mercantile society was not a formal body of merchants all acting according to well-established rules, but rather an informal set of negotiated norms and commercial customs that were adopted amongst a wide variety of trade relations. Although in essence, self-interest was a crucial motivation for every merchant participating in international trade, merchants were aware that they could only serve their own interests by looking out for the interests of others and the common language developed between traders is often a language stressing mutual benefit. Albert O. Hirschman has stated that 'the by-product of individuals acting predictably in accordance with their economic interests was ... not an uneasy balance, but a strong web of interdependent relationships'.¹¹ This is crucial in understanding the role played by socio-cultural elements with regard to commercial behaviour. Self-interest is by no means absent, but became a recognized principle within commercial society in the sense that self-interest in others was also accepted. According to Amalia Kessler, 'anti-commercial norms of selflessness served to promote commercial self-interest'.¹² I. Ben-Amos considers that the evolution towards modernity 'has typically centered on the supposed decline of personal obligations and the emergence of more calculating, selfish norms'.¹³ Rather than seeing a substitution of a system based on social and personal relationships with a system based on rationality, early modern commercial society managed to construct commercial relationships by incorporating social customs. Eighteenth-century commercial society developed in a way that anti-commercial norms of selflessness were used as a common language on which long-lasting and regular trade relationships could develop that served mutual interests.

This idea makes traders more than individuals in a market society. Human agency with regard to worldwide integration is not given to the individual, nor is globalization explained by structural economical conditions. Attention to networks rather than individual entrepreneurs is one of the most important developments in business history in recent years. In establishing the historical agency exerted by networks of trade, finance and information, the role of the individual entrepreneur is taken out if its cadre of rationality and self-interest to be inserted into a theory in which cooperation and interaction are the crucial forms of agency.¹⁴

The merchants whose activities serve as the empirical basis for this book were all active in the diamond trade. There are two important reasons why the dia-

mond trade is an excellent case to test the hypothesis that social relationships are crucial to successful commerce. A first argument is that the international diamond trade was a branch of business that built upon a relatively high degree of cross-cultural cooperation. Commerce in precious stones is generally considered to be a closed world of orthodox Jewish merchants. This stems from the historical assumption that the trade in precious stones has been dominated for centuries by Jewish traders. Relying on the idea that diamond trade was exercised within a relatively closed and homogeneous group, social and cultural explanations for the self-regulating and extralegal nature of the business are popular.¹⁵ Historical evidence, however, suggests that diamond trade was not as closed as presumed. Intercultural partnerships are found commonly in lists of merchants active in the Indian diamond trade and existing commercial correspondence suggests the importance of non-Jewish diamond merchants.¹⁶ Francesca Trivellato has studied a cross-cultural diamond network spreading from Lisbon to London and India, demonstrating that other ethnic groups played an equally crucial role in the trade.¹⁷ Owing to a lack of source material, the flow of diamonds to the Mogul court, China or Arab and Persian regions cannot be analysed in a structural manner and in general the historical role of Indian trade networks in serving Asian markets remains undervalued. Another element challenging the idea of diamond trade as dominated by one ethnic group is that the homogeneous nature of Jewish merchants as one group is, from a historical point of view, highly questionable. Sephardic Jews coming from the Iberian Peninsula were clearly distinguishable, economically but also socially, linguistically and culturally, from the Ashkenazim that came from Eastern Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. A second reason is that a great deal of the trade in diamonds was secretive. From the 1750s onwards, Brazilian diamond imports to Europe were limited by a royal monopoly. At various times, the trade in Indian diamonds has been regulated by the different European East India Companies. Import duties had to be paid, and at times private trade in precious stones was forbidden. The large amount of illegal commerce and smuggling made the diamond business dependant on personal relationships, which enhanced the importance of commercial trust.

This book is about one of many different networks active in the diamond trade in the first half of the eighteenth century. James Dormer was a Catholic Englishman living in Antwerp and as a merchant he had not specialized in a specific commodity. As many merchants of his time, he traded in everything that could yield a reasonable profit. In this sense, he was no different from other eighteenth-century merchants.¹⁸ As a result of this lack of specialization, Dormer developed an extensive correspondence with different traders. Between 1735 and 1765, he and his son, who took over the firm after Dormer died in 1758, wrote an average of 509 letters per year. The fact that this number is not

extraordinarily high for a merchant at the time shows perhaps that Dormer was not one of the bigger firms, but it nevertheless indicates that traders spent a lot of time writing letters to business contacts. With only a few of those business contacts did Dormer develop a close relationship and the duration of most of his correspondences was short: more than 75 per cent of them stopped within five years. Only 13 per cent of the merchants with whom Dormer corresponded remained in regular contact with him for longer than ten years.¹⁹ An important part of his activities were embedded within the international immigration of English Catholics. Although Dormer tried, and succeeded by marriage, to gain entry into the world of local lower nobility, he also considered himself to be a part of the international English Catholic diaspora. 48 per cent of the traders with whom Dormer corresponded for longer than ten years were English, Irish and Scottish, and a lot of them were Catholic. He offered credit to English travellers and one time he personally rescued an English alcoholic army captain from prison.²⁰ It is not surprising that a merchant relied heavily on other merchants sharing a similar background. The familiarity created by a shared religion, nationality or language might serve to deter merchants from cheating on a business partner and it seems logical that many merchants were naturally attracted to trading partners living far away who shared origins in the same community.

International commerce, however, was not exclusively based on such monocultural networks of trade. Although Dormer had not specialized, over time he did develop specific interests. The insurance company he founded in 1754 was important for him, as well as his banking activities. In commodity trade, he developed a focus on diamonds and textiles. It is in the diamond trade that Dormer associated himself with traders who did not share a common religion, kinship ties or nationality. His first transactions in the diamond trade were conducted with the Sephardic Jewish firm of Francis and Joseph Salvador. These merchants were, more than Dormer, active on an international scale and in other branches of trade and finance. Around their commercial association, a trade network developed itself that remained operational until Dormer's death in 1758. The network spanned four cities: Amsterdam, London, Antwerp and Lisbon, and different religions, ranging from Sephardic Jews, English Catholics and Protestants, as well as French Huguenots. It remained active on a regular basis for a period of fifteen years and with all the network members living abroad, Dormer had established a regular correspondence for that period, making the network merchants exceptionally intimate trade contacts with Dormer. Although the network focused on diamond exchange, its members interacted with each other in different trade operations such as textile trade, insurance and financial operations. For the sake of simplicity, this network will be referred to throughout this book as the cross-cultural diamond trade network. The interest of Dormer in diamonds is somewhat remarkable. In the first half of the eight-

eenth century, Antwerp suffered an economic crisis and commercial activities were in decline. This was also noticeable in the diamond trade and only twelve diamond merchants were known to be active in Antwerp in that period.²¹ Amsterdam and London had overcome Antwerp as Europe's most important centres in the trade of precious stones. For the merchants active in the cross-cultural network that emerges from the correspondence sent to Dormer, Antwerp remained an important market to sell polished diamonds. Taste differed locally, and although London and Amsterdam were by far more important as diamond import centres, Antwerp could still rely on a diamond cutting industry and on a local consumer market.

The main commercial instrument used by merchants working together was business correspondence. The regular writing of letters to one another allowed for international business to take place, as it turned discussions on commercial opportunities into concrete commodity transactions. But letters sent were much more than tools used in commerce; they also allowed for the construction of intimate commercial ties that made the relationships between the merchants of the cross-cultural diamond trade network privileged. Apart from a direct function related to commerce, the letters merchants wrote to one another served a number of other purposes. In their cohesive function, through reciprocity and mutual interest, business correspondence assured that the network was profitable for all merchants involved. It is the main reason why such a business organization remained operational. In their social function, these trade letters created a sense of intimacy and friendship between merchants and hence worked to create a familiar world within which it became easier for them to trust one another. It adds to the idea that a network is an organization and not just of businessmen sharing an interest in the diamond trade, but also of a group of privileged merchants who had developed a routine exchange of letters between them, in contrast to a world of outsiders and competitors. In this sense, it is correct to use the term commercial friendship. According to Luuc Kooijmans, friendship in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries should not be mistaken with our modern notion of friendship as being free from self-interest. In a time when protection and support from the government was minimal, individuals became engaged in relationships with people who would be willing to help in case of need. Relationships had to be maintained by regular contact and the assumed promise of reciprocity.²² These conditions were present in the privileged relationship between Dormer, Francis and Joseph Salvador, Berthon and Garnault and others. Such friendship was not exclusive, however, and none of the merchants who were active within the network devoted all their commercial activities to that network. All merchants had other trades, other interests and other correspondents. A few examples given above suggest already the willingness to use these other contacts on behalf of network trade, but it seems clear that the relationship between network insiders and outsiders was more complex than that,

especially because a differential in commercial activities meant that different webs of correspondents not always meant that they were competitive webs potentially harmful to network trade activities. The attachment of merchants to different international circuits of commercial correspondents shows that the cross-cultural network did not operate in a vacuum; it was but one of many different possible organizations of long-lasting business relationships. What these relationships had in common was that they had become more and more international and diverse, and that they increasingly relied on a set of informal norms regulating commercial behaviour. More privileged relationships of commerce were embedded in the larger world of commercial society and a third additional purpose of commercial correspondence was the maintenance of ties with this outside commercial community, by providing information on the reputation and creditworthiness of other merchants. The divulgence of reliable information not only added to the reputations of merchants within a web of privileged relationships, it also opened up new opportunities – something that always interested a trader.

A last purpose of trade letters was the arrangement of credit operations. The amount of letters sent by merchants that discuss concrete commodity transactions is far lower than the amount of letters discussing financial operations, especially credit. In international commerce, most payments for goods contained an element of future payment. The dependence on credit tied the mercantile community together, and payment instruments such as the bill of exchange were the physical expression of these ties. The bill of exchange was a technical invention making international payments possible. In the eighteenth century, the bill of exchange was no longer exclusively attached to commodity trade. The invention of the endorsement had made it a negotiable commodity and bills could contain a whole list of signatures on the back. The valuation of these strings of credit was based on trust, meaning the punctuality of the payer, but also indicating the belief that he would indeed pay. The lack of specialization of most eighteenth-century merchants was also visible in the giving and providing of credit. According to Stanley Chapman, 'the loan business was quite conveniently run in harness with that of the merchant'.²³ Merchants developed skills in both commodity trade and finance and both were strongly interwoven.

Apart from the large attention to credit, correspondence contained a lot of information regarding possible transactions. In writing about many events, market possibilities and possible engagements in future trade relations, James Dormer and his correspondents have provided us with the material required to reconstruct their image of the world. The number of transactions that traders looked into is far greater than the number of transactions that became concrete. If analysis were to be restricted to the actual commercial operations of traders, it would provide a limited image of the world as it was perceived by merchants. David Hancock has described two ways of analysing transatlantic trade: statistical and biographical.

His main problem with a statistical approach is that it ‘reveals patterns in their entirety of which the participants could not directly have been aware.’²⁴ International merchants considered the world as a place of possibility.

This is best shown by the experience of Francis and Joseph Salvador who were active as international merchants, engaged in different enterprises that were often international in scale. Their firm had representatives in India and they were involved in the trade monopoly in Brazilian diamonds. Joseph Salvador bought land in South Carolina, where he lived the final two years of his life and his son-in-law died fighting for American independence. Their international connections influenced their mindset; the world was an open place to them, a place in which they were constantly looking for new opportunities by contacting traders who lived far away.

The opportunistic mindset of a merchant was complemented by a curiosity in the world. Joseph Salvador was interested in geology and astronomy, and within the network he was not the only trader with a passion for science. These interests enhanced the merchant’s view of the world, and they had a notion of it that was more than theoretical. In this way, awareness grew as did the perception of these merchants as cosmopolites. The experience of the Salvadors as merchants, and their financial success, had given them a certain status. Both Francis and Joseph Salvador were on different occasions consulted by the Portuguese and British governments. They had an influence on adopted international policies, because they were seen as people with an international outlook. It is often this label of cosmopolitanism that has created the perception of merchants as the main actors in the development of globalization. It is difficult to reconcile an idea of geographical integration through human interaction if the people involved were not attached to their surrounding societies. In her analysis of cosmopolitanism, Margaret Jacob has justly pointed to the need to consider physical places where strangers could meet.²⁵ It was often centres of international trade, such as port cities, that were considered as cosmopolitan places because of the different ethnic groups established there and their occupation in commerce.²⁶ However, early modern globalization seems hard to sustain if its existence is based on the actions of a minority group of international traders living in a number of port cities. Chapter 5 will show that members of diaspora movements were embedded in the social environment in their host society, in a more profound and nuanced manner than is usually assumed. Placing the actions of diaspora traders in a paradigm that is based on the search for acceptance by the host society is reductive and underestimates the manner in which different diaspora merchants had adopted a national feeling about their host society without abandoning their loyalty to their religion. It reduces diaspora members to ‘outsiders to polity with only commercial profit in mind ... their link to their host society [is not] assumed to be anything more than the payments made for

a right to conduct commerce as cross-cultural brokers.²⁷ According to Francesca Trivellato, ‘Sephardic merchants asserted their self-perception as full members of an increasingly tolerant commercial society, but also struggled to diminish the impact of less than sympathetic views that were meant to keep them on the margins of that very same commercial society.’²⁸

The combined presence of cosmopolitan outlook and membership of international networks with a successful positioning in a new society offers a solution to the paradox that the same merchants who managed to integrate in remote regions were not really embedded in those regions. The quote from Francesca Trivellato shows that, in the eighteenth century, full membership of foreigners in society was not generally accepted but remained open to fierce debate. It shows that the world was changing due to a larger circulation of people, goods and information. International and cross-cultural commercial networks did not create a global village. But they had started to change mentality and had opened questions about the organization of societies. These developments in turn led to a larger worldwide interconnectedness.

This book is divided into three parts, each containing two chapters. The first part is contextual. Chapter 1 offers a methodological overview of the analysis of commerce. It aims to show that there is a problem with the reliance on individual rational behaviour as the main explanatory factor for economic interaction. The rise of a commercial society is often considered to be one of the main expressions of modernity and historically, as well as economically, the development of free market exchange has become a central element in explaining the world of today. The connection between free trade and democracy has even led to the belief that history had reached an endpoint. Although Francis Fukuyama does not see man as a purely economic animal, the central idea of his *End of History* can be situated closely to positivist and evolutionary narratives with regard to commerce.²⁹ This belief stems from the way commerce in particular and economic activity in general has been studied in classic economic theory. Economic man is reduced to a self-interested and rational individual, and social and cultural underpinnings to economic activities such as commerce are seen as either irrelevant or archaic. Fukuyama’s point of view belonged to a specific time, and in our current world-view, Western-based global history that considers the global spread of free market exchange as an endpoint is very much questioned.³⁰ In Chapter 1, this classic notion will be challenged by addressing criticisms launched at classic economic theory from different angles. Anthropological and sociological discourse will be used to support economic theory that includes not only self-interest and rationality, but also cultural particularity and social embeddedness. In making economic man a social participator in networks and a culturally diverse individual, cross-cultural trade networks can be said to have contributed to an early modern globalization.

The merchants studied in this book were all active in the diamond trade, and Chapter 2 focuses on the commercial world in which these traders operated. It gives an overview of the history of the diamond trade, with specific attention to the eighteenth century. Diamonds were a valuable luxury commodity in Europe, but also in Arab and Asian countries and in pre-industrial times diamonds were only found in India, Brazil and on the Indonesian island of Borneo. In this chapter, trade networks bringing diamonds from the mines into consumer markets will be investigated. This chapter initially focuses on diamond trade in Asia, moving on to the discovery of Brazilian diamonds and their subsequent entry into international commerce. The finding of precious stones in Minas Gerais greatly altered the international diamond trade and posed a threat to established networks active in trade with India. Another aspect affecting mercantile activities was taste. The last section of this chapter focuses on the consumption of diamonds in Europe, and how international trade networks were spread in Europe to allow diamonds to reach the classic consumption markets for jewellery, such as Paris. One of the most important aspects of these trade networks was that diamond trade was not a typical luxury commerce. Rough diamonds were imported into Europe to be transformed into jewellery but polished stones were also sent to India to be sold there. In this sense, no one-dimensional commodity chain can be traced from diamond mines in Asia and Brazil to European markets.

The second part of this book aims at an empirical analysis of the underlying mechanisms that helped to establish a cross-cultural diamond trade network. Chapter 3 deals with the network itself: its concrete activities and its internal cohesion through commercial correspondence. The first part of the chapter analyses the practical operations taking place within the network. It shows who was involved, what the respective roles were of the network members, and in what way they were active in the diamond business. The second part of the chapter analyses the foundation of this network, and addresses the question of how cross-cultural trade can take place. It is argued that business correspondence plays a crucial role in the establishment of regular commercial ties, and that it served, separate from its role in concrete trade transactions, four other functions that helped to maintain intra-network relationships as well as the connections with commercial society within which the network resided. These functions were the securing of mutual interest, the construction of a form of commercial friendship, the divulgence of information on others and the provision of credit.

These functions were not exclusive to a privileged set of traders and Chapter 4 deals with the relationship of one of the network's members with merchants belonging to another trade circuit. It will show the limits of loyalty but also how merchants used competition as a way to reinforce their own privileged relationships. Dormer maintained an extensive correspondence with a number of firms that were involved in a kinship-based network of Ashkenazi diamond traders. These merchants were considered as commercial competitors by some

of Dormer's closest acquaintances and his involvement with them shows that self-interest was a strong motive for commercial action and that group loyalty had boundaries. Similarly to the Sephardim, Ashkenazi merchants were part of a religiously-inspired diaspora, and this element was an important part of their identity. The Ashkenazi diaspora has received far less attention than its Sephardic counterpart, partially because it is commonly accepted that the Ashkenazim were more land-oriented while the Sephardim have been seen as more international and connected to overseas trade. Merchants of the Ashkenazi firms studied in this chapter travelled to other cities or fairs in person, something Joseph Salvador rarely did. One of the aims of this chapter is to show that this difference in mentality cannot be reduced to a paradigm of old-style kinship-based business organization versus a more globalized cross-cultural model.

The final part of this book concentrates on the role played by commercial networks in the development of an early modern globalization. Chapter 5 argues that circuits consisting of internationally-active merchants can only contribute to growing interconnectedness if these merchants were at the same time oriented towards international trade but also attached to the local society in which they lived. Using the example of the Sephardic and Huguenot diasporas, this chapter shows how the dialogue maintained between society and foreign traders went beyond a simple demand for assimilation. Although international commerce and unfamiliar merchants have a long history of being considered as corrosive to the social order in society, the eighteenth century saw the emergence of thinkers who thought of trade as an asset. A growing presence of foreigners in the public space and in different segments of society contributed to mutual change that forced society to reconsider issues of belonging and social and cultural order. Growing cross-cultural interactions taking place on a local scale is a crucial condition to maintain the idea of a form of globalization.

The final chapter focuses on the exact contribution made by merchants who were at the same time outward-looking cosmopolites and inward-looking locals. Different business activities of several merchants active in the cross-cultural diamond trade network will be investigated, as well as the attachment of merchants to far-away regions. It was through the opportunistic participation of merchants in different commercial ventures with diverse traders that a new world of commerce came to take shape in the perception of these merchants with regard to the world. The combination of a changing mentality and awareness of the world with a growing attachment to specific communities and a normalization of commercial relationships with strangers is what justifies use of the term globalization in pre-industrial times. In this sense, the importance of traders as agents of worldwide interconnectedness goes beyond their professional activities. After all, the historical relevance of groups of people such as traders cannot remain limited to their employment alone.