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**Ports as nodal points for global networks: the formation of the New York community of
passenger liners’ general agents 1870-1914**

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Resumen:

The transition from sail to steam had an important impact on the organization of migrant transport. The concentration of the business in the hands of big passenger liners taking over the fragmented business during the sail shipping era was however a slow process. All migrants arrived in the U.S. by steam after 1873, yet the control over the previously established and ever expanding networks of migrant brokers and migrant agents on both sides of the Atlantic took much longer to materialize. General agents played a key role in this process. Despite being fierce competitors, common interests drove these companies and general agents to collusion. Whereas on the old continent head agencies were scattered around complicating meetings between boards of directors, the concentration of head offices of general agents in two New York streets enabled them to meet frequently and on very short notice. They played a key role in maintaining the migrant flow to New York, which greatly contributed the development of the dominating position of this port on the Atlantic coast and determined the city’s urban development. This article sets out to analyze how this community was formed, general agents’ strategies to acquire social capital, reasons for collusion ranging from controlling the migrant agent network to organizing a shipping lobby powerful enough to influence American immigration and maritime legislation, etc. Using consular archives and correspondence between the New York general agent of the Holland America Line this analysis of the general agents uniting maritime and migration networks intends reevaluate ports as nodal points for global networks – a too often neglected characteristic of ports.

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