

## ***The Rise and Decline of a Saltern. Rent-seeking at its Best<sup>1</sup>***

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### **1. Introduction**

“Many have been puzzled by the mysterious decline or collapse of great empires or civilizations and by the remarkable rise to wealth, power, or cultural achievement of previously peripheral or obscure peoples. ... The pattern was not greatly different in the Andes, nor in Angkor Wat, nor in still other places”. With these words Olson (1982:1) introduces the issue and outlines the problem. We would not go so far as to rank Lüneburg in line with the empires mentioned above, but it was still of regional importance and, remarkably enough, many of the elements of Olson’s work can be found while investigating the history of this region.

It was not only these corresponding facts which made the author focus his interest on this town, but there are other peculiarities which deserve having a closer look. While Olson’s interest focusses on societies, i.e. complex structures, even when looking at past centuries, the case of Lüneburg is much less complex. Olson deals with various industries, regions and interests; here we have a nearly monolithic structure of business, one town and only one region. All participants in the game are totally involved in and dependent on the salt industry. Furthermore, there were no diverging interests *within* the principality

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of Lüneburg<sup>2</sup>. Additionally, Lüneburg exploited a natural resource at very low production costs, having a natural monopoly<sup>3</sup>.

Therefore most of the ingredients of the Olson analysis are absent or at least very weak. None the less, the rise and decline is observable in an exemplary way<sup>4</sup>.

At this point we have to remind ourselves that measures such as local tolls, tariffs and other structure-conserving policies — which constitute one of the major short-comings of economic policy (if there ever is one) and one of the major preconditions of stagnation — are just another form of the so-called “rent-seeking behaviour” of our times. It was Tullock (1989) who emphasized that the results of rent-seeking and the old privileges of ancient societies, empires and principalities are equivalent. “Almost all the talent and energy of the [subjects, KHW] who wanted to rise in society tended to be directed at efforts to obtain the favour of the powers that be or to retain that favour if they already had it”. (Tullock (1989:94)) Both rents and privileges have a certain value for the owner and leave him better off than those who have not been successful in looking for benefits. Another point to be mentioned is the fact that, usually, the privileges could be withdrawn by those who conferred the rights. In a similar but more arduous way, economic rights may be annulled by regulating agencies, boards, etc..

Summing up, we have to consider more elements when referring to rent-seeking behaviour than is usually assumed. The term “rent-seeking” comprises more than the single-issue relationships of the struggle of more or less well-defined monopoly rights within the debate of de-(re)regulation (Wilson (1980)).

— They often assume competitive behaviour instead of imperfect competition;

<sup>2</sup> They were not observable or at least less important.

<sup>3</sup> The production function can be approximated to a linear function with constant marginal costs.

<sup>4</sup> As Witthöft (1976:7), one of the most outstanding authors working on the saltern, has put it: “Screening German economic and social history, there is no example of long-lasting and undisturbed growth. The town accumulated all influences without any actual change, became encapsulated and declined” (Author’s translation).

- they confine themselves to bilateral bargaining processes, neglecting the possibility of several suppliers and demanders;
- they look solely upon the struggle *for* rents, and seldom consider rent-destruction or rent-bypassing;
- they are snapshots of some status quo achieved;
- regarding the dynamic aspects, there is a rising and falling of rents as well as an entering and exit of actors on the stage which, possibly, make irrelevant alternatives relevant;
- within a dynamic framework involving several parties and subjects, the problem of (temporary) coalition-building arises, non-cooperative analysis is sprinkled with cooperative elements;
- the interdependency of the political sector and the economic sector is often poorly described and time-lags are hardly recognized.

We are neither going to incorporate all the subjects just mentioned nor do we intend to solve all the problems connected with these aspects in this paper. But, and this seems to justify the work on a historical theme for a theoretician, many of the theoretical aspects to be found in history can recur.

In the following we will sketch the starting point of the history, identifying the ingredients and the actors. Armed with this background we will show the economic upswing and the related political changes. At this point, rent-seeking and coalition-seeking occurs for the first time. Later on, the ratio between the activities of the town alters in an interesting manner, finally ending in the insignificance of the saltern.

## **2. Scene and Setting**

At first glance it is not very easy to understand why the county of Lüneburg became so important for so many centuries. It was not located on an extraordinary river, it had no shipbuilding industry and no direct access to the open sea. Moreover it was not a central region through which all trade had to pass. It was only a very small residence for the dukes, had no armed forces and was of little interest for the dukes, kings, etc. living nearby. Economically speaking, about 1000 A.D. it was a peripheral region of only local importance.

Additionally, there were other more important and faster-

developing centres at a short distance, competing to become trading-centres. There was Hamburg, a rising town for the trade seawards, only 80 kilometres away and the wealthy Hanse-town Lübeck which dominated all the trade of the Baltic Sea, Scandinavia and Russia. South of Lüneburg was Brunswick, the capital and residential place of the dukes, attracting science and politics as well as trade, and Hannover, another residential town lying at a junction of transit routes. West of Lüneburg was Bremen, another shipping port. East of the town was nothing worth mentioning. The Brandenburg or Mecklenburg areas were of little economic interest.

Thus the geographic situation did not support any economic upswing or even political power.

Thus the question arises: what were the reasons for the growing importance of the town and region of Lüneburg?

Three aspects should be worth mentioning:

1. In former days navigation on the river Elbe was very dangerous and therefore the trade via land was advantageous. So there remained some trade from Hamburg to the south-east area of Magdeburg and Saxonia which had to pass through the county of Lüneburg.
2. The regional power structure was not sufficiently clear, leaving something like a power-vacuum or a gap on the surface of regional powers. This gap must have been large enough to enable the saltern and the town respectively to build up their leading position.

In earlier times the dukes of Brunswick suffered economic decline and losses of regional power. They were happy not to have to care for other areas such as Lüneburg and left the town to its own resources. The German Emperor was weak and the well-known particularism of the German Reich dominated. Of course, the neighbouring towns and principalities were very sensitive to encroachments, so that we must regard Lüneburg as a country embedded in the centre of areas and towns which were much more important.

3. The third but most important point is the natural resource of the salt-well. Since the salt was of high quality and the production costs were low Lüneburg had no serious competitor in northern and north-east Europe<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> The salt from Halle (Saxony) and Kolobrzeg (Poland) was of only local importance. For the details of their sales' territories, see the appendix.

Due to the lack of a strong political power and policy coordination among the states, principalities and towns, a substitute had emerged: the Hanse. Despite some diverging interests among their members, towns (not countries) represented by the merchants had a keen interest in installing rules and conditions for dependencies in other towns in order to control trade properly. This economy-based structure was very important for the towns, because although formally independent, they had to defend their positions several times against hostile sovereigns. That does not mean, however, that the Hanse was a peaceful organization interested only in economic affairs. Moreover, the financial standing of its members individually as well as collectively made it possible to use the political and military potential of the Hanse in order to enforce beneficial treaties.

The economic situation was different. The salt-spring at Lüneburg had an extraordinary quality and at that time this resource was a necessary ingredient to preserve fish, meat and other food. The term "white gold" indicates the overall importance of salt. In addition to the resilience of demand, production costs were incredibly low, so that the profits obtained from production of salt became immense<sup>6</sup>. From this it is hard to understand why the dukes of Brunswick, the formal sovereigns, did not claim the saltern at an early stage. Later (but too late) they tried to recapture salt-production and failed.

### 3. The Cast

Looking at nearly 900 years of coalition-building and regional rent-seeking it is hardly astonishing that the actors in the game change over time. The leading character, however, is played by the town of

<sup>6</sup> Witthöft (1976) e.g. shows that average production throughout the centuries was about 20,000 tons p.a., yielding a profit higher than that earned by the silver mines of the Harz. Körner (1957:52) mentions a gross profit of 83,000 Marks (1350), which is considerably large compared with 18,750 Marks (1500) of the silver mines at the height of their prosperity.

Lüneburg throughout every act. In the following considerations, we are going to use the terms of the town of Lüneburg, the saltern or the Council of Lüneburg as synonyms. Although they are formally independent and different agents, *de facto*, their interests and their behaviour are congruent. The actors of the game are:

The Town of Lüneburg	with	— Dukes of Brunswick
		— Dukes of Saxony
	or	— Town of Magdeburg
		— members of the Hanse, especially Hamburg and Lübeck
	vs.	— German Emperor (later)
		— King of England and Hannover (later)
		— foreign (French) salt producers
		— domestic saltens (later)
		— Elector of Brandenburg.

Although each character appears in certain acts, there is still enough room and time for coalitions, treaties and temporary alliances. Interestingly enough, each participant was of some value for the town of Lüneburg even though they may have been far away. Thus we will have not only a bilateral game of non-cooperative behaviour between the sovereign and the saltern but we will have rent-seeking coalitions playing cooperative and non-cooperative games as well.

Now we will see how the distribution of political power in that area varies with the development of the participants' economic performance. According to cooperative game theory the value of coalitions depends on their members as well as on the period of the coalition. For example, the membership of Hannover in a coalition with Lüneburg did not change the value of that coalition if we look at the early period of 900-1300. Later this irrelevant alternative became relevant (about 1700), the membership increased the value until 1845. In the following years the effect was just the opposite. The saltern would have been glad to push Hannover out of the coalition because its value became negative. Unfortunately, there were no other players who would have accepted the membership of the town of Lüneburg.

#### 4. The Scenario

The earliest documents mentioning the saltern of Lüneburg date from about 900 A.D. The principal owned all the ground, rivers, resources and often human capital too<sup>7</sup>. Therefore the dukes had to run the saltern by themselves and the *small* profit was passed over to the local monastery. Despite the growing demand for “white gold” the government did not recognize the importance of salt-production and they operated the saltern at a low and very inefficient level. With the wisdom of hindsight the dukes’ behaviour was short-sighted: they preferred quick returns rather than profit maximization in the long run.

Owing to permanent budgetary deficits, the sovereign was interested in short-run profit maximization, resulting in the absence of investments, exploiting production facilities and finally selling shares of the saltern to his knights. This did not mean that the saltern was privatized. The knights who received small shares of the saltern were not interested in economic activities either and they resold their shares to private people.

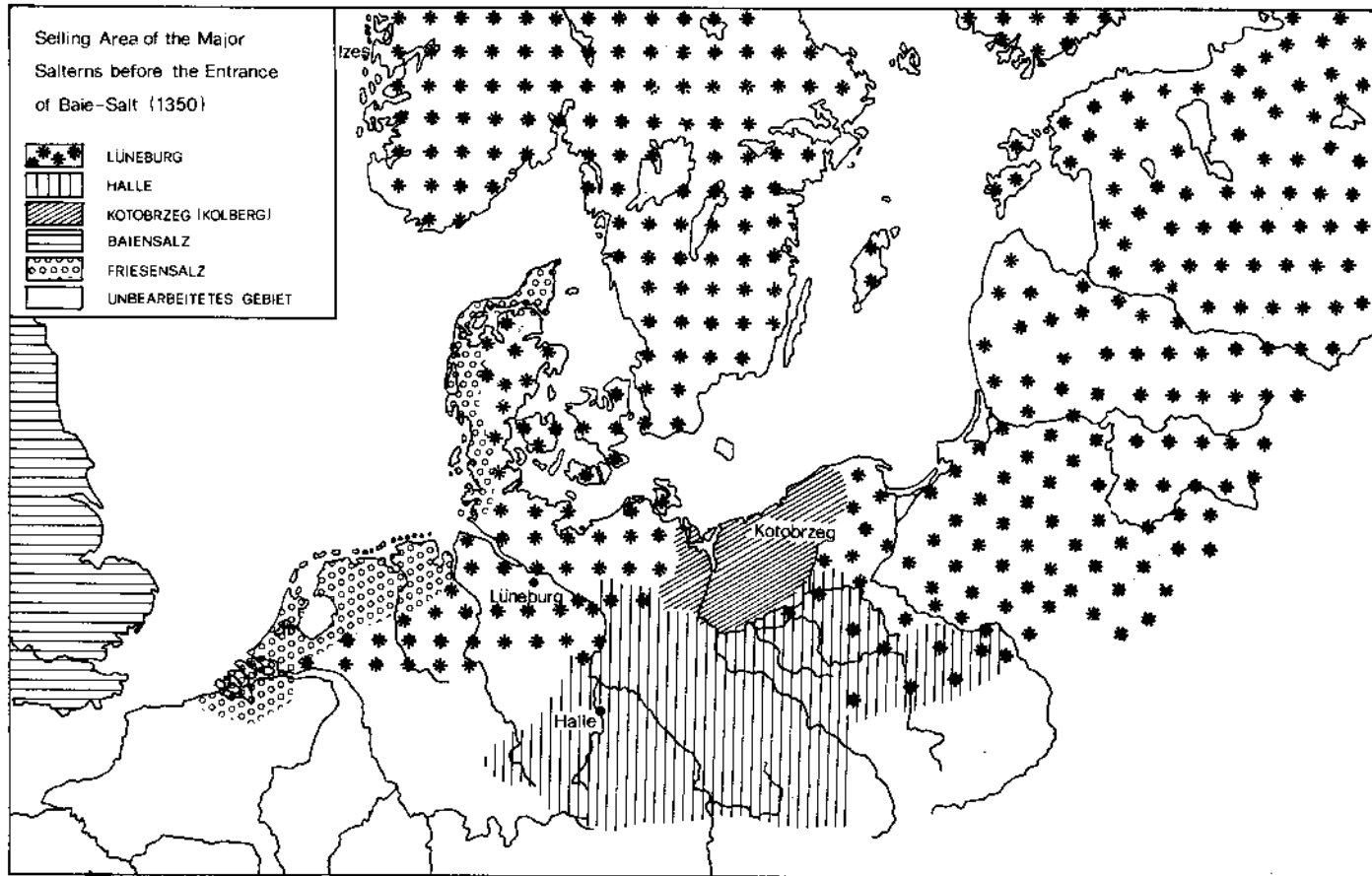
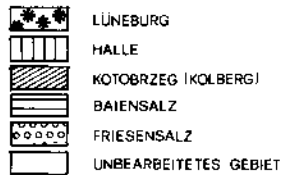
Nevertheless, the duke owned the “bare”<sup>8</sup> and thus still had enough influence on the profits of the saltern. In 1269 this source of finance was sold to inhabitants of the town of Lüneburg and in 1350 the last share of the knights was resold to private owners. About 1269 the duke fully withdrew from salt production and salt distribution. All monopoly rights connected with the salt spring were signed away. Now only the private owners had the privilege to operate the saltern.

Selling the “bare” and the privileges of the saltern was very profitable for the sovereigns so they looked for other privileges which could be sold. The dukes were aware of the fact that the right to run the saltern depended on the crucial fact of it being a monopoly. All competition lowered the value of the privilege. Since the privilege had

<sup>7</sup> For the following scenario the reader is referred to the survey of the time-table.

<sup>8</sup> The “Bare” was the only house where the boiling pans of lead could be melted and cast into new pans. The Bare represented a monopoly.

Selling Area of the Major  
Salterns before the Entrance  
of Baie-Salt (1350)



been dedicated to the town i.e. inside the city-wall, salt production outside the town being free. In 1270 the sovereign explored a new salt-spring and was going to exploit it. It is not clear whether he really intended to run the new saltern, but it is very likely that the threat of the new saltern was used to lower the value of the old privilege. An additional *artificial* rent was created only for the purpose of being sold. The duke's expectations came true when the owners of the old privilege bought the new one in 1273. Other privileges followed.

After 1350 the separation between the political sector of the government of the town and the economic sector represented by the merchants disappeared. The right to be elected to the town council was assigned to the "Sülfmeister" only. That means an identification of the owners of the saltern with the politics of the town. As Reinecke (1933:79) puts it in his seminal work about the history of Lüneburg: "it is no accident that among the oldest documents listing the representatives of the town council there were "Sodmeister" and "Pan-owners"<sup>9</sup>, and later Reinecke asks (1933:81) whether "the town council - all the time having close ties with the saltern - was to be rooted in the early days of the saltern".

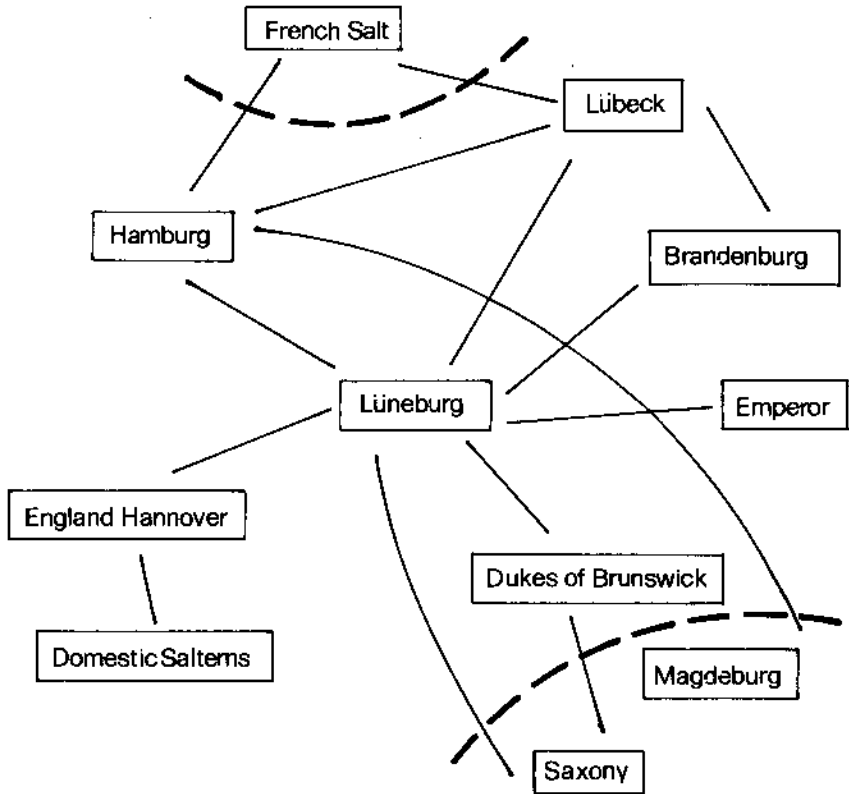
It is superfluous to say that during the following centuries the town of Lüneburg never insisted on rules and decrees which were contradictory to the interests of the saltern.

*Privatisation* was accompanied by an extraordinary upswing of trade and the town of Lüneburg became wealthier. It became a member of the Hanse in order to simplify extensive salt-trade<sup>10</sup>. Simultaneously the political importance of the town increased. The power of the town reached its zenith about 1370.

<sup>9</sup> Sülfmeister and Sodmeister are equivalent and mean the chairman of all the pan-owners. Pan-owners were those privileged people who were given the right to boil salt. The number of the pan-owners was strictly limited, but varied throughout the decades.

<sup>10</sup> For the largest distribution of the salt of Lüneburg see the appendix.

Figure (1): The political, regional and economic surroundings of Lüneburg



Owing to the wealth of Lüneburg there was controversies with the sovereign who repealed all privileges in 1367. The town, however, did not care because of their Hanseatic allies. Lüneburg expelled the duke's troops from the town's fortress. As long as the dukes of Brunswick were useful to the saltern they tried to maintain a good relationship with their sovereign. After this military struggle the town went over to the side of the dukes of Saxony in 1371. The reason for this decision was Saxony's interest in securing trade routes from and to Hamburg through the county of Lüneburg. Leaving other political peculiarities aside (the struggle with Brunswick), this new coalition yielded new privileges.

Although Lüneburg had successfully finished the war with its sovereign, the costs of the military struggle exceeded the financial resources of the town. The major creditors were Hamburg and Lübeck. The wealthy town of Lübeck which transacted nearly all of the Scandinavian salt-trade<sup>11</sup> was owed over 170,000 Marks (1389). Although the interest rate of 10 per cent<sup>12</sup> (c.f. Heineken (1965:64)) was remarkably high, the saltern's answer to this debt was typical: it neither improved its budgetary policy nor did it react with "market" tools to strengthen its marketing and trade. The decree of 1392 (the "Sate", i.e. statute) was promulgated. With this decree all trade by-passing the town was made punishable<sup>13</sup>. Consequently, as a short-term effect, the deficit decreased rapidly<sup>14</sup>.

All these new decrees, rights, etc. served to secure the monopoly rents of salt production, distribution and exploration. More precisely, all the interest focused on Lüneburg salt, i.e. domestic salt. If the saltern had been interested in controlling trade and in maximizing its profits, then it would have been capable of skimming off the consumers' and producers' surplus obtained by foreign salt, too. Instead, all trade with foreign i.e. French "baie" salt was strictly prohibited. There was also partial preferential treatment and active obstruction to competition.

The saltern had asked for such new privileges because about 1400 the imported quantities of foreign salt which had been much cheaper than domestic salt increased. At this time the Dukes of Brunswick made a last attempt to regain control over the town but were defeated by the troops of the Hanseatic coalition (1400).

Rents were either sought when the original rent-providing

<sup>11</sup> See the map in the appendix.

<sup>12</sup> To illustrate this, Franke (1935:59) lists the credits of Lübeck during the years 1365-1390, showing that the average new annual debt of Lüneburg was about 3000 Marks.

<sup>13</sup> Interestingly enough, money was spent to build embankments and trenches in order to make by-passing impossible or at least too time-consuming.

<sup>14</sup> The theme of the Sate was the persistent deficit of the Dukes. Lüneburg credited about 50,000 Marks in *exchange* for extensive privileges. (Friedland (1953:20))

institution became less important and/or if the economic sector faced intensified competition.

Around the turn of the century it became obvious that political considerations were still important but that economic questions could not be neglected. Hamburg had supported the saltern against Brunswick but was interested in trading not only with Lüneburg salt but with French baie-salt too. This was an exclusively economic problem and the interests of Hamburg became contrary to those of Lüneburg which pleaded again for protectionism. Thus the coalition between Lübeck and Hamburg weakened and finally broke down because of the tariffs and special rights which Lüneburg merchants claimed and because of the Hamburg "stapelrechte"<sup>15</sup>. The conflict with their former allies resulted in their exerting pressure on Lüneburg, to cancel the unilaterally imposed tariffs (1476). At that time the peculiarities of the Lüneburg salt-trade first became obvious. The saltern had failed to organize and to control the trade by itself. All intermediate and wholesale trade was controlled by non-Lüneburg merchants. Only when the decline of the saltern set in did the "Salzkontor" start some marketing activities (Witthöft (1976:7)).

The saltern stood alone and busily sought other allies. Since the Duke of Brunswick would hardly support the town, the German emperor was the next possible recourse for support. Lüneburg used this new authority to side-step the Hamburg-Magdeburg Treaty (1532) and to secure free navigation on the River Elbe. The question whether the "stapelrechte" were binding for the southern estuary, too, remained unsolved for several decades. The lawsuit referring to this subject had never been brought to an end (1554).

In the meantime the Duke of Brunswick had consolidated his power and his budget while the financial situation of the saltern had become very bad<sup>16</sup>. As already mentioned, the only ally was the

<sup>15</sup> The Stapelrechte meant that Lüneburg had to stop at the Stapelplatz e.g. Hamburg. No bypassing was allowed in order to support domestic industry and to impose tariffs.

<sup>16</sup> Lübeck had withdrawn financial support because of the growing discrepancies regarding trade policy.

emperor, and in 1556 Lüneburg's sovereign successfully repealed all privileges.

Now the situation was totally different from that of previous years. Lüneburg came to a new arrangement with the sovereign and the town had to accept most of the duke's conditions (1562). The reasons for this quite astonishing reorientation were twofold. First, growing competition with imported salt led to a sharp economic crisis. Former monopoly areas were lost, monopoly prices reduced sales and production costs became relatively too high. The latter was due to the out-dated organization and technology of the saltern.

Second, nearly all the other former coalition partners preferred a slightly moderate form of protectionism or, like Hamburg for example, advocated free trade.

The dukes, however, aimed to secure sufficient tax revenues from the saltern and this could be done in the best way by confirming the monopoly rents and declaring new monopoly areas such as Hoya or Bremen (1669).

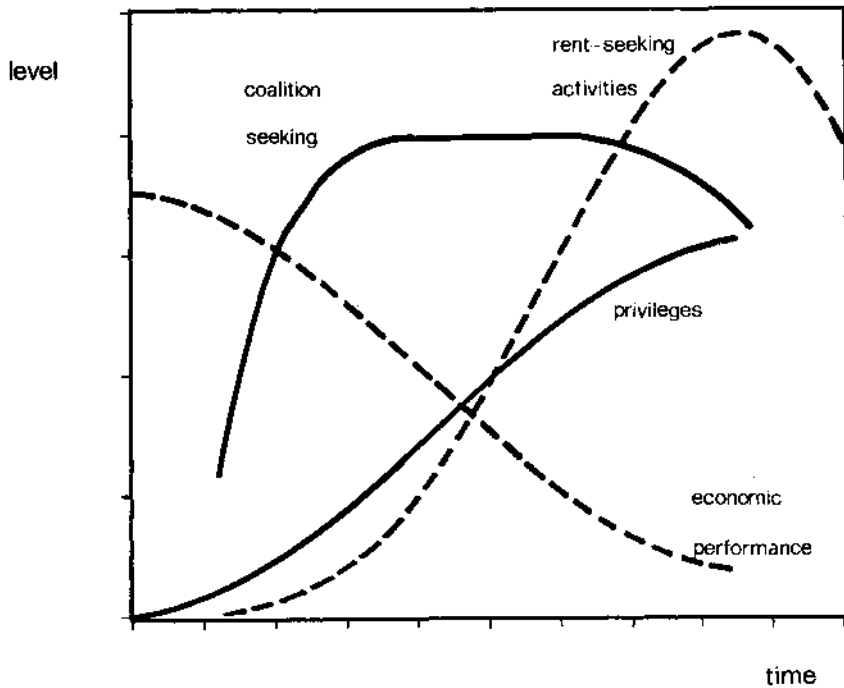
Summing up, the downswing of the salt-production industry neither brought about business-related consequences nor a change in the town's salt-policy. No new technologies, organizational or distributive innovations were introduced. Kahle (1987:16), for example, analyzed production-technology as well as the organization pattern. He found that the internal as well as the external interdependences had been so numerous that a flexible response to the challenge of French salt was hardly possible. Instead, the saltern stuck to old methods and tried to compensate for economic losses by political activities, labelled as rent- or privilege-seeking. The sclerotic process continued because the saltern had been successful (temporarily at least) in gaining political support (see Körner (1957:54)). These various effects are schematically drawn in Figure (2).

Despite this new coalition and new decrees in favour of protectionism which were intended to slow down the decline, the economic crisis of the saltern increased. In 1690 Brandenburg rejected the monopolistic offer of a new salt-contract and in 1714 another bulk purchaser, Prussia, followed suit. In both cases the prices were too high.

Nevertheless, the saltern did not learn from the experience of the past. Instead it sought new "unused" coalitions, since the Dukes of Brunswick were not able to protect the special privileges of the town of Lüneburg any longer. Thus, in 1716 Hannover, unified with the English throne, confirmed all artificial rents again. The so-called "Edikte" were numerous during 1701-1789. Again the decline could be slowed down only by enlarging the Bremen monopoly area (1748).

Finally, the saltern went bankrupt (1794). Now responsibility was withdrawn from the town and their apologists inside the town-bureaucracy and the Bülow-Plan for reconstruction was carried out. After reorganization the saltern lost its formal independence and the influence of the Council of Lüneburg was limited to one seat on the supervisory board. During the first thirty years of the nineteenth century the saltern kept its status quo<sup>17</sup>.

Figure (2): Economic Performance and Corresponding Activities



<sup>17</sup> For the shrinking of the sales areas see appendix.

Lüneburg had no ally among former partners of the coalitions. This is very easy to explain. The coalitions the saltern attained were only used to be manipulated as a whole and for exploiting single members. As long as the economic potential was large enough to compensate for political drawbacks this strategy was successful<sup>18</sup>. Cooperation did not occur.

The last resort, Hannover, stabilized the situation for a last time. But in 1840 not only did foreign salt threaten the position of the Lüneburg saltern but of domestic producers, too. For the last time the saltern won a legal dispute with the Linden saltern of Hannover in 1840, but nine years later the privileges in Bremen and Ostfriesland were cancelled. This was due to the different economic policies giving preference to and advocating free trade.

These different points of view were mirrored even within the town of Lüneburg: the Lüneburg Chamber of Commerce pleaded for annulment of the privileges even before the saltern finally relinquished all privileges in 1867.

## **5. Conclusions**

In this case-study many of the theoretically-derived results concerning rent-seeking behaviour are confirmed. Tullock's idea of a complete substitution of ancient privileges and modern artificial rents can be found during more than 800 years of history. In a similar way, Olson's statements about the reasons for sclerotic tendencies and the rise and decline of economies find their counterparts in reality. But some other aspects are astonishing and worth mentioning, too. From this study it is not clear what time-horizon the actors of the saltern had. They must have been very short-sighted and, additionally, extremely stupid in the sense that they did not learn from the past. They behaved like model-type actors with no historical time. The reason for this is not clear enough to draw definite conclusions but the

<sup>18</sup> See e.g. Axelrod's (1984) strategy games.

opportunity to exploit a wide range of new coalitions seems to be a good proxy. This opens the field to coalition-forming theory which is usually excluded from rent-seeking analysis. Nevertheless, it plays a crucial role in the history of this saltern. Coalitions were sought and the saltern joined them when facing economic hardship with a typical delay. But, and this is another interesting fact, the saltern played no active role in the coalitions. It was an extractor rather than a contributor. After having "utilized" the members of a coalition they were "dropped". In the short run these strategies were successful, but the overall decline could not be prevented by this type of strategy. Although hypothetically a readjustment of economic policy and an economic-oriented reorganization of the saltern might have been a better way of coping with growing competition and changed economic conditions.

APPENDIX

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Time-table

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Year	
900	The land and the saltern are owned by Duke Henry the Lion of Brunswick.
956	Tribute to the local monastery. The saltern is owned and operated by the sovereign.
1200-1250	The shares of the saltern are sold piecewise to knights because of the duke's financial deficits.
1269	The duke sells the "bare" to the private (Lüneburg) owners of the saltern. The sovereign has now fully withdrawn from salt-production and distribution.
1270	The duke explores and exploits a new salt-spring outside the town of Lüneburg.
1273	After bargaining between the town and the duke, this new salt-spring is sold to the owners of the old spring. The duke gives the town the privilege of the exclusive right to extract and trade salt. The duke confirms that he himself obeys this privilege.
1348	The duke sells the monopoly right of the rivers to the town ("Ilmenauprivileg").
1350	The right to be elected to the town council is assigned to the "sülhmeister" only.
1350	The knights have resold the shares, the saltern is fully privatized.
1365	The duke confirms the privilege and assures protection of the trade routes.
1367	Disputations with the sovereign who is repealing all privileges.
1371	The troops of the duke are expelled from the castle of Lüneburg.
1371	Lüneburg turns away from the dukes of Welfen and seeks the support of the dukes of Saxony.
1377	The dukes of Saxony renew the monopolies.
1383	The rights are extended and now comprise salt-extraction, production, and exploration.

- 1392 Decree of "obligation to use the routes" through Lüneburg.
- 1400 The decrees of "Eddagsartikel" stipulate that salt which is not produced at Lüneburg is prohibited from transit trade through Lüneburg.
- 1400 Military conflicts of the Hanse against the Dukes of Brunswick, victory of the Hanse.
- 1400 Growing competition from French baie-salt. Controversies with the town of Hamburg over the "Stapelrechte".
- 1407 Hamburg forbids seaward trade of foreign salt.
- 1417 Lüneburg hampers and forbids the development and building of new routes.
- 1442 The right of free trade of Lüneburg salt in all accustomed regions is confirmed once more.
- 1445 Lüneburg seeks the support of the German emperor and strives for titles from the emperor.
- 1450 Hamburg claims "Stapelrechte" on the estuary of the Elbe. Lüneburg has to pay tolls to Hamburg.
- 1470 The "Hamburg stapelrechte" Hamburg not on the southern part of the estuary.
- 1471 Navigation tariff on on the River Ilmenau.
- 1476 Hanse towns Lübeck and Hamburg successfully exert pressure on Lüneburg in order to withdraw the tariff.
- since Hostile encroachments by Hamburg on the southern Elbe.  
1530
- 1550 Financial recovery of the sovereign of Lüneburg, growing differences with Lüneburg.
- 1532 Hamburg - Magdeburg Elbe treaty.
- 1534 Duke blockades Lüneburg.
- 1854 German emperor advocates free shipping on the Elbe.
- 1556 Repeal of all privileges of the town of Lüneburg.
- 1554 Long-lasting lawsuit between Hamburg and Lüneburg.
- 1562 Agreement between the parties, advantages for the sovereign.
- 1585 Attempt agreement between Hamburg and Lüneburg.
- 1588 Disputes with Lübeck and Hamburg about tariffs.

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- 1669 duke confirms the new monopoly region of Hoya for Lüneburg. Constitution of the saltern is laid down in accordance with the duke.
- 1687 Import, trade, and consumption of foreign salt is prohibited again.
- 1690 No new salt contract with Brandenburg.
- 1700 Decline of the saltern, because of  
1. imports/smuggling  
2. less efficient technology  
3. price policy  
Sales crisis, due to high prices and outdated production technology.  
Council of the town Lüneburg sets monopoly prices.
- 1701-1789 "Edikte" of protectionism.  
Several "edikte" ensuring the position of the salt of Lüneburg are enacted.
- 1714 No new salt contract with Prussia.
- 1716 George I of England (Hannover) confirms the privileges.
- 1729 New regulations of the saltern initiated by the Duke, restraining the influence of the town council.
- 1730 Withdrawal of the supervision of the Council.
- 1748 Enlargement of the monopoly area (Bremen).
- 1794 Reorganisation of the saltern by the sovereign. The town of Lüneburg is represented by only one member on the controlling board.
- 1799 Reconstruction (v. Bülow-Plan) is successful.  
1. only one member of the town council,  
2. credits by the sovereign,  
3. supervision by the sovereign.
- 1800-1830 Keeping the status quo.
- 1830-1866 Growing competition of domestic and privately-owned salterns.
- 1840 Juridical controversy with the Linden saltern (Hannover).  
Lüneburg is supported by the government.  
Ruinous competition takes place.
- 1849 Privileges are cancelled in Bremen and Ostfriesland, because the privileges are not titles (government reasons!!).
- 1850 Markets are opened for free trade.
- 1854 Juridical finding against monopolies.

1866	Lüneburg Chamber of Commerce pleads to have the salt privileges annulled.
1867	Free trade in salt.
1867	The saltern relinquishes its privileges.

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