

Speaker: Lucas Haasis (Olenburg University)

*The Power of Persuasion. Becoming a Merchant in the 18th Century*

Discussant: Anka Steffen (Europa-Universität Viadrina)

### **Abstract**

In August 1745, a merchant loaded his business archive onto a ship in Brest bound for his hometown Hamburg. The merchant had spent the previous two years in France travelling for the purpose of establishing and making a name for himself as a wholesale merchant. But the archive never reached its destination. It was confiscated during the capture of the ship by a British privateer. In 2012, this merchant's archive was rediscovered in the Prize Papers collection at the National Archives, UK, in London. In 2022, a book has been published telling its story and the story of its original owner. The book offers the first comprehensive work on the establishment phase of an Early Modern wholesale merchant. The microhistorical study offers deep insights into the crucial career steps and the fields of activity of Early Modern merchants in establishment, covering case studies on 18th century shipping business, commission trade, high-risk trade, the founding of a merchant house and marriage preparation.

The Luetkens archive is a time capsule. It still holds all incoming and outgoing letters along with further mercantile records. These records have survived in their original condition, which means that it can be used to reconstruct this man's establishment phase in great detail. At the same time, the microhistorical approach introduces a novel focus for microhistorical research. Due to the special nature of the source collection, which mostly consists of over 2.000 letters in three languages, German, French and Dutch, the main aim of the study is not only to tell the story of the merchant Luetkens, but rather to broaden the analytical focus on mercantile letter and business practices at the core of mercantile establishment, including over 30 more correspondents in the analysis. This allows to gain a comprehensive view of the North-European world of trade and Franco-Hamburg relations in the 18th century.

In his presentation, Dr Lucas Haasis, postdoctoral researcher and the research coordinator of the Anglo-German Prize Papers Project (<https://www.prizepapers.de>) will present his major findings and introduce the audience to the Prize Papers collection.

Book: <https://www.transcript-verlag.de/978-3-8376-5652-7/the-power-of-persuasion>

CV Haasis: <https://uol.de/geschichte-der-fruehen-neuzeit/mitarbeiterinnen/lucas-haasis>

Prize Papers Project: <https://www.prizepapers.de>