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A Periodisation of Globalisation According to the Mauritian Integration into the International Sugar Commodity Chain (1825-2005)[i]

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This chapter shows that the analysis of commodity chains can be fruitfully employed to respond to recent calls in the field of global/world history for a periodisation of globalisation.[ii] The commodity-chain approach is ideally suited for advancing global historians' understanding of the way that particular places are positioned within a changing capitalist world system. This is important because it is this capitalist world system that ultimately defines globalisation in a particular place and therefore also the periodisation of globalisation.

The place to be studied in this chapter is Mauritius, a small island in the Western Indian Ocean that has a very particular history of colonial and postcolonial integration into the capitalist world system and its sugar commodity chain. I discuss Mauritian history within the framework of bilateral and multilateral trading agreements that had significant impact on the sugar industry and kept the island economically dependent on this single crop.

After briefly sketching the early centuries of colonisation I analyse the inclusion of Mauritius in the British Empire's 1825 West Indian Sugar Protocol. From there on, I divide the paper chronologically into four broad periods: first, the long nineteenth century of intra-empire trading agreements and economic diplomacy; second, between 1919 and 1937, when the sugar sector in Mauritius transformed into a system of income redistribution; third, the period through the Commonwealth Sugar

Agreement of 1951 up to the Lomé Convention of 1975; and finally, the contemporary developments, shaped by the extension of the GATT into the World Trade Organisation and a revival of free-trade ideology .

The Mauritian position within the capitalist world economy prior to 1825

Mauritius was one of the few European colonies that were uninhabited at the time of colonisation. It has since then been ruled by the Netherlands (1635-c.1700), the French (1735-1810), the British (1810-1968), and a locally based postcolonial bourgeoisie alliance with certain Fabianist/democratic elements (1968-present).

The Dutch period was a rather unfortunate business venture for the Dutch East India Company;[iii] and the opening up of the island to capitalist exploitation only happened in the eighteenth century, with the arrival of the first French colonialists who ventured into forms of pre-industrial capitalist agriculture. Mauritian integration in the first two centuries of settlement was rather exceptional as it happened independent of existing local pre-colonial economic practices and markets. This had consequences. Economic activities were not shaped by the integration of local or regional structure into the emerging Europe-centred world economy. The challenge was to establish a regional structure on the fringes of world trade and turn this into a profitable venture. The French established a free port on the island, with this emphasis on ‘free trade’ based on privateering.

The British conquered the island in 1810 and Mauritius formally became part of the Empire in the Vienna Treaty of 1814. Britain granted the French-Mauritian ruling class rights to pursue their cultural practices and keep reminiscences of the former legal-political structure. From then on this structure worked below the superstructure of British colonial administration.[iv] The hierarchy that positioned the

French colonisers as the subjects of British rule was to determine the patterns of struggles within the local society and economy for the decades to come. All changes following Mauritian integration into the Empire's system of preferences for the sugar commodity chain in 1825, particularly the abolition of slavery, must therefore be understood as the 'real' incorporation of Mauritius into the capitalist world system by the then dominant power: the British Empire.

Embedding Mauritius: the 1825 integration into the West Indian Sugar Protocol

Crucial for Mauritius and its incorporation into the capitalist world system was a substantial shift and revolution in the till then small agricultural sector. This happened in 1825.[v] The privateering-based Mauritian free-port economy was modulated into a mono-crop economy based on sugar plantations due to its integration into the preferential West Indian sugar-tariff system at work in the British Empire. From then on, if the island's Franco-Mauritian economic elite 'wanted to make money under British rule... they had to produce commodities'.[vi] The establishment of large-scale capitalist agriculture on the island meant a significant move towards Mauritian integration into the British-dominated global system. But this was not only based on the production of sugar cane; with it came a bundle of legal structures, morals of trade and codes of conduct that had to be implemented along the commodity chain of sugar. Crucial to the enforcement of these new rules was the way in which the chain and its nodes were controlled:

> 'There are two primary loci where one can create large nodes of decision-making bodies. One can group primary production in large units – what we might call the 'plantation' solution. Or one can create large nodes at a stage after the initial production zones in the commodity chain. For

> example, some large 'merchants' (what in French are called *négociants* as opposed to *traitants* or *commerçants*) can station themselves at bottlenecks of flows. It is not enough, however, to create a quasi-monopoly or oligopoly of merchandising. It is also crucial for this (let us call him) large-scale merchant (or merchant-banker) to establish a dependency upon him on the part of a mass of small producers.'[vii]

In other words, my periodisation of globalisation for Mauritius along the lines of a commodity-chain analysis begins with sugar. Preferential access to the Empire's market for this commodity established a new bottleneck for the Mauritian economy and substituted the bottlenecks to flows created by French piracy before 1810. These had been built on the island's strategic position in the Europe-Asia trade. But the turn to piracy had also been effected by the failure of the French East India Company to establish profitable commercial agricultural businesses in Mauritius.[viii]

When French Isle de France fell to the British Empire in 1810 the island not only received a new name (Mauritius); it suddenly became part of the Empire's market, which was significantly bigger and more profitable than that of the declining French Empire. What this meant in terms of future economic options took the Franco-Mauritian upper class little time to realise. With demand for sugar on the British home market significantly higher than in France, sugar production quickly increased after 1815, as the new crown colony enjoyed lower export-duties.[ix] A driving force behind the transformation of the domestic economy was the first British governor, Robert Farquhar (1810-1817, 1820-1823). Accounts differ as to whether he realised himself that sugar cane was best suited for the rough Mauritian climate and therefore negotiated duties equal to Caribbean sugar; or whether he was pushed to do so by the Mauritian planters.[x] Because there was no private banking system in Mauritius before the 1830s, planters depended heavily on the colonial government's financial support. Thereby the British established an early monopoly as the island's merchant bankers.[xi]

Another way through which economic policy on the island was determined and embedded via London was connected to long-lasting disputes between the Colonial Office and the British East India Company over the terms of free trade or import/export duties. Mauritian planters had already been sending memorials to London, demanding that the extra 10-shilling duty paid on East Indian sugar that was supposed to give the West Indies a competitive edge be waived. When Farquhar left for good to London in 1823 he started campaigning for the Mauritian planters' rights to equal market access, and was supported in this by the new governor Cole.[xii] But Mauritian efforts to establish large-scale sugar-cane plantations faced a powerful enemy. Caribbean plantations in those days were mostly run by businessmen who not only lived in Britain, but had substantial influence in the House of Commons, or were even members of the House themselves. The following quote from an article in the *London Times*, published on the day of the third reading of the Bill granting Mauritian sugar equal import conditions as West Indian sugar, indicates why campaigning had been successful:

> 'Indeed, if nothing more could be adduced in favour of Mauritius than the promise made at the conquest of the island, that all the benefits should follow the possession which were enjoyed by the other British colonies, it is difficult to conceive how the pledge could be forfeited without a blot on the national honour.'[xiii]

Thus, the amendment of the Bill in 1825 sheds light on the way the British public constructed its relationship to the French colonists in Mauritius: they had the same rights to the Empire's market – a concession rarely granted to non-European populations.

Global (intra-empire) trading agreements and economic diplomacy from 1825 to 1919

Mauritian entry into large-scale sugar production coincided with the end of sugar's era as 'England's single most important import'. But whereas West Indian sugar exports came crashing down in the following decades, Mauritian production and export expanded rapidly. Production continued to increase until 1846, when Britain abolished preferences on its market in the Sugar Equalisation Act and sugar prices fell rapidly.[xiv] Disagreement on the rules and morals of the trade nevertheless arose earlier, when Mauritian planters realised that slavery would be abolished. Clashes between their ranks and the British intensified the closer the date for the final abolition of slavery in 1835 approached.

As early as the eighteenth century, an imagination of the island's development prospects along the lines of labour shortage had been established. While slavery had been transformed into an ever more inhumane regime after the introduction of the *Code Noir* in Mauritius, a second imagination defining the working population's different set of skills along race clusters had become inscribed into Franco-Mauritian minds. The end of legal slave trading coming after British conquest in 1811 triggered illicit trade in the following decades; and at approximately the same time, contract workers from the vast British possessions in India were gradually imported to replace the slaves on the plantations. These two succeeding regimes of coerced labour determined the labour process on Mauritian plantations throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth century.[xv] Of particular interest for Mauritian integration into the sugar commodity chain is the transition from one labour regime to the other.

The abolition of slavery brought fresh capital to Mauritius in the form of a £2 million compensation. But a furious showdown with the colonial administration before 1835 (including an attempt on government by planters from the south-eastern district of the island, and a general strike against the installation of a new Protector of Slaves) helped Mauritian slave owners to further negotiate the right to association, to print a newspaper and to open private banking houses and print money. This utlimately gave them control over a state-like system of rights operating under the umbrella of colonial dependency.

It needs to be explained how, after the abolition of sugar duties and slavery, Mauritius quickly − much to the surprise of most British experts – became the main sugar exporter in the imperial market.[xvi] Two developments seem central for this quick acquisition of market share.

One advantage, although at first sight anything but obvious, was the short duration of Mauritian sugar planters' businesses. The Caribbean estates had amassed substantial debts and therefore a substantial amount of their share of the £20 million compensation paid for ending slavery in 1832/33 went into liquidation. The money received by Mauritian slave owners went where the money in the Caribbean did not go: into 'investment in social overhead capital and agricultural improvement'.[xvii]

A second factor I want to highlight was the planters' ability to adjust to the new rules of the market. The contrast to the old modes of production deserves additional emphasis here: Mauritius had shifted from a free-port economy to a plantation economy, turned from slavery to contract labour, and moved its bottleneck strategy from privateering in the Indian Ocean's waters to lobbying in the London offices of the colonial administration. Mauritian entrepreneurs responded early to beet-sugar-induced difficulties on the world market with the establishment of an institution to better represent their interests in 1827. In 1850, they called again to London for a green light to establish a Chamber of Commerce in Mauritius. Whereas, given its charter, the first Chamber had mainly been intended to provide an infrastructure for facilitating prosperity and development, its re-establishment envisaged the following as one of three objectives outlined in its charter:

> 'to receive and collect all information concerning subjects of commercial interest, with the aim to remove all the disadvantages from these and to right the wrongs; to consult authorities and individuals on these issues.'[xviii]

This demonstrates that it was set up to actively maintain and improve the island's position in the global system. Gathering and spreading knowledge about changes in the market and other business-related issues among the local planters and millers was of crucial importance: Mauritius was on the periphery of the global system of sugar trade in the 1820s, but had become ever more central in terms of production capacity and technology by 1850. What was scarce, though, were technologies and measures of authority to gain political influence on the decision makers in London's political and diplomatic circles. For this, the French settlers established close alliances with British traders operating on the island.

A crucial role in the enterprise to change Mauritian positioning was given to the leading Mauritian nineteenth-century shipping and marketing company, Blyth Brothers & Co. The founding director of this company, James Blyth, had already been central to the first successful establishment of a banking house in Mauritius (1830).

Subsequently the company set up shipping activities. In 1850 Mauritius, it was anything but easy to gather information on European market developments. As the island was not connected to the emerging system of steamship lines linking Europe and the Indian Ocean, travel times were long. This caused problems even in the simplest forms of communication, such as in the transmission of letters by ship between London and Mauritius. As early as 1854 the then President of the Mauritian Chamber of Commerce (MCC), Mr Wiehe, complained in furious letters about the lack of steamships connecting Port Louis to the outer world. Blyth Brothers held business interests in these and related matters and was the ideal ally for the MCC. The acting company's Director, H. J. Jourdain, was elected Chamber President in 1864. In the following decades all Blyth Brothers successive directors came to the Chamber Presidency. Furthermore, the company's offices in London functioned as a non-permanent representation of the MCC, and from there dinners with British members of parliament were arranged while Blyth Brothers became involved in buying and selling land and plantations in Mauritius.[xix]

The MCC itself started lobbying for a telegraphic cable connection to Britain in the 1850s (though they were not successful until 1869) and succeeded in lifting import duties on machines used in sugar factories in 1853. When in 1854 London sugar tariffs fell, a system of differential import rights based on polarisation was introduced. In co-operation with the Chamber of Agriculture (MCA), the MCC sent a special envoy to London to lobby for a better import regime for Mauritian sugar with high polarisation. I have outlined several earlier activities of similar kind above that were more successful. It is then surprising that the unsuccessful mission of 1854 has been interpreted as the advent of Franco-Mauritian private sector diplomacy in

London.[xx] Still, that mission triggered resulted in a change of strategy that remains salient until today - albeit novelty here is a different one.

As the efforts had not brought the intended harvest, the MCC went on to council Mauritian planters on how to best grain their sugar. The British trading company M. M. Travers & Sons was also consulted to advise how to advertise test packages of Mauritian sugar. Many local producers had, for example, advertised their highest quality sugar to buyers and then ended up paying indemnity as the bulk cargo delivered was of lower quality .[xxi]

Nevertheless, the 1860s decline in prices for sugar from the colonies on the London market was a factor no lobbying at the Colonial Office could have turned into a benefit for Mauritius. Therefore, the island turned to the British colonies India and Australia, and managed to establish a substantial market in both. Sugar production had risen to 150,480 tons in 1862, and already in 1863 Bombay was buying 10,000 tons of Mauritian sugar while substantial quantities of rice, flour, lentils, and grains moved in the other direction feeding a growing population of mainly South Asian contract workers and their descendants. The tightened commercial link between the two colonies was followed up by the introduction of the Indian rupee as Mauritian currency. Up to the First World War, India was to remain a major market for Mauritian sugar. In 1899, first the Indian colonial government and, in a later vote, also the House of Commons supported the imposition of countervailing duties on bounty-fed sugar imported to India in the interest of Mauritius. Only when the European demand for sugar rose, with the beginning of the war in 1914, did the British government pool the colony's production. From 1914 onwards the island's sugar was and would remain part of the European market.[xxii]

The Mauritian sugar sector as a system of income redistribution (1919-1937)

As I said, the period between Mauritian integration into the British Empire's sugar commodity chain and the First World War was characterised by the introduction of the sugar regime. This meant a change of economic strategies. With the new regime of trade and its morals, an adjustment of labour regimes on the production side of the commodity chain was enforced and Mauritian plantations had to shift from slave to indentured labour. But indentured labour was anything but the system of free citizens selling their labour force on the market as preconditioned by Marx for capitalist economies. Ideally, contract labourers were free to work anywhere they wanted when contracts ended. Therefore, the duration of contracts was another challenge for Mauritian private-sector diplomacy. Longer contracts meant more time to exploit labourers and recoup expenses for their immigration. In some periods, planters had the upper hand and the Mauritian administration granted five-year contracts. In other periods, the British administration in India stopped the migration of indentured workers altogether or insisted that contracts would be limited to one or two years. In the difficult years after 1860, the Mauritian plantocracy turned an existing system of small-scale land sales to former slaves into a profitable means to outsource parts of their business to former indentured labourers.

In the early 1870s, a large-scale process of *morcellements* (divisions) began that would last until the onset of the global economic crisis of the 1920s. Substantial plots of cane land were parcelled and sold, turning former contract workers into smallholders. Present-day Mauritian nation-building narratives often describe this process as emancipation. But the *morcellement* is best understood if other significant changes in the industry are accounted for too. It coincided with a centralisation of sugar mills whose numbers reduced by nearly 90 per cent from 1860 (303) to 1937 (38) while the average annual extraction capacity of mills rose from 450 to 8,210 metric tons in the same period. Actually, *morcellements* had very different effects. They helped large businesses to secure their survival twice, during the global recessions of the 1870s and 1920s, and pushed two new professions up the Mauritian economic hierarchy, estate agents and brokers, who both acted as go-betweens linking sellers and buyers, and later millers and small-scale planters. It was only those most smallholders who hardly saw any prosperity coming their way.[xxiii]

So far, most historical research on the *morcellement* has focused on transactions in the years before 1914. This covers only parts of the picture and ultimately leads many historians to (unwillingly) affirm present-day nation-building ideologies. More insightful is to include the vast plots of land changing hands in the wake of the abolition of indenture (1923), particularly for the years 1918 to 1921. Then, sugar prices were at an all time high, thousands of new smallholders bought their plots at peak prices and saw their profits dwindling with falling sugar prices. This meant that during the peak of sales huge sums of fresh capital went to landowners and to a new professional group: estate agents. Land was often bought, parcelled and sold by joint venture companies of European-Mauritians and traders of South Asian descent, some of them former contract workers, with Indian merchants and banks lending capital to buyers. While the estate-agency business helped several families to acquire massive wealth and turn this into corporations that would be important players in Mauritius for the coming decades, the vast majority of smallholders remained dependent labourers, as their plots were far too small to sustain households. The free wage labourers emerging after the end of indenture in 1923 were often highly indebted smallholders who were desperate to find seasonal employment with millers and owners of large plantations.[xxiv]

The *morcellement*, in my interpretation, should be understood as a huge campaign to generate fresh capital and outsource market risks for those controlling a centralised system of mills on which the new smallholders were dependent to sell their produce. The weight of this dependency became evident to contemporaries in the global crisis of the 1920s and 1930s that consolidated the highly uneven control over the intra-Mauritian nodes in the sugar chain. For once, an intra-island market in which planters and millers openly negotiated prices for cane could not emerge as transport facilities were extremely limited and planters were bound to sell their canes to nearby mills. Secondly, large businesses controlled the island's institutions where the scientific breeding that generated new canes with higher yields was done. Small businesses were thus excluded from another important means for increasing profit.[xxv] Finally, changes to Mauritian incorporation into the capitalist world system came with the development of a new, local bottleneck institution and significant changes in in imperial and global trade.

The said new bottleneck institution emerged from a reorganisation of marketing and financing within the Mauritian sugar industry. After 1825, former British governors like Farquhar had supported the planters' interests within the imperial system of trade preferences. Following the establishment of the MCC in 1850, Mauritian planters and merchants took lobbying into their own hands. The London offices of the British-Mauritian company Blyth Brothers & Co. played an important role in this process of emancipation of Mauritian private-sector economic diplomacy until 1914. The end of First World War marked major changes in the British Empire’s sugar commodity chain.

A system of tariffs to reduce commercial in favour of military transport was established during the war.[xxvi] In 1919 a system of imperial preferences was introduced to replace the wartime restrictions and revive trade. While free trade had never been fully implemented either in the Empire or in its relation to global markets, this new system marked the end of the free-trade propaganda/ideology. In Mauritius, planters reacted to this with the foundation of a new umbrella organisation, the Mauritius Sugar Syndicate (MSS). The British economist James Edward Meade, writing on the prospects of the Mauritian economy in 1961, lists the following boards and associations for the Mauritian sugar industry:

- The MCA as the umbrella organisation of planters, millers and others connected to the industry.

- The Mauritius Sugar Syndicate is exclusively a marketing organisation. It handles the whole crop of the colony and, jointly with the Chamber, is responsible for the discharge of obligations under the Commonwealth and International Sugar Agreements.

- The Central Arbitration and Control Board as a semi-official body that determines conditions and terms for the sale of cane to mills.

- The Mauritius Sugar Producers Association as an employers’ union representing the millers’ interests towards the planters.[xxvii]

The marketing dimension of the MSS highlighted by Meade dates back to the interwar period. It is particularly interesting that the colonial government sanctioned the handling of the whole crop by the MSS following the first substantial and widespread riot of small planters. In 1937, due to a transmission of reduced world-market prices from the millers further along the chain to the small planters, a large group of the latter attacked one of the mills that had declared it would buy up their sugar cane at reduced prices only. Four planters were shoot by armed employees of one mill and a commission of enquiry was set up. Following the recommendations of this commission, the MSS was officially turned into the bottleneck that from now on mediated between the Mauritian nodes in the sugar commodity chain and the outside world.

Already before 1937 the MSS had been in charge of selling all Mauritian sugar on the world market. But this had been by way of a series of agreements among local businesses. While a substantial part of Mauritian produce was exported at a guaranteed price under the system of imperial preferences, the remainder was sold at shifting world-market prices. The overall income was then pooled and split according to shares of total produce among the millers and owners of large plantations. In my view, smallholders are best described as an appendix to this system as they sold their canes via brokers to millers and received sugar in return. This sugar could then be passed on to the MSS in another transaction involving brokers. The crop season was pre-financed by MSS payments to millers who usually had themselves granted loans to small planters. In years of low world-market prices the MSS stored a substantial amount of sugar to be marketed in hope of higher prices in the future. Thus, a redistributive system was already operating before 1937 as millers and owners of large plantations not only pooled and collectively sold their sugar, but also shared the risk of selling a certain amount of sugar on the ‘open’ world market. However, this redistributive system extended to the small planters only via intermediaries: millers and brokers. Small-planters' canes had to be processed by millers and they kept a substantial margin as payment for their services, usually handing small-planters the equivalent of approximately two-thirds of sugar that could be gained per ton delivered. Such a significant deductions could not be justified with the mere costs of milling only. It was also said that the small-planters' canes were of lower quality, as they did not plant those varieties that were bred for high-yields in Mauritius' scientific institutions. After the 1937 riots, this bottleneck in the chain between smallholders and millers was given up in favour of a system of general redistribution of market gains and risks, making the small planters full members of the MSS.[xxviii]

One important aspect enabling the institutionalisation of this system was that there was a matching institutionalisation on the international sphere. In 1937, Britain ratified the International Sugar Agreement (ISA). The ISA provisioned Mauritius as well as other colonies and Commonwealth countries with a range of fixed annual quota for exports to the London market. This put an end to a series of policy changes in the 1920s and 1930s. Before 1937, Britain had switched rather erratically between protecting its home markets by reducing or abolishing preferences for producers in the colonies on the one hand, and on the other hand extending preferences to subsidise ailing Mauritian and other colonial producers. From 1937 on, Britain and other contracting parties of the ISA mutually acknowledged existing quota systems to the degree that these were written into the agreement (albeit some of them amended following negotiations).[xxix]

From imperial preferences to the Commonwealth Sugar Agreement (1951) and the Lomé Convention (1975)

When colonial dependencies rose up with growing success against colonial exploitation after the Second World War, many colonial powers already had a safeguard system in place. In the late war years, preparations were made to set up a number of agreements and institutions that would regulate international trade in the decades to come (Bretton Woods, United Nations, World Bank, International Monetary Fund, etcetera). The Global Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), ratified in 1947, established a system of trade regimes and codes of conduct for the colonial powers, as well as their colonies, which were to be transferred one to one in cases of transition from a colonial to a postcolonial state. [xxx] Mauritius as a British colony became a member of the GATT in 1947: After independence in 1968, a simple one page letter dated 4 April 1968 sent by the British government to the GATT director was sufficient to assure Mauritian accession to the GATT according to provisions reserved for newly independent countries in 1967.[xxxi]

Under the GATT, trade in all goods with special provisions for former colonies as well as other bilateral or multilateral trade agreements signed by one or more member states had to be presented to and accepted by all other members. When the British government implemented the Commonwealth Sugar Agreement (CSA) in 1951, granting an annual purchase of 1.8 million metric tons of cane sugar from Commonwealth sugar producers at a guaranteed price, this agreement had to be passed within GATT. Later, the CSA had to be integrated into the emerging European Economic Community. The Common Agricultural Policy, protecting and subsidising EEC producers heavily against world-market competition, strongly resembles the principles of the CSA in its seclusion from world-market mechanisms. Whereas other imports of sugar were levelled by high import duties to European prices after subsidies, seventy-nine former European colonies in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific were granted duty-free purchase at intra-EEC price levels for their agricultural products under the Lomé Convention ratified in 1975. As sugar represented about 90 per cent of the country's export income at the time of Mauritian independence in 1968 (with only minor changes over the following fifteen years), the guaranteed price brought in revenues that facilitated financing a policy of export-led development. This started with the opening of an Export Processing Zone (EPZ) in 1970 and ultimately led to a booming textile and garment industry with 50 per cent of investment coming from the local sugar industry making the Mauritian EPZ that with the highest ratio of local capital worldwide. [xxxii]

After independence, Mauritian economic diplomacy continued as a joint endeavour of the postcolonial state and the private sector. Until the early 1990s, Mauritian governments lacked funding to send delegates to Brussels or London for tariff negotiations. These instead were pursued with the support of the MSS, MCC and MCA representatives in European countries, and the Mauritian public-private (diplomacy) partnership negotiated the highest of all sugar quotas among the so-called ACP-countries, seventy-nine former European colonies from Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific, in the Lomé Convention of 1975.[xxxiii]

The trade regime established after the Second World War cannot be understood and interpreted without a short reference to its dominant ideologies. While questions how to achieve economic development had been a major concern during the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, the scope of these debates was limited to the respective spheres controlled by a single imperial power. With the emergence of regulatory institutions of global significance, such as the GATT, the idea of development was given a new twist. The world was from now on divided into three regions that were positioned along a hierarchy determined by economic variables such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Although in terms of its sugar industry Mauritius was an industrialised country, its GDP and other variables positioned the island on the underdeveloped side of the hierarchy: the Third World. Part and parcel of this division of the world were the ideologies of development and modernisation that defined fixed patterns of action to be followed if a country's position was to be improved. Thus, one can speak of a neo-evolutionary concept that positioned nations and their economies in time according to their stages of development.[xxxiv] Inherent in the promise of development and prosperity was a system of aims and norms inscribed into the GATT which are circumscribed in its 'Preamble':

> Recognizing that their relations in the field of trade and economic endeavour should be conducted with a view to raising standards of living, ensuring full employment and a large and steadily growing volume of real income and effective demand, developing the full use of the resources of the world and expanding the production and exchange of goods,
>
> Being desirous of contributing to these objectives by *entering into reciprocal and mutually advantageous arrangements* directed to the substantial reduction of tariffs and other barriers to trade and to the elimination of discriminatory treatment in international commerce.[xxxv]

It was exactly this concept of reciprocal and mutually advantageous arrangements that was transformed in the heydays of development policies in 1965.

Now, preferential trading agreements between the EEC and former European colonies were legitimate although they were non-reciprocal.[xxxvi] On paper, the industrial countries volunteered to forego the norm of reciprocity in order to give trade benefits to underdeveloped countries and hence allow them to develop. But the EEC, for example, not only chose which country to grant such benefits to and which not to according to a postcolonial nation's political performance; it also gained control over substantial shares of goods traded on the world market under the system of trade preferences. As outlined above, and similar to economic diplomacy in the nineteenth century, the Mauritian private sector was very active lobbying in Brussels; only this time, it was not the British governors supporting them but the government of independent Mauritius.

From Lomé and GATT to WTO (1995)

The Uruguay Round, initiated in 1986, laid the grounds for the foundation of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in 1995. Once again, and for the second time after the rise of free trade ideology in mid-nineteenth century Britain, the capitalist world economy went into a phase of trade liberalisation claiming to end all other bilateral and multi-lateral trade agreements. What this meant for Mauritius is best illustrated by the events around the ministerial conference of the WTO in Cancun in 2003. Since the foundation of the WTO, the way in which global trade liberalisation was to be achieved has been a highly controversial issue. Every two years, ministers of member states, WTO delegates, lobbyists representing transnational companies and delegations from large international NGOs meet to either follow up or open up a new round of negotiations.[xxxvii] These rounds are split according to three sectors: trade in agricultural goods, trade in non-agricultural goods and the newly emerging global trade in services framed in the Global Agreement on Trade in Services.

In 2003, Mauritius was a member of several pressure groups, each consisting of nation states grouped together along shared interests in one of the three sectors. An example of such a type of formation is the group of ACP states benefitting from the Lomé Convention of 1975 and successor agreements. This group met that in preparation for the 2003 summit in Fiji in May to agree on common grounds for trade in agricultural goods.[xxxviii] The Mauritian Minister of Industry and Commerce, Jayen Cuttaree, led this group of nation states as spokesperson. Another group was the Organisation of African Union (OAU), which tried to bring together the commercial interests of African nations as the least developed of all continents. Given that Mauritius was one of the few African countries that could afford to employ a decent number of representatives in the WTO headquarters in Geneva, it was no surprise that Jayen Cuttaree acted as spokesman for the OAU as well. This is a coincidence of representations of obviously very different interests: whereas the OAU objected to the US and EU insistence on agricultural preferences as these harmed the export prospects of most African countries, the ACP states supported the EU/US initiative as they profited from preferential access to the European market. Thus, the Mauritian position in Cancun was somewhat schizophrenic as for once it went along with the ACP in trade in agricultural goods.

On the other hand, Mauritius supported the OAU demand for extended protectionism and financial support in trade in non-agricultural goods based on the notion that underdevelopment had resulted from colonisation and therefore a gesture of reciprocity was needed from the former colonisers. Furthermore, the Mauritian government took sides with the EU/US position on opening up trade in services as most Mauritian companies hoped to profit from expansion to the East African states. Thus, Mauritius in 2003 was by no means represented as a coherent national economy by its government in the Cancun negotiation round.

The national policy was, in terms of global trading agreements, divided according to its main economic sectors: sugar cane, textiles and garments, tourism and services. Along the commodity chains of these sectors, the Mauritian government took up a Janus-headed stance: one time promoting liberalisation, another time protectionism. Thus, what had started as a seemingly small-scale endeavour in economic diplomacy in the years before 1825 had turned into a full-scale foreign policy operation. The dimensions of this operation became even more evident when Mauritian minister Jayen Cuttaree ran for the post of the Director General of the WTO (and lost to the EU Commissioner for Agriculture, Pascal Lamy).

Conclusion

In 2012, sugar production still shapes much of social life on Mauritius. The sugar fields dominate the landscape with 40 per cent of acreage under cane cultivation. The industry also strongly impacts on future Mauritian economic prospects. This chapter has outlined the continuous importance of the co-operation of governments and the private sector in maintaining sugar and its production regime for the period from 1825 to 2005. What became evident are continuities in the nature of the business and its fundamental political-economic structure. If this is considered, certain ideas concerning how to periodise globalisation can be questioned while others come to the fore.

Given the unbroken legacy of early nineteenth-century public-private-partnerships in Mauritius, one central idea for periodising globalisation seems doubtful: that there was an era of free trade in the nineteenth century. From the perspective of Mauritian sugar and later industrial sectors, this has always and continuously been based on insider deals cut in front- and backroom diplomacy, as well as by positioning the island within power struggles guiding the long-term workings of the global system. But free trade was also not the dominant pattern of actual practice. Take, for instance, the system of distinguishing and taxing sugar imports into the British Empire via polarisation introduced in 1854. This policy stands in contrast to assumptions of an entirely duty- and quota-free British Empire.

Osterhammel and Petersson, however, equate an era of free trade, which they date from 1846 to 1880, with the emergence of a global economy. For the same period, these authors identify the emergence of a global consciousness.[xxxix] Here one might add other examples that contradict this periodisation. Campaigning for and against the abolition of slavery around 1830 was a conscious global movement as well. This calls for shifting attention from the often-invoked consumption patterns to critiques of labour regimes established along commodity chains across the globe.

In other words, globalisation can be periodised by analysing the economic calculus and the morals that guide the establishment of global trading regimes as well as their contestations. Given that sugar brought Mauritius into the sphere of large-scale global capitalist production, this factor itself defines a macro-period of globalisation. Within this period, changes in world-market prices and global economic developments might be identified as secondary macro-factors that in moments of fundamental crisis, such as in 1937, trigger internal and external regulatory procedures that may alter the Mauritian positioning within the sugar commodity chain and especially the nature of the central nodes of the chain: its bottlenecks. Periodising globalisation for Mauritius (or any other post-colony) should therefore involve studying the interstate system and its uneven regulation of global trade over the past two centuries.

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[i] I would like to thank Jonathan Curry-Machado and Robert Heinze for their valuable advice and comments.

[ii] McKeown, 'Periodizing Globalization'.

[iii] Moree, *Concise History of Dutch Mauritius*.

[iv] Boudet, 'La Construction Politique'.

[v] Allen, *Slaves, Freedmen, and Indentured Laborers*, p.12.

[vi] Storey, *Science and Power*, p.26.

[vii] Wallerstein, 'Great Expansion', pp.113-4.

[viii] Vaughan, *Creating the Creole Island*, p.61.

[ix] Mintz, *Sweetness and Power*, pp.188-90; Teelock, *Bitter Sugar*, pp.42-3.

[x] Macmillan, *Mauritius Illustrated*, p.44; Teelock, *Bitter Sugar*, pp.43.

[xi] After British take-over, the Colonial Bank of Mauritius, Bourbon (Reunion) and Dependencies had been established in 1812 but operation ceased in 1813 (Berthelot, *Histoire de la Chambre de Commerce*, p.45).

[xii] Storey, *Science and Power*, p.26; Teelock, *Bitter Sugar*, pp.43-4.

[xiii] *The Times*, 6 June 1825.

[xiv] Mahler, 'Britain, the European Community, and the Developing Commonwealth', p.473.

[xv] Vaughan, *Creating the Creole Island*; Allen, 'Licentious and Unbridled Proceedings'. Tinker tries to link the two regimes even closer, calling contract labour *A New System of Slavery*.

[xvi] Boudet, 'Les Abolitions de l'Esclavage'; Boudet, 'La Construction Politique'; Bräutigam, 'Strategic Engagement', p.67.

[xvii] Sheridan, 'West India Sugar Crisis', pp.548-9.

[xviii] Berthelot, *Histoire de la Chambre de Commerce*, p.15.

[xix] Lagesse, *Blyth Brothers*, p.120; Berthelot, *Histoire de la Chambre de Commerce*, pp.29-33, 153-7.

[xx] Bräutigam, 'Strategic Engagement'.

[xxi] Berthelot, *Histoire de la Chambre de Commerce*, pp.44, 56, 72, 87.

[xxii] Lagesse, *Blyth Brothers*, p.118; Berthelot, *Histoire de la Chambre de Commerce*, p.60; Griffin, 'Sugar Industry', pp.41-2; Anonymous, 'Trade Movements'.

[xxiii] Allen, *Slaves, Freedmen, and Indentured Laborers*, pp.72-4; North-Coombes, *Studies*, p.141.

[xxiv] This issue is rarely raised in Mauritian historiography (see for example Teelock, *Mauritian History*, pp.323-50).

[xxv] Storey, *Science and Power*.

[xxvi] Mahler, 'Britain, the European Community, and the Developing Commonwealth', p.475.

[xxvii] Meade, *Economic and Social Structure*, pp.79-80.

[xxviii] Hooper, *Report*; Meade, *Economic and Social Structure*. Small planters in 1960 owned and worked 40% of the Mauritian land under cane.

[xxix] See Gilbert, 'International Commodity Agreements'.

[xxx] Hoekman and Kostecki, *Political Economy*, p.38. It is important to note that agreements such as the CSA and the Lomé Convention also needed to be matched with provisions of the ISA, which was amended in 1954 and 1974 (Gilbert, 'International Commodity Agreements'). This is outlined in GATT, *Territorial Application*.

[xxxi] GATT, *Status of Mauritius*.

[xxxii] Mahler, 'Britain, the European Community, and the Developing Commonwealth', pp.476-80; Neveling, 'Spirits of Capitalism'.

[xxxiii] Bräutigam, ‘Strategic Engagement’.

[xxxiv] Ferguson, ‘Decomposing Modernity’.

[xxxv] GATT, *General Agreement*, emphasis added.

[xxxvi] Ziai, ‘From Development Discourse’.

[xxxvii] Hoekman and Kostecki, *Political Economy*.

[xxxviii] The following description is based on research during two periods of field research in Mauritius in 2003 and 2004, and builds on various articles published in the Mauritian daily *L'Express* in 2003, among other sources of information.

[xxxix] Osterhammel and Petersson, *Geschichte der Globalisierung*, pp.60-3.