

Summer Semester 2022

SDAC Guest Lecture Series

Triangles of Vigilance vs. Information based Decision Making. The Case of Spanish Colonial Rule

Arndt Brendecke
LMU MunichMonday
25.04.22
18-20:00 c.t.

Prof. Dr. Arndt Brendecke is a German historian who currently leads the Chair of Early Modern History at Ludwig Maximilians Universität in Munich. His research has concentrated on the emergence of the European culture of time, the development of the procedures of knowledge production that today seem self-evident, and on the structures of power and information in early colonial empires. His teaching focuses on the history of the Holy Roman Empire, England, and Spain and early globalization, focusing, for instance, on the history of the Caribbean and colonial Latin America.

His publications include *Imperium und Empirie. Funktionen des Wissens in der Spanischen Kolonialherrschaft* (Köln u.a. 2009) which was translated into English (*The Empirical Empire: Spanish Colonial Rule and the Politics of Knowledge*) and Spanish (*Imperio e información. Funciones del saber en el dominio colonial español*) in 2016 and *Die Jahrhundertwenden: Eine Geschichte ihrer Wahrnehmung und Wirkung* (Frankfurt am Main, New York, 1999).

As early as in the 16th century, Spain established a set of remarkable techniques in order to provide the court in Madrid with a constant supply of information about its widespread Colonial Empire. The utopian aim was *entera noticia*, 'full knowledge'. The gathering of information went hand in hand with an impressively early installation of colonial administration and the systematic use of written communication (constant correspondence, questionnaires etc.). Centers of power were to be created in Madrid and the Escorial, where information from the entire Empire could come together, and where the king could take his decisions and pull all the strings, like a spider in the middle of the web. In the first part of this talk, Prof. Dr. Brendecke will explain how this center of knowledge should have worked. In the second part of the contribution, he will show why the idea of making decisions based on objective information remained a utopian ideal and what the practice actually looked like instead. Colonial practice cannot be captured by the model of a central accumulation of knowledge and power, but far more adequately by the model of triangles of vigilance.

This event will be held via zoom.
Please contact Prof. Dr. Viola Thimm to register
(viola.thimm@fau.de).



ELITE MASTER'S PROGRAM
Standards of Decision-Making Across Cultures

