

“Shaping the Officer. Communities and Practices of Accountability in Premodern Europe”

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Interactions between subjects and rulers have been studied in a wide range of historiographical approaches. Among them, the question of officers’ accountability has been of particular interest as a fundamental field for the analysis of rule and authority in premodern Europe. While recent research has attributed to communities a more active role in defining these interactions, they are still mostly portrayed as reacting to inputs from above. Even in recent approaches on ‘state-building from below’ or in more specific concepts such as ‘empowering interactions’, local populations are depicted as either posing resistance or participating in an arena conceded to them.

Officers’ accountability is the main focal point of our conference since it is a privileged field to analyse these phenomena. However, instead of thinking of communities as essentially reactive agents, we would like to look at how communities actively modelled the officers’ behaviour, shaped institutions – understood as including formal and informal practices –, and thus established both their own and the officers’ actual scope of action. We are especially interested in the various ways local populations engaged in holding officers accountable, both through regular and extraordinary procedures as well as through everyday interactions with office holders.

We would like to invite papers that reflect on the role of communities in processes of officers’ accountability in Europe from the 13th to 18th centuries. Special emphasis should lie on practices rather than regulations and local perspectives rather than central institutions.

Possible questions include, but are not limited to:

- (1) What are the ways in which communities established and/or activated limits to the actions of officers? Rather than focusing on strictly formal procedures, we would like to look at strategies such as scandalisation, resistance, collaboration, negotiation, etc.
- (2) Did the interaction with local communities create or enforce specific models of behaviour on the part of the officers, either in terms of internalised norms or externalised performance and *dissimulatio*?
- (3) What are the relations and dynamics between more formalised and officially regulated procedures of accountability and more informal practices, such as active informing, petitioning and rumours?
- (4) Does the analysis of practices and processes of accountability in this way allow us to question or reformulate established diachronic explanatory models of premodern Europe (such as state-building, modernisation, or bureaucratization)?

Proposals (in English) should include a title and an abstract (300 words) and a short CV. Please send your proposal to maria.martin@lmu.de and ziegler@ghil.ac.uk by 8 May 2017. Standard travel and accommodation expenses will be reimbursed.