

## **Global History Lecture Series**

**April 9<sup>th</sup> 2021(Friday) at 14–16 am (German time)**

**Speaker: Magnus Ressel (Frankfurt University)**

**Title: “The German Empire and Trade with the Caribbean in the 18th century. The Business Ventures of Friedrich von Romberg (1729-1819)”**

**Commentator: Michael-W Serruys (Brest University)**

### **Abstract**

In the presentation, I intend to give new insights into the colonial enterprises of Friedrich Romberg (1729-1819). He was most likely the richest man on the European continent around 1785 because of his intensive involvement in the Belgian textile industries, in banking, in maritime insurance, in the Atlantic colonial and slave trade and in freight forwarding from the North Sea to the Mediterranean. My central hypothesis is that Romberg’s success was due to the combined utilization of several sectors in the global economic system of the late 18th century. Operating under strong imperial protection in Brussels, Romberg vertically monopolized in his various firms sections and aspects of the exchange and refinement of continental European products and colonial goods and continuously reinvested his winnings in his textile factories in Belgium. Romberg’s activities are on the threshold of the historical change of the traditional merchant-banker towards the owner of an institutionalized and bureaucratized company. An analysis of Romberg's business ventures brings thus to the fore the functional interdependencies and dynamics of trade between Central Europe and the Caribbean in the 18th century.