



## In the Footsteps of Humboldt: Germans and Austrians in Venezuelan Social Science.

Dienstag, 23.09.2014 | 17.00-18.30 Uhr  
Merangasse 18/KG, SR 35.K1, 8010 Graz

During the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, Venezuela was a common destination for voyagers from German-speaking countries. Inspired by the works of Alexander von Humboldt, painters and naturalists such as Ferdinand Bellermann and Anton Göring crossed Venezuela in search for "picturesque" landscapes, exotic flora and fauna and foreign Native People. The voyagers were supported by German immigrants who had previously settled in Venezuela and this set-up allowed them to study the social customs of the country through the eyes of the settlers. Even though the views the voyagers held of the Venezuelan society at the point of their arrival bear strong traces of Eurocentrism, they were nevertheless influential on the development of Venezuelan Social Science. Up until the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the country's geography was, for instance, studied by using *Le voyage aux régions équinoxiales du Nouveau Continent*. In the 1870s, the Silesian scientist Adolfo Ernst founded the School of Positivism in Caracas, a school of thought that was formative for many generations of sociologists, historians and politicians who then controlled the social and political thinking of Venezuela for half a century.

**Tomás Straka** holds a PhD in History and is Professor at Andrés Bello Catholic University in Caracas, where he directs the History Master's

Programs. Focussing on the history of ideas and on historiography, he has studied the thought of the Venezuelan royalists during the Independence War, the Catholic Thinkers in the Liberal Era and the uses of the Bolivarianism in the Latin-American politics discourse. Tomás Straka is also a columnist. He further organizes an annual history conference at his university

and he has been visiting scholar at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. Among his publications are: *La voz de los vencidos, ideas del partido realista de Caracas 1810-1821; Hechos y gente, historia contemporánea de Venezuela; Un reino para este mundo: catolicismo y republicanismo en Venezuela* and *La épica del desencanto, historioografía, bolivarianismo y política en Venezuela*. Together with Michael Zeuske and Agustín Sánchez Andrés, he edited *Las independencias de Iberoamérica*.



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