The aim of this session is to attract papers to reflect on complex political systems (CPS) in the Early Modern Age, which were dominated by the convergence of multiple interests, and their need to gather information about their subjects from different sources. As a rule, local actors played an essential role in achieving the system’s political aims of integration and governance. The global expansion of the Spanish and Portuguese monarchies and of the Ottoman Empire in the 16th century, in which different institutions, social and economic practices, and political and religious traditions converged, demanded communication and information mechanisms to convey the necessary knowledge about both territories and people.

These local, political or religious, ‘agents’ were a sort of “transmission belt” between the court and its European, American, African and Asian territories; they defended local interests while delivering information about distant political and cultural contexts. They complemented the action of other political actors (such as viceroys, governors and superior councils) and provided a more direct means of communication between the subjects and the king. These local actors include a wide array of intellectuals, such as the humanist Mariangelo Accursio or the writer Giovan Battista Pino, who defended their cities’ interests at Charles V’s court; religious reformers, such as Diego de Salazar and José de Acosta, who connected distant territories in Asia, America and Europe with their ecclesiastical work during the reign of Philip II; or the missionaries Andrés de Urdaneta and Martín de Loyola, who connected peoples and experiences both within and outside the empire’s borders, also in the 16th century.

We welcome papers on local agents, both individuals and groups (secular or religious), which were active within the same territory, their role, networks, religious identity, production of texts and accounts. The aim of this session is to re-create the human and information-related dimension of a universe of local agents that constantly moved back and forth between their territories and decision-making centres.

Their essential role provides a new insight into Early Modern governance, which was based on the strategic action of territorial mediators, as well as to present Early Modern empires as a laboratory of knowledge in which the operation of territorial mediators played an essential role in the governance of different contexts and interests.

Session organized by Ida Mauro and Diego Sola, University of Barcelona.
Research group REDIF. Redes de información y fidelidad: los mediadores territoriales en la construcción global de la Monarquía de España (1500-1700).

Please send proposals, including a 150-word abstract with your paper title, full name, current affiliation, and a short CV (up to 5 pages) by July 31th, 2020 to Dr. Ida Mauro idamauro@ub.edu and Dr. Diego Sola diegosola@ub.edu

For further information see the Renaissance Society of America meeting website: www.rsa.org/page/RSADublin2021

Picture: Gasparus Bouttats, Felipe II of Spain receives the Japanese and Jesuit ambassadors from the Tenshō Embassy (1582-1588). National Library of Spain, Madrid.