

## **Call for Proposals: Political Economies of Mining in the Early Modern World Workshop**

*University of Vienna, September 25-26, 2025*

Mining played a vital role in premodern economies. The extraction, transformation, and exchange of precious metals – such as silver, gold, and copper – not only established global economic networks but also reinforced political power. Whether viewed from the perspective of territorial rulers, merchant elites, or miners, mining had the capacity to strengthen fiscal control, drive commercial exchange, and upend local economies. While the significance of mining is indisputable, the processes and mechanisms that made it so central to the political economy of diverse regions remain less explored. This workshop aims to move beyond assessments of the impact of silver and gold on monetary policies to examine the institutions, ideas, and practices associated with the extraction of mineral resources across the pre-modern world. We aim to connect scholars whose expertise spans mining regions that have rarely been considered together in the context of early modern political and economic transformations through comparative and thematic approaches. To achieve this, the workshop will bring together specialists of major mining regions in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Europe, focusing on the late medieval and early modern periods.

The workshop will also engage local archivists and museum curators who will contribute to a roundtable discussion in the concluding session. We aim to integrate their expertise in managing large collections of mining objects and archives in Central Europe to explore new approaches to writing histories of political economy based on these collections. To encourage collaboration, this workshop will be held just after another international conference hosted by one of Central Europe's largest mining archives, the Slovak Mining Archives in Banská Štiavnica (Slovakia), on September 10-11, on the topic of “Mining and Migration.” For further details please contact Peter Konečný of the Slovenian Mining Archive ([peter.konecny.schemnitz@gmail.com](mailto:peter.konecny.schemnitz@gmail.com) <https://www.minv.sk/?sba>). The ERBE Symposium on Cultural Heritage in Geosciences, Mining and Metallurgy, taking place in Ravne na Koroškem, Slovenia on September 22nd – 27th may also be of interest: <https://www.erbe-symposium.org/>

The workshop will take place on **Thursday 25th-Friday 26th September 2025** at the University of Vienna. We aim to discuss approximately 10 pre-circulated article-length papers over two days, exploring themes such as taxation, mining laws, labor regimes, and knowledge production from the 1300s to the 1700s, with the aim of fostering comparative analysis. Decisions regarding the publication of the papers in a special issue or an edited volume will be made after the workshop. We welcome creative interpretation of the workshop themes, but are particularly interested in papers that address the following topics:

- **Mining laws:** Starting from the late medieval period, the codification of mining laws began to proliferate. In what ways did various stakeholders – including state officials, imperial representatives, and local communities – shape mining ordinances? How did these legal frameworks evolve, how were they adapted to new territories, and what lasting impact did they have on the governance of mineral resources, labor relations, and economic policies?
- **Mining communities:** Mining often took place in remote areas, beyond the immediate control of urban elites. As a result, miners were granted specific autonomies, including ad hoc legal courts, tax exemptions, and flexible mobility rights. How did these communities interact with existing legal, social, and economic frameworks? How did these negotiations shape the governance of mining regions and influence state-building?
- **Ideologies of resource management:** Searching for, extracting, and managing minerals were not just mechanical operations; they were deeply entangled with early modern conceptions of the cyclical nature of resources. What kinds of moral, religious, and cosmological frameworks shaped the management and expansion of pre-modern mining? How did top-down ideologies of resource management compete with or adapt to vernacular practices of extraction?
- **Knowledge and governance:** The extraction, transformation, and trade of minerals generated knowledge production and exchange. What kind of hierarchies, networks, and bureaucracies were necessary to take minerals out of the ground and get them to consumers? What tensions or synergies emerged between state-driven policies and the knowledge and techniques developed by local mining communities?
- **Beyond gold and silver:** Minerals such as alum, vitriol, iron, and salt as well as stones and gems did not turn into coins, yet they played a crucial role in shaping local and global exchange networks. How did these distinctions shape the social composition of mining communities and the relationships between political authorities and on-the-ground actors? And how did diverse minerals influence regional mining histories, impact local economies, and contribute to commercial networks spanning both nearby and distant emporiums?

The workshop is co-organized by Gabriele Marcon and Claire Sabel, as a collaboration between FWF-ESPRIT project “Mining the Earth, Roaming the Globe” (PI: Gabriele Marcon) and ERC project SCARCE (PI: Sebastian Felten). It is the first of three planned workshops in Vienna. Future meetings will explore themes of environment and knowledge production. Potential contributors should send an abstract of no more than 250 words and a 150 word bio to ([gabriele.marcon@univie.ac.at](mailto:gabriele.marcon@univie.ac.at) and [claire.sabel@univie.ac.at](mailto:claire.sabel@univie.ac.at)) by **26 May**. Limited funding is available to cover travel and accommodation in Vienna, thanks to financial support from the Austrian Science Fund (FWF – Österreichischer Wissenschaftsfonds), the European Research Council, and the Faculty of Historical and Cultural Studies at the University of Vienna. To help us plan with budgeting, please indicate in your submission if you have other funding sources to cover your travel expenses.