

Call for papers

Comparing the Copperbelt: Political culture and knowledge production in Central Africa

Workshop to be held at Moba Hotel, Kitwe, Zambia, 23-24 July 2018

Comparing the Copperbelt is an ERC-funded research project, running at the University of Oxford from 2016-2020. The project aims to examine the Copperbelt (in both Zambia and the DR Congo) as a single region divided by a (post-)colonial border, across which flowed minerals, people and ideas. It analyses how academic knowledge production (e.g. by the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute and CEPSI) shaped understanding of Copperbelt societies and it seeks ways to explore Copperbelt political culture and popular perceptions from a historical perspective.

This workshop aims to bring together researchers on and in the Copperbelt region to share ideas on social, environmental and cultural history. Research papers from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds (history, anthropology, economics, etc.), approaches and regional focuses (both old and new mining regions) are welcomed. The workshop seeks to bring together academics, trade union leaders and environmental activists to foster discussions about the history and current condition of the Copperbelt region.

Topics to be explored include, but are not limited to:

- New approaches to political culture on the Zambian and Congolese Copperbelt
- Popular perceptions of social change on the Zambian and Congolese Copperbelt, e.g. through urban spirituality, trade union activism or environmental movements
- Processes of knowledge production and their interactions with historical change, e.g. the interaction between academic research and civil society
- The relationship between mining, political culture and social history, for example through labour and ethnicity (both in old and newer mining regions)
- How present-day dynamics on the Copperbelt can be related to historical change, for example labour and environmental movements

This workshop will be an excellent opportunity for the ERC project researchers to share their preliminary insights (from archival research and oral history) and to receive feedback on their findings to date. More importantly, this workshop enables participants to learn from other approaches and research experiences in order to advance the study of the Copperbelt region. We particularly welcome submissions from Zambian and Congolese researchers: project funding has been allocated to support the participation of local researchers, including bringing Congolese researchers to Kitwe. As well as academic presentations, this workshop will leave plenty of time for discussion and will include visual exhibitions related to the project themes.

Paper titles and abstracts (no more than 300 words) should be sent to the organisers (Miles Larmer miles.larmer@history.ox.ac.uk and Claire Phillips claire.phillips@history.ox.ac.uk) by 15 February 2018. We will then contact successful applicants to make arrangements for travel, accommodation and other logistics.

