

Digging Deeper: Uncovering the People Behind Prehistoric Flint and Other Georesource Mining

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From early Prehistory to the present day, subterranean resources (georesources) have played a central role in the economic, technological, and social development of human societies. Focusing on both early and later Prehistory, from the Palaeolithic to the Bronze Age, this session aims to place the individuals engaged in the extraction and processing of georesources at the centre of the discussion.

Who were the people involved in the mining and treatment of materials such as flint, radiolarite, copper, gold, gemstones, salt, ochre and other materials? How can they be identified through archaeological evidence? Were these activities undertaken by isolated individuals, by specialised groups, or by entire communities? Did such work occur within domestic contexts or in specifically designated areas? Were they seasonal and communal undertakings, or rather carried out by intra- or extra-community specialists? Did these activities benefit specific individuals or groups within society? Are differences observable between contemporary communities, and if so, how might these be explained?

By addressing these questions, this session seeks to enhance our understanding of the social structures and dynamics of prehistoric and protohistoric societies, shedding light on the organisation, specialisation, and socio-economic implications of georesource exploitation. Presentations reporting recent research developments, new discoveries, or ongoing projects related to these broad themes are also warmly encouraged.