

Call for Abstracts – Workshop and Fellowships

Politics of Payments: Theorizing the Transformation of Monetary Orders

International Workshop and Fellowship Opportunities at the Historical-Sociological Research Hub ‘Fault Lines of Democracy: Violence – Sovereignty – Territoriality’

September 7-9, 2026, Hamburg Institute for Social Research, Germany

Money is not merely a neutral medium of exchange but a contested terrain of political and economic power. Who builds and owns the infrastructure of payment? Who controls the issuance and circulation of money? Who maintains these systems and bears the costs of their operation? Whose interests does the monetary order serve? These questions have shaped political conflict and institutional development across centuries, yet they remain inadequately theorized and historicized.

We invite submissions for a workshop exploring the historical evolution of power relations within payment systems and monetary orders. This interdisciplinary gathering aims to bring together scholars from sociology, political science, history, and economics to examine fundamental questions about ownership, control, maintenance, and contestation of monetary infrastructure. We are particularly **pleased to have Marieke de Goede (University of Amsterdam) as our keynote speaker**, who will talk about her research project on approaching colonial durabilities in modern financial infrastructures.

The workshop foregrounds theoretical and political analysis of monetary systems, with particular attention to processes of transformation and institutional change. We seek contributions that engage with the power dynamics embedded in payment infrastructures and examine how these arrangements emerge, stabilize, and break down—from historical coin monopolies and early banking systems to contemporary digital payment platforms and central bank digital currencies. How have struggles over monetary sovereignty, seigniorage, and financial intermediation shaped state formation, imperial expansion, class relations, and patterns of accumulation? What drives transitions from one monetary order to another? What

theoretical frameworks best illuminate the political character of money, its infrastructure, and its transformation?

We welcome contributions that examine the political history of money and monetary orders through **multiple theoretical and disciplinary lenses**, including but not limited to political economy, historical sociology, monetary theory, institutional economics, and critical finance studies.

The workshop invites presentations **addressing topics such as** the emergence and transformation of monetary hierarchies, the relationship between monetary power and state power, payment infrastructure as a site of power, profit, and maintenance work, the historical evolution of monetary sovereignty and its challenges, the relationship between democratic statehood and monetary governance, imperial and hegemonic dimensions of monetary orders and their decline, the distributive consequences of different monetary arrangements, crises and ruptures in monetary orders, monetary warfare and financial sanctions, and contemporary transformations including cryptocurrencies, stablecoins, and platform-based payments.

We particularly **encourage theoretically ambitious work that connects historical analysis to broader questions of political and economic power**. Comparative and long-term historical perspectives that illuminate processes of institutional change are especially welcome.

Please submit an abstract of approximately 400-500 words along with a brief biographical note to bruchlinien@his-online.de until **22 March 2026**. The Hamburg Institute for Social Research will cover **travel expenses and accommodation** for the selected participants.

In addition, interested parties have the opportunity to apply for an extension of their stay at the institute by **1-4 weeks** as part of a **fellowship** from the **research hub “Fault Lines of Democracy.”** If you are interested in a short-term fellowship at the Hamburg Institute for Social Research, please indicate this in your application for the workshop and briefly describe the topics and projects you would like to work on and discuss during your stay—and when you would like to be in Hamburg around the time of the workshop. The offer includes the option of free accommodation in the institute’s guest house and an expense allowance.

We look forward to a productive exchange across disciplines on the political foundations and transformations of monetary systems.

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Deadline: 22 March 2026