

LOCAL ECONOMY

CALL FOR PAPERS

Special Issue: The formalization of artisanal and small-scale mining: Taking stock and charting the future

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The artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) sector is growing, its expansion driven largely by economic crises and declining agricultural fortunes. The sector is evident in almost all mineral-rich regions, with a particularly notable presence in sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and Latin America. The sector can be considered as both a blessing and a curse.

The sector operates with high levels of environmental contamination, degradation and exposure to health risks. Environmental problems are, to a large extent, precipitated by the lack of enforcement of mining regulations, and weaknesses in mining legislative frameworks. In many parts of the world where mining activities are carried out, the weak and ineffective regulatory dispositions have left the natural environment at the mercy of polluters.

However, the mining governance challenges and the negative portrayal of ASM should not distract from the great diversity existing within the sector. Some ASM operators are undoubtedly irresponsible and uninterested in protecting the environment but equally there are others who comply fully with legislation. These, more responsible, operations have better working practices and make use of cleaner technologies to process minerals, dramatically reducing their environmental impact.

Very few studies have empirically examined outcomes once ASM operations become formal. Thus, in an effort to take stock and chart the future, we invite new and refreshing perspectives of formal ASM operations that transcends the preoccupation with informality in ways that add on to the gradually growing body of scholarship on formal ASM. Thus, this call invites contributions to enable a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the process and impact of formalised ASM. It also invites papers that seek to provide actionable insights for formal ASM managers and employees, policymakers, and researchers. We encourage empirical studies utilising diverse methodologies, whilst also welcoming substantial theoretical contributions. Below are exemplary questions and areas for consideration, but submissions should not be limited to these:

1) So far, what are the socio-economic and environmental outcomes once ASM operations become formal.

- 2) How have ASM entrepreneurs navigated the complex institutional and bureaucratic regimes to get their operations formalised?
- 3) How do formalised operations interconnect with the ever-expanding informal operations, and how can entrepreneurs and policymakers manage these dynamics effectively?
- 4) How has formalisation and increasing mechanisation of ASM operations affected women's roles in ASM, and what policy measures can effectively address the challenges, if any?

Instructions for Authors

Founded in 1986, Local Economy is a peer-reviewed journal bringing together policy analysts, researchers, and practitioners concerned with place-based policies for economic development, regeneration, and human development. Although Local Economy is a peer-reviewed journal, it aims to make academic research accessible to all working in the broad fields of local economic development and regeneration.

Local Economy operates as an international interdisciplinary forum that seeks not only to publish analysis and critique but also to disseminate innovative practice.

Local Economy publishes three main types of papers:

Feature articles: Between 6000 and 8000 words (after abstract and references), analytical, thoroughly researched, and preferably contributing to theoretical developments in the field; these papers will be peer-reviewed.

In Perspective articles: Between 3000-5000 words, reflecting on recent policies, programmes, and projects in the broad field of economic development and regeneration; these papers are not peer-reviewed but subject to editorial approval.

Viewpoint articles: Between 2000-3000 words, polemical opinion pieces; subject to editorial approval

Please use the Harvard style of referencing.

Please consult the Local Economy website for more guidance:

<https://journals.sagepub.com/home/lec>

Submission of Papers

Please submit expressions of interest, abstracts, or first drafts by e-mail to the corresponding (guest) editor (below).

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The deadline for abstracts, etc, is 30 November 2025.

The deadline for final papers is 31 January 2026