

## BIWEEKLY COLLOQUIUM

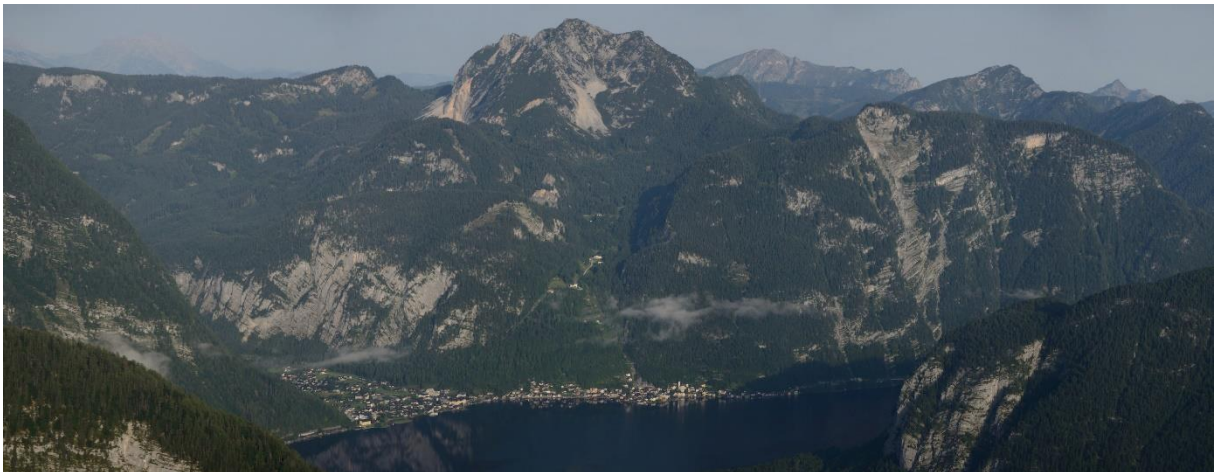
Semester topic "Challenging environment and social networking as drivers of change"

Monday, April 15<sup>th</sup>, 4:15 p.m.

Facing Change in the Alps. 3500 years of human-environment relations in the Hallstatt-Dachstein region

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The Hallstatt High Valley represents one of Europe's oldest cultural and industrial landscapes. For millennia this remote alpine valley was the demographic and economic center of a wide region. In this landscape the venture of large scale underground salt mining spans from present back to the Bronze Age. The oldest secure evidence for large scale underground salt mining dates to the 14th cent. BC. But various indicators point towards a much older tradition of salt production, reaching far into Neolithic times. The extraordinary preservation conditions in the salt mines

and the variety of archaeological, historical and environmental sources allow for unique insights into prehistoric technology, raw material management, working processes and human-environment relations.

But the Hallstatt/Dachstein region not only represents an alpine environment, where the evolution of human-environment relations can be tracked over a long time period. It also offers the possibility to observe the impact of natural extreme events on socioeconomic systems. In Bronze Age as well as in the Iron Age mass movements devastated the High Valley, filled the underground mining galleries and blocked the entrance to the mines. These events represented severe disruptions, but salt mining did not come to a definite halt. The scale of disruption, the impact on the socioecological systems in the area and the impact on human subsistence strategies is still poorly understood. Whether those events led to a collapse of the system in place and an entirely new and unrelated system established itself or whether a recovery was possible remains unclear. To address these issues an interdisciplinary project funded by the Austrian Academy of Sciences and conducted at the Natural History Museum Vienna was started in May 2017. The Facealps project addresses the interplay between i) palaeoenvironmental change, ii) geological and climatic extreme events, iii) land use changes, and iv) raw material exploitation.

