

EXTRACTIVISM

Call for international fellows 2025

The Extractivism project is accepting applications for short-term fellowships, which are funded for up to three months in the University of Kassel and/or the University of Marburg in 2025.

The Extractivism.de Project

Extractivism.de is a collaborative research project funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). It is based at the University of Kassel and Philipps University of Marburg. The project aims to study natural resource extractivism globally, focusing on **Latin America and the Maghreb**. We strive to contextualize extractivist societies within the broader climate crisis and the corresponding interlinks with current geopolitical shifts, rising global inequalities, and energy regime transitions. Understanding what sustainability and decarbonization mean for countries whose socio-economic development relies on extracting and exporting raw materials and natural resources is essential. Extractivism.de investigates the **"dark sides of sustainability"** in the Global South and the reintegration of the Global South into a global landscape undergoing multiple transformations. We strive to comprehend how and under what conditions North-South and South-South relations will evolve, particularly in a scenario where energy security and the geopolitics of raw materials become increasingly significant. We integrate a solid empirical focus with theoretical work, connecting field research in the regions and primary data with qualitative and quantitative analysis to provide essential transregional comparisons. We aim to produce new theories and methods in cross-area studies by examining whether and why similar social, cultural, and political patterns emerge in different world regions.

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Our fellowship program aims to facilitate in-depth discussions among scholars in the Global South, focusing on Latin America and the Maghreb, by bringing together academics from various disciplines, including political science, economics, sociology, anthropology, sustainability studies, and history. This interdisciplinary approach is essential for fostering knowledge transfer within a South-South framework, and we are keen to invite academics from many parts of the world. Second, we seek to create political spaces where interdisciplinary scholars can dialogue and explore policy alternatives grounded in solid empirical, theoretical, and methodological foundations.

Thematic Scope of the Fellowships

The world is transitioning into a new energy era. Decarbonization in favor of renewable energy sources has already started globally, increasing the demand for strategic – or ‘green’ – raw materials. Moreover, the return of geopolitical tensions caused by international crises like the trade war between the US and China, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the Russian invasion of Ukraine has accelerated national policies to rearrange production and consumption chains to reduce their vulnerability. Nevertheless, the demand for fossil fuels continues to rise, and technological advancements that enable unconventional extraction ensure that oil and gas will remain valuable resources for years to come.

Against this background, many countries in the Global South receive multiple and, at times, contradictory signals for changing their position in the global economy and with whom they partner. On the one hand, they get a new spotlight for those seeking access to the new ‘green’ resources, which are often abundant and cheaper in these regions. On the other hand, they also attract the interest of many actors seeking to boost oil and gas production before it is too late. Latin America and the Maghreb are central to these changes.

Since at least the 19th century, an extractivist development model has characterized Latin America and the Maghreb. Their economies have specialized in extracting and exporting natural resources to global

industrial centers in Europe, North America, and East Asia. Latin America also produces a significant percentage of the world's staple foods, which has fostered increasingly strong economic relations with the populous countries of Asia in the last two decades. Moreover, the continent holds nearly a third of the world's reserves of copper, bauxite, silver, coal, and oil and more than a third of all minerals deemed strategic by industrialized nations. Gas, oil, phosphates, wind, and solar energy are crucial in the Maghreb. Discussions about exploiting these new critical resources and the large-scale production of renewable energy through solar, wind, or hydrogen are becoming important political drivers in both regions. They are a source of domestic contestation and coalition rearrangements.

Energy transitions are inherently an issue of great power politics. China, the EU, and the US – and their transnational companies – have already assumed positions of protagonism in the process, dominating the production of electric vehicles, fuel cells, wind turbines, solar panels, and ion batteries while competing for leadership within the so-called green industrial sectors and for having privilege access to strategic resources around the globe. They have launched global initiatives to finance energy transition projects in the Global South and increase their influence. For example, the EU Green Deal and the EU Global Gateway are already impacting Latin America, and decision-makers are attempting to capitalize on these initiatives to attract investment, expand their extraction capability of strategic minerals, and upgrade their position in production chains. While Biden's Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII) and its Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) have motivated many international companies to increase their involvement in renewable projects in the region, Trump's upcoming presidency put a spanner in the works. It can reframe, once again, the US-Latin American relations. China, in turn, has been enhancing strategic relations with the region through the Belt and Road Initiative, which recently was adapted to better respond to the technological, digital, and strategic competition created by the energy transition.

Therefore, Global South countries, including Latin America and the Maghreb, face a dual challenge on this background. On the one hand, they must navigate a new dynamic of geopolitical relations with the Global North, which will be strongly driven by the interests of accessing strategic resources and mechanisms of decoupling, derisking, and 'green-shoring' production processes linked to renewable energy. On the other hand, this geopolitical prevalence within the energy transition dynamics creates much rivalry and protectionism, reducing even further the possibilities of a sustainable transfer of technology or knowledge to the Global South, limiting their opportunities to use this moment as a lever to develop their economies, promote structural transformation and reduce the various problems arising from the persistent extractivist development model.

Fellows are asked to examine the circumstances under which negotiations and structural transformations can occur and the many obstacles that hinder it from overcoming the extractivist development model with a potential focus on Latin America and/or the Maghreb. Specifically, we want to discuss the geopolitical and geoeconomic impacts of the energy transition in different dimensions of the political spectrum. We are also interested in complementing our social science approach with historical perspectives to learn from past energy transitions. For that, we seek scholars working on:

- Which resources will gain in importance, and which countries and/or groups of countries may benefit from this, bearing in mind that they may also be among the losing groups?
- What are the geopolitical shifts and outcomes already underway in Latin America and the Maghreb?
- Who are the potential winners and losers of this shift? Are there progressive reactions regarding regional integration or domestic structural change? Are there reactionary actors gaining momentum with it?
- How do countries in the Global South, particularly in Latin America and the Maghreb, react to these challenges regarding their economic strategies, foreign policies, and development policies?
- Which social, political, and economic groups are becoming drivers of change, and which tend to block these processes?

- Do China, the EU, and the US offer opportunities for Latin America and the Maghreb, and does that reflect different regional political preferences?
- How do the EU and Germany evaluate their engagement in the regions?
- How does political polarization cause countries to swing between reliance on fossil fuels and green strategies, leaving them stuck in an unstable, incomplete transition?
- In what ways does green extractivism deepen social inequalities, create conflicts over land and water, and exclude certain groups within countries?

Requirements and Conditions

The fellowship is open to outstanding Social Scientists, including those in Economics, Sociology, Political Science, International Relations, Anthropology, and History. The scientific committee will base its selection on academic excellence and reputation, publications, experience in the research field, and the quality of the submitted project. In addition, applicants should be familiar with at least one of the project's languages: **English, German, Spanish, or French**. It is also strongly recommended that the applicants have an intermediate level of English communication.

Fellows will receive financial compensation of up to **3.000€** per month. Costs for travel to and from the stay in Kassel or Marburg will be covered. Finally, Extractivism supports family and is committed to gender equality, social inclusion, diversity, and affirmative action policies. Applicants from the Global South or belonging to any minorities are particularly welcome.

Application

The following documents are required in English, French or Spanish:

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- **Application form** ([download here](#)) in which you state your available dates,
- A **motivational letter** stating why the candidate is a good fit,
- **Short CV** (max. five pages), including a list of project-related publications,
- Copy of the **doctoral certificate**,
- **Research proposal** with research schedule, work plan, and expected outcomes (max. 2.500 words).

Applications must be sent until **28.02.2025** electronically as a single PDF to fellows@extractivism.de

For more information about the project, please access www.extractivism.de