

Call for Country Case Studies of German Renewable Energy Cooperation in the Global South and European Periphery – here: Lithium extraction and processing in Serbia

Terms of Reference

About the project:

The case studies are a collaborative project of different units of Rosa Luxemburg Foundation (RLS) to highlight the effects and investigate the neo-colonial structures of German diplomacy, policy and investment in energy transition projects in the Global South and the European Periphery. The project is supported by several regional offices and units of the RLS in order to collect different international examples and to give an impression of the strategies of German actors in the energy transition. Each country case study is commissioned separately, but the case studies are part of a larger project and focus on critically reflecting on German policies and investments through a decolonial lens. The aim is to provide a structural analysis of the approach of German state and private actors towards energy transition and to create and visualise linkages between the experiences in different Global South and European Periphery countries. Future parts of the project will complement this analysis by providing definitions and concrete examples of a truly just energy transition from an internationalist and decolonial perspective.

Title of the publication:

(Tentative) – German Renewable Energy Cooperation: Colonialism in a new cloak?

Description

In the face of the global climate crisis, no one disputes the need for a rapid and global energy transition away from harmful fossil fuels. A huge demand for renewable energy and the raw materials for its production has rapidly emerged. While Europe and Germany are discussing the technical and industrial potential of decarbonisation and the need for an energy transition within the framework of green capitalism, what is often neglected is the fact that there is a huge global imbalance between how much energy is used on the one hand and where the energy comes from on the other. As can already be seen in many cases, the rush to renewable energy (RE) is currently fuelling the risk of another global system in which critical raw materials and critical infrastructure such as land and water are sourced in the global South for export and use in the global North. In many cases, this is already having a negative impact on nature and human rights. German policies and investments in many countries of the Global South play an important role in this so-called energy transition process. The country is quick to emphasise that all its involvement supports a 'just transition' everywhere, that its involvement only creates a 'win-win' situation for all parties involved, and that it is not part of a 'new energy imperialism'.

The country case studies aim to critically assess and analyse examples of German policies and investments in the energy transition. While not denying that there may be opportunities for countries, the case studies will look at examples where environmental degradation, land conflicts and/or unsafe and exploitative working conditions are occurring, or are at risk of occurring, as a result of a policy, investment and/or development project that is supposed to contribute to a 'just' energy transition.

Main objectives of the case studies:

1. The primary objective of this project is to identify, analyse and expose the unjust experiences of the so-called 'just' energy transition and the colonial hierarchies in the extraction of resources for energy consumption and use.
2. To raise awareness of the lack of public information, democratic participation and examination of global inequalities in the energy transition.
3. The aim is not to denounce the need for a global energy transition as such, but to expose the prioritisation of energy needs for the industries and societies of the Global North at the expense of the environment and societies of the Global South and the European Periphery.
4. To expose the ways in which the energy transition is being hijacked by corporate interests to push for so-called 'false solutions', such as hydrogen that is not produced with green energy, carbon capture and storage (CCS), biofuels, etc.
5. To identify and formulate alternative proposals in the face of the corporatisation of the energy transition industry, putting people, the environment and global justice at the centre.

Common thread / connecting link between all the articles:

All case studies should contribute to the above objectives.

The research should focus on the involvement of German companies and the German government in the Global South and European Periphery in the area of energy system transformation. This includes the procurement, processing and trade of critical raw materials needed for the energy transition as well as all sectors related to renewable energy production, transport and trade. The articles should distinguish between different levels of "green" in the green transition, i.e. be sensitive to green-washing efforts and only consider energy systems based on circular and sustainable models as truly green.

Guiding questions for the case study on Lithium extraction and processing in Serbia are:

- Which official agreements exist between the governments of Germany and Serbia, such as the Strategic Cooperation on Climate Action and how do they relate to the extraction of energy transition resources such as Lithium? Which official agreements exist between the EU and Serbia and how do they relate to the extraction of energy transition resources such as Lithium? Which official government visits by Germany and the EU took place in the past three years, what were the main topics related to the case study and who was involved (politicians, private sector, NGOs)? What were the announcements and agreements made regarding cooperation in the field of energy transition? What role does Serbia play in the German government's and the EU's key strategic documents related to energy transition?
- Is there any German taxpayers' money or loans going into the just transition or renewable energy sector in Serbia? Is there German development cooperation in the energy system transformation sector, and if so, what are the programmes? This may include grants and loans, for example from GIZ, German development banks such as KfW, ministries that support the development of certain sectors, including the Ministry of Education and Research.
- Which German companies are involved in RE-investments in the country examined, and in which scope? If possible, give an overview of German companies active in the raw materials and/or renewable energy sector in the country, then describe the activities of one company in more detail.
- Have there been any changes in legislation in the country, for example, to facilitate the exploration of new raw materials/energy sources?
- Are there any national or international human rights violations and/or violations of the German Supply Chain Due Diligence Act and/or the European Due Diligence Directive, e.g. in the exploration of new areas and sources of energy and raw materials? E.g. problems such as land grabbing/displacement, ecological damage, violence by security forces, forced labour, lack of occupational health and safety, etc.? Can you link the rights violations to a specific company and/or German development actors?
- Are there any ecological or environmental risks or damages associated with German renewable energy investments?
- What potential links can be drawn between engagement at the state level (diplomacy, development cooperation) and at the private sector level (corporate investment)?
- Where is it difficult to obtain the necessary information - i.e. where is there a lack of transparency (e.g. who is behind the investments, etc.)?
- What is the level of public or civil society involvement in the issue, and what are their main concerns and demands?
- What measures and actions would be necessary in the country to prevent or stop the unjust, exploitative and/or destructive effects of the energy transition? What demands can be derived for German policy?

Methodology may include the following, but should be described in the author's application

- Review of publically available information from respective governments and companies active in the country
- Review of civil society or other publications on the subject
- Review of scientific and think tank publications on the subject

- Stakeholder interviews
- RLS may be able to assist with parliamentary enquiries in Bundestag (“Kleine Anfrage” or “Schriftliche Frage”)

Proposed structure for the case studies:

- Introduction: general information about and summary of the problem with energy transition projects in the specific country and the involved actors
- Political dimension: diplomatic ties between Germany and the country, geopolitical significance, agreements on cooperation on energy transition projects
- Economic dimension: hard facts on grants, investments and loans in the extraction of resources / building of infrastructure for energy transition
- Legal dimension - changes or infringement of national legislation, infringements of international law, and/or infringements on the German Supply Chain Due Diligence Act and /or European Due Diligence Directive
- Concrete example/case study: analysis of the social and ecological impact of one specific kind of investment by a German company or one specific project by a German development actor
- Demands of local actors, political demands for local, international, and German decision makers & recommendations for action
- Analysis of the global system enabling the current unequal relations from a decolonial perspective and proposition of alternative paths
- Summary with most important aspects and political demands

Tone/ style of writing:

The publication should serve as a tool for public information sharing and advocacy, both in the country investigated and in Germany, in order to prevent and stop ecological destruction and human rights infringements. Therefore, research carried out and the arguments presented in the articles need to have a solid grounding with scientific standards. All statistics, citations and other data must be backed by sources that need to be checked on their reliability and potential bias. Terms that are specific to a context need to be explained for an international audience. The paper should have a clear wording and structure.

Target group for the case studies:

Parliamentarians, NGOs and activist networks working on energy and mining, journalists, research institutes and think tanks, as well as an interested public audience.

Dissemination:

- The country case studies will be compiled by RLS into one publication along with an introduction and potential glossary
- Graphic design and potential visualisations will be commissioned by RLS
- The case studies will be available for free dissemination through the RLS website
- The content of the case studies will be summarised for and disseminated through various media including, but not limited to social media.

Format:

- Layout: DIN A4
- Design: pictures and graphics are desired and style will be harmonized by RLS
- Each case study should have min. 15,000 and max. 20,000 characters with spaces

Time line:

- By December 4th : Submission of Applications (see below for desired content)
- By December 16th: Commission authors for writing case studies -
- Until January 15th 2025: authors commission research design / synopsis for case studies
- Date tba: online meeting between all authors and RLS team
- until February 14th: submission of first draft of the case study
- until February 21st: commenting of the case studies by RLS editing team
- potential second and third feedback loop between author and RLS team
- until March 3rd: submission of final draft of the case study
- Layout and graphic design to be organised by RLS
- Launch / Publication date is yet tbd, authors might be requested to present the case studies in a launch event/ give video statements for social media

Details about Applications

- Authors from anywhere may apply (see also language specifications below), it may be one or several authors applying together
- Each country case study will be commissioned separately, but work with aligned ToR
- Applications should be submitted by December 4th 2024, to Josip Jagić, Project Manager & Political Analyst Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung Southeast Europe, josip.jagic@rosalux.org and include the following information:
 - CV & Cover letter outlining the candidate's qualification and motivation for the mandate
 - Research Design including description of methodology
 - Previous experience with similar assignments, ideally with a previously written work
 - Demonstration of alignment with RLS overall goals, a leftist approach and the ability to incorporate a decolonial approach to the study

Selection Criteria for the applications:

- Total Price: 50%
- Research Design: 25%
- Previous work and experience and demonstration of decolonial approach: 25%

Budget & Honorarium for authors:

Honorarium will be based on locally prevalent rates in the applicant's country of residence and may be proposed in the author's application (quotation based on daily rates).

RLS has reserved some additional budget for editing, graphic design, and dissemination costs.

The contract with the authors includes:

- submission of research design / proposals
- participation in an online meeting with the RLS team and all case study authors
- Submission of draft case study for comments/ review
- incorporation of comments and submission of final article
- incorporation of changes by copy-editors before publication
- submission of an executive summary / outline of important points for media representatives
- participation in a dissemination event and/or recording of a video statement on the major outcomes of the case study and recommendations

Other conditions:

- the authors are expected to review existing research, official documents; interviews and field visits might also be necessary as part of the research, any field work expenses are covered within the honorarium and cannot be claimed from RLS additionally
- payment will be made in two instalments, firstly a smaller instalment after submission of the research design & online meeting with RLS, secondly a bigger instalment after submission of the final case study
- taxes will be deducted as per local compliances

The honorarium contracts will be provided by the respective RLS offices/units, in this case, RLS Southeast Europe in Belgrade. The exact remuneration will be decided by the offices / units and will be based on locally prevalent rates.

Languages:

- the case studies can be submitted in English or German – tbd with contractor before signing of the contract

Point of contact for authors:

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