



“Critical” minerals and the ecological transitions in Europe and the Global South

Supply chains, policies, & markets seen from the social sciences

Research workshop Call for Participation

Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB)
Brussels, 4-5th of October 2023

Presentation and objectives: According to a 2021 report from the International Energy Agency (IEA), the demand for minerals related to the energy transition is predicted to increase by at least four times by 2040 to meet climate goals.¹ In Europe, in the name of this transition, governments are developing new instruments to support companies in securing their mineral supply. One example of this is the “Raw Material Critical Act” currently being discussed at the EU level. In the Global South, states and sub-national governments are responding to this demand for minerals with new policies, often combining mining sector reforms with industrial measures to capitalize on this demand and improve their positions in the world economy. Private actors are, of course, also very active in these transformations. At every step of the supply chain (mining, refining, production), companies are currently reconfiguring their strategies to compete in the “green” technologies market. Consequently, the number of extractive projects is rapidly growing. As is contestation, at the local level, but also at the EU level, where environmental and human rights NGOs are connecting environmental justice movements in the Global South and in Europe.

This workshop aims to bring together 10-12 researchers currently researching one or more aspects of these ongoing transformations in Europe, the Global South, and across multiple stakeholders and sites. We aim to create an informal network of researchers working on this topic from different disciplines in the social sciences, to discuss the common challenges we are facing.

Call for proposals: We expect proposals from different social sciences disciplines such as political science, international relations, economics, political economy, geography, history, anthropology, or sociology, using qualitative or quantitative approaches. There will be no paper expected. We strongly encourage people who are at the very beginning of a project to send their proposal. We are interested in researchers focusing at the level of national policy, on a specific industry, or mining project, etc.. We also encourage presenters to discuss

¹ International Energy Agency (2021). The role of critical minerals in clean energy transitions, World Energy Outlook Special Report. International Energy Agency Paris, France.

methodological, investigation, and fieldwork challenges. We expect short propositions (title and abstract between 100 and 150 words) including but not limited to:

- **Policies:** Policies implemented in Europe or in the Global South at the local, national or regional level regarding “critical” minerals (e.g.: mining, taxation, export, etc.) and the actors involved in their implementation (e.g.: National geological surveys, mining companies, NGOs, international organizations, etc.).
- **Supply chains:** Strategies implemented by private and public actors for the reordering of the supply chain both in Europe and the Global South, and the instruments that are used in this reordering (e.g.: transparency standards, battery passports, etc.).
- **Markets:** Local, regional and global markets of critical minerals and the actors of these markets (e.g.: Metal exchanges, commodity traders, brokers, etc) as well as the funding of mining projects and the various capital providers intervening in the supply chain.

Organization: The workshop will occur at the Université libre de Bruxelles (Belgium) on October 4th and 5th. People are expected to be in Brussels in the late morning on 4th of October. During the two days, participants will present their ongoing research projects and engage in collective discussions. At the end of the first day, the organizers will host a public panel on the ongoing negotiations on the “Critical Raw Material Act” in Brussels, with representatives from NGOs, European Commission, industries and political parties.

The organizers will cover the food but not the transport or hotel. There will be no other costs for participation. We invite you to avoid taking flights to attend the event and are ready to accept online participation for people for whom the train is impossible due to distance from Europe or the Global South.

The deadline is July the 31st, and the proposals have to be sent to:

- **Quentin Deforge**, Université libre de Bruxelles (quentin.deforge@ulb.be)
- **Nicolas Hercelin**, Université du Luxembourg and Luxembourg Institute of Socio-Economic Research (nicolas.hercelin@liser.lu)