

# Call for Papers

## Special Issue “Mining transitions in Latin America”

The Extractive Industries and Society

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Guest editors

This Special Issue invites contributions that interrogate the conceptual relevance and empirical resonance of “transitions” as a framework for understanding contemporary mining and natural resource governance in Latin America.

Over the past two decades, minerals—the “foundations of the energy transition” (Bazilian, 2018)—have become tethered to the decarbonization imaginaries of high-energy-consuming markets. This shift has catalyzed urgent discussions surrounding secure and sustainable supply chains, ethical due diligence, and the heightening of geopolitical tensions (Arian, et al., 2025; Riofrancos, 2023). However, as the “green” transition reveals itself to be a mere addition to, rather than a replacement of, carbon-centric energy systems, the very nomenclature of “critical” or “transition” minerals demands scrutiny (Franks, et al., 2025; York & Bell, 2019). Far from solely fueling renewable technologies, the current mineral boom is de facto driven by conventional, yet no less transformative, sectors such as global construction and military expansion (Vivoda, et al., 2025; Lamb, et al., 2019). At the same time, the extraction of “safe haven” metals (e.g., gold) has not receded, often reflecting market volatility and the anxieties of a perceived crisis in the current accumulation cycle rather than a commitment to sustainable outsourcing (Bloomfield & Maconachie, 2021).

In Latin America, “transitions” experiences are heterogeneous and deeply contested. Some states are attempting to leverage this global moment to advance value-added development, articulating definitions of “criticality” that are grounded in sovereign (yet no less problematic) priorities rather than the demands of the Global North (Voskoboynik & Andreucci, 2022; Barandarián, 2019). And, while hydrocarbon dependencies have for long shaped governance and conflict arenas in the continent (Anthias, 2018; Perreault & Valdivia, 2010), today some countries contemplate phasing out fossil fuel production while maintaining steady energy supply (Gupta, et al., 2025; Viera-Romero, 2025; Vega-Araujo, et al., 2023). Simultaneously, the regional landscape is being reshaped by the rising influence of emerging actors from China and the Middle East, whose investments in infrastructure and mining governance are challenging conventional geopolitical alignments (Bull & Banik, 2025; Gonzales-Vicente, 2022).

Beyond these macro-political shifts, the region is also witnessing granular socio-ecological transformations that existing transition frameworks often fail to grasp. Even as Latin American countries try to meet global mineral demand, mine closure and the proliferation of abandoned mining sites places dilemmas on consensus building about post-extraction futures, including phasing out mineral dependencies grounded on (hydro) carbons, the remaining of left-behind (but now valuable) minerals from old extraction sites, and landscape recovery of varying degrees of ambition (from maintenance and

remediation to ecological restoration) (Hudson-Edwards, et al., 2024; Ureta & Flores, 2022). We see profound changes in the materiality and location of extraction: a move from the subsoil to subaquatic depths and the socio-technical accommodations this entails (Bustos-Gallardo, et al., 2022; Leiva, 2022); from primary underground deposits to the gleaning of colonial and industrial waste dumps (Jaramillo & Carmona, 2022); and emerging distinctions in the legality of practice, even if, at the same time, formal mining operations intersect with, or dissolve into, informal and illegal practices (Benites, 2023; Kaufmann & Cote, 2021).

## Key Themes and Questions

This Special Issue seeks to ground "transition" frameworks—including critical approaches to energy (Bridge, et al., 2013), sustainability (Binz, et al., 2025), and post-mining transitions (Measham, et al., 2024)—within specific Latin American realities. We also seek to explore alternative frameworks that convey place-based perspectives, such as equity concerns conveyed under *transiciones ecosociales* (Lang, et al., 2023) or *transición energética justa* (Colombian Government, 2025).

We invite contributions from across the qualitative and mixed methods social sciences, including geography, sociology, anthropology, history, development studies, Latin American studies, among others. We are particularly interested in work that examines how the current moment expands or disrupts historically sedimented extractivist, colonial, imperial and patriarchal logics (Andreucci & García Lopez, 2025; Mejía-Muñoz & Babidge, 2023; Ojeda, et al., 2022); nuanced approaches to subsoil, soil and volumetric materialities as they relate to changes in resource governance (Collins, 2025; Marston, 2024; Jonkman, 2024); critical mineral production networks “touching ground” in Latin America (Irrazaval & Carrasco, 2023; Dorn & Huber, 2020); political ecologies of the subsoil, environmental justice and socio-ecological conflicts (Martinez-Alier, 2021; Svampa, 2019; Ulloa, 2017; Bebbington & Bury, 2013); science, technology and society (Jaramillo & Tafurt, 2025; Barandarián, 2019); and natural resource governance, although any contribution that engages with mining transitions in Latin America is welcome.

Research articles should cover one or more of the following inquiries:

- **Conceptual Friction:** How can a transitions frameworks illuminate contemporary dynamics of mining and natural resource governance in Latin America today? Conversely, how can Latin American scholarship engage with transition frameworks through criticism, grounding or radical refusal? To what extent can the intersection between transition frameworks and Latin American studies illuminate previous paradigms to understand domestic resource governance, including the resource curse, decentralization in natural resource governance, and environmental justice and socioecological conflicts?
- **Material and Institutional Adaptation:** How is domestic governance adapting to the Latin American diversification of mineral portfolios (e.g., lithium, copper, rare earths), unconventional sources (e.g., waste recovery), and shifting production practices? What knowledge politics prevail in the regulation of these sites, practices and technologies? To what extent is socio-ecological variation in new mining practices grasped in emerging regulations and governance frameworks?

How is Latin America participating, reshaping or accommodating to global value chain governance? What are emerging paradigms in mineral provenance beyond certifications and due diligence, and how are they attuned to socio-ecological variation in Latin America?

- **Resource imaginaries and territory:** How ideas of mineral criticality travel across hemispheres and markets? How are the meanings of criticality grounded and developed in Latin America? To what extent are low carbon and sustainable energy futures evoked in socio-technical imaginaries and territorial visions across the region? If they are not mobilized, why? What alternative resource imaginaries are set in motion?
- **Historical Legacies and uneven development:** To what extent are contemporary adaptations patterned onto the institutional memories, cultural imaginaries, discourses of resource nationalism and material legacies of centuries of extraction? How are uneven development geographies redrawn at the intersections of expanding mining frontiers, energy poverty and inequality? How are mining and energy governance intersecting in post-conflict territories?
- **Formal, informal and illegal mining:** How are prohibition regimes and local actors engaging with the legal, discursive and symbolic distinctions between legality, informality and illegality? How is the framing of illegal mining and environmental crimes constructed, and how does it reconcile or mediate competing narratives around mining in the context of energy transitions? How are criminalization and law enforcement driven or mediated by cross-regional cooperation, trade and private governance, and geopolitics? How local communities engage with illegal mineral economies?
- **Community, Governance, and drivers of change:** In what ways are community claims departing from established repertoires of contention (opposition vs. negotiation) toward new practices, such as mining adoption? To what extent are Indigenous, Black, Campesino and different grassroots collectives able to exert autonomous territorial governance before legal and illegal mining? How to conceptualize socio-ecological conflicts and environmental justice today amidst the full range variation of community orientations before extraction? Are the engines of institutional development still located in social movements and national technocracies, or are they shifting toward global market pressures, legislative maneuvers, and community-led governance?

### Submission Guidelines and Scheduling

- **Abstract submissions are accepted until June 1, 2026.** Please provide a 500-word abstract, keywords, a short bio (150 words) and contact information in PDF format. E-mail your submission to [gy243@cornell.edu](mailto:gy243@cornell.edu) and [alejandra.villanueva@kuleuven.be](mailto:alejandra.villanueva@kuleuven.be)
- Accepted contributions will be invited to a hybrid workshop in September 2026 (location and specific date to be confirmed). Participants will share a final draft before the meeting to receive feedback and prepare the article for final submission.
- Selected participants will choose the location that best accommodates their departure point. Travel support will be provided on a case-by-case basis and will be contingent on the availability funds.
- **Final submissions are expected by December 30, 2026, through the [submissions portal](#).**

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