SGO2500 –North South Development: Energy transitions

# Course content

This course provides a geographical and critical perspective to global development, with a focus on energy transition processes in and in relation to the global South. The course aims to provide students with a fundamental understanding of the challenges related to sustainable development from the perspective of the global South by focusing on energy transitions.

In light of climate change and the need to divest from fossil energies, energy transitions are at the heart of global development and sustainability debates concerning how to meet current as well as future needs while balancing social, economic and ecological considerations.

Energy is fundamental to individual and collective social and economic development. Furthermore, types of energy and how energy is produced and consumed not only impact nature and climate; it also shapes conditions for democracy and development. Thus, energy transitions – fundamental changes in energy production and consumption patterns that involve technological, economic, social and cultural changes – have impact on opportunities and challenges in development. We look at historical transitions to fossil energies as well as the discussions on transitions away from fossil energies.

The burden and benefits in energy systems and energy transitions are unevenly controlled and distributed within and between countries. Peoples of the global South have less access to energy, while also suffering more from the consequences of climate change. Through the course, we discuss how the systems and conditions for energy transitions are shaped by historical and uneven relations between the Global South and North.

The different patterns, pathways, and experiences of energy transitions across different countries illuminate not only the inherent difficulties of pursuing sustainability but also the fundamental differences between the global North and South in terms of development priorities, capacities and challenges. Questions of justice, in terms of distribution of burden and benefits and roles in decision making over energy transitions is key.

Core issues of energy and development and energy transitions are addressed from the perspective of the global South and placed in the context of global sustainability. The awareness of a spatial perspective to development problems and processes will enable students to identify and understand the impact of regional and global processes on people’s lives in specific places.