

Clemens Greiner, University of Cologne, clemens.greiner@uni-koeln.de
Britta Klagge, University of Bonn, klagge@uni-bonn.de

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Call for Application of Master Students for Field Research in Namibia

The Universities of Bonn and Cologne in Germany offer one or two stipends for field research and the writing of a Master's thesis on the development of a green-hydrogen project in Namibia.

The collaborating partners are conducting a research project on "[Energy Futures: Infrastructures and governance for renewable energies](#)". The project (CO2) is part of a Collaborative Research Centre (CRC) initiated by the Universities of Bonn and Cologne called "[Future Rural Africa: Future-making and social-ecological transformation](#)" (CRC 228), funded by the German research association DFG ("Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft"). The project CO2 aims to generate findings about how energy projects are envisioned and implemented, both at the institutional level and on the ground.

Background

African energy futures face multiple challenges. While there is consensus that electricity generation needs to be expanded to reach 100% electrification and SDG7 ("sustainable energy for all"), it is an open question how this goal should be achieved. Climate activists as well as international and bilateral development organizations based in the Global North demand that only renewables should be developed, for which there are excellent conditions in most African countries and in Namibia in particular. However, there are also proponents of exploiting fossil fuels in various African countries, some of them only recently discovered (also in Namibia!). They argue that oil and gas will support economic development and industrialization, and that Africa has the same right to use fossil fuels as, for example, European countries. The Russian war in Ukraine has exacerbated this situation and increased global demand for fossil fuels enormously. Most recently, several European countries are eager to replace Russian gas with fossil fuels from Africa and elsewhere to keep up their carbon-intensive economies. Furthermore, longer-term visions aim to export energy, in the form of electricity or green hydrogen, from Africa to Europe.

The case of Namibia

Namibia is at the forefront of these developments with a national green-hydrogen strategy supporting various projects under development. They aim at both export (e.g. Hyphen in/near Lüderitz) and developing local uses (e.g. Daures Hydrogen Village). Green-hydrogen production in Namibia benefits from very good wind and solar conditions, and vast open spaces in one of the least densely settled countries in the world. However, it requires the development of various infrastructures, including plants for renewable-energy production (wind/solar PV) and sea water desalination, and of transport infrastructures (roads, pipelines, but also ports in the case of exports). Local employment is contingent upon skills, which are not readily available in Namibia, which is why training efforts are planned or already underway. While a maximum of local value-added is an important motivation for green-

hydrogen developments in Namibia, it is an open question how this can be achieved. Furthermore, there are expectations and promises of other local benefits like electricity and clean water supply as well as associated agricultural or industrial development (e.g. production of fertilizers from green hydrogen, green iron or steel).

What do we look for and what do we offer

We are looking for one or two master students in social or political sciences, human geography, social anthropology or related disciplines who are willing to do extensive fieldwork on the *conditions and developments at the site of a green-hydrogen project in Namibia, concretely the Hyphen project in/near Lüderitz or the Daures Hydrogen Village near Uis/Brandberg Mountain.*

The master thesis and associated empirical research should focus on as many of the following aspects as possible:

- Local conditions and challenges for realizing the projects, both from investor and community perspectives (incl. social, economic and ecological dimensions)
- Local expectations and acceptance of project by different local stakeholder groups (to be selected as result of the previous point)
- Official or unofficial stakeholder engagement at local and regional level by investor and/or national government: who, how, goals and strategies, results in terms of local employment and other benefits (promises, contracts?)
- Infrastructure developments planned and underway to make green-hydrogen project possible: what, by whom (public/private), financing (public/private), involvement of local actors

Requirements for applicants

1. Candidates must be enrolled in a Masters course programme in Namibia or Germany.
2. Education: Candidates must have a completed Bachelor degree in the social sciences or humanities, preferably with a focus in social or political sciences, human geography, social anthropology or related disciplines.
3. Language Skills: High level of fluency and experience with academic English is mandatory. Fluency in one or several of the local languages is an asset.
4. An outline of the planned research of the candidate (5 pages, maximum 3000 words), submitted in English (see below for details). The project description should include a general research question related to the state of the art on the topic, suggestions on the methodological approaches to be followed, sample questions for interviews as well as – in form of an annex – a time and budget plan (not part of the 5 pages).

Other requirements

1. Availability for approximately 3 months of fieldwork in Namibia in 2023/2024;
2. Ability and willingness to travel to and conduct research in either the Lüderitz or Uis area;
3. Proficiency in the use of computers and the internet, including MS-Office;
4. Ability to work independently and be self-motivated;
5. Strong communication, interpersonal and social skills;
6. Willingness and interest to work towards contributing to academic publications. In addition to producing his or her thesis the Master Student will contribute to a published journal article together with other team members.

We are looking forward to applications for funding through a stipend which would cover, if applicable, costs for transport (flight to Namibia, local transport), research permit and daily allowances. In your application, please specify how much funding you would require (list of expected expenses in €).

Please note: The Universities of Cologne and Bonn offer a stipend for graduated BA students for field research and writing of a Master's thesis. Please take into account that this is a stipend that acknowledges the work the student is doing in addition to their university commitments and therefore does not constitute a salary for a full-time position. In return, the student provides us with a copy (pdf) of the complete master thesis and files containing all collected data, especially interview transcripts (translated into English where necessary).

Application Procedure – Please follow all steps as described:

- Carefully read the Call for Application and, related to its content, write a research proposal for the Master's thesis. Please limit your proposal to 5 pages and maximum of 3,000 words.
- In addition to the proposal, applicants need to write a motivation letter (explaining why they are suitable and interested to receive a stipend for field research related to this project, with reference to the requirements listed above and other reasons if applicable)
- Applicants also need to submit an up-to-date and detailed CV, Bachelor degree document (diploma and/or transcript of completed degree), a reference letter from at least one university professor, official English test result certificates (TOEFL or IELTS), and any other suitable documents. NOTE: All submissions are expected to reveal an excellent command of English, in particular the letter of motivation, the proposal and the CV.
- Applicants must submit documents certifying their current enrolment and status in a Master Program at a Namibian or German University.

*Please send your application to us via e-mail **as soon as possible** to both of us.*

Clemens Greiner and Britta Klagge

Guidelines for research proposal

- Problem statement and research question (1p)
- Current state of the field of study (5-10 literature references; refer to key literature) (1-1,5p)
- Theoretical/analytical approach (if possible) (0,5-1p)
- Methods of research (including ways of collecting information; which informants; which project site) (1p)
- Tentative work plan (table) (0,5p)
- References (0,5p)
- (Mention own expertise in CV and cover letter)