

## The politics of solar energy expansion in the global South: insights from Latin America and India

Demi-journée d'études organisée par le CESSMA

Axe 3 : « Marchandisation et émancipation

De la question sociale à la question environnementale »

**27 mai 2026, 14h-17h**

Bât. Olympe de Gouges, salle 209  
Campus Grands-Moulins, Université Paris-Cité  
8 rue Albert Einstein 75013 Paris

### Organisation

Bérénice Girard, Isabelle Hillenkamp

## Programme

### Solar capitalism. Resource frontiers and socio-ecological contestations in Latin America

Sofía Ávila Calero, IIS/UNAM

This presentation will introduce *Solar Capitalism* as a critical concept around ongoing dynamics in the global energy transition. For the capitalist political economy, shifting away from a fossil to a renewable energy base implies harnessing the flows of solar energy in ways that adjust to the logics of capital accumulation. Therefore, an increasing demand for land, minerals, and labor is producing multiple inequities and social conflicts globally. By focusing on the Latin-American context, I will address the economic and socio-environmental implications of this model and discuss existing perspectives to build alternative solar futures

### Making Arequipa a « Green Hub »? The challenges of solar farms in Peru's southern desert for energy transition and regional development

Juliette Marin, DevSoc/IRD

Several large-scale solar energy infrastructure projects are currently under development in the desert region of La Joya, in southern Peru. Led by international, national, and regional actors, these projects embody a vision of development centered on the emergence of a « green hub » that is both energy-focused and productive. However, an analysis of these initiatives, the actors involved, the contexts in which they are being implemented, and the dynamics at play reveals complex territorial relationships, particularly with regard to mining extractivism.

#### Localisation

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## **Corporate energy transition, land appropriation and socio-territorial relations: lessons from large photovoltaic parks and *ejidos* in Mexico**

Paola Jiménez de León, CESSMA/UPC

In the face of climate collapse and the gradual depletion of fossil fuels, so-called low-carbon energies have become a key focus of climate, development and energy security agendas. Within the context of the prevailing discourse of the 'energy transition', large-scale solar park projects are transforming socio-territorial relations worldwide, particularly in the peripheries of the global economy. This research explores how the implementation of solar energy infrastructure in Mexico instrumentalises and reorganises pre-existing socio-territorial relations to secure access to land. Through a dialogue between empirical findings and conceptual frameworks from political ecology, the analysis traces the mechanisms through which solar energy promoters facilitate the installation of infrastructure on common property territories (*ejidos*) in Mexico. These mechanisms include deploying discourses of 'empty' or 'environmentally degraded' lands, and mobilising power relations in *ejido* governance. The research argues that these strategies are not only effects, but also the socio-territorial reconfigurations required by the corporate energy transition. They demonstrate that territorialised social relations act as interfaces through which hegemonic energy agendas attempt to materialise, while also becoming potential sites of dispute.

## **In service of Hindutva: Solar energy expansion and neoliberal Hindu nationalism since 2014**

Bérénice Girard, CESSMA/IRD

From 2.82 GW in March 2014 to 143.6 GW in April 2026, India's installed solar capacity has expanded dramatically under Prime Minister Modi's tenures, coined the 'Solar superman' by some far-right media outlets. This paper examines how this rapid growth is embedded within broader processes of state transformations since his first election as PM in 2014. Drawing on qualitative data collected between 2022 and 2025, this paper argues that the expansion of solar energy functions as a key component of his government's broader socio-political agenda, namely neoliberal Hindu nationalism. It more specifically examines how solar energy deployment is mobilised to enforce Hindu hegemony on the Indian territory and to advance an increasingly centralized and market-oriented model of environmental governance.