Fellowships 2027/28, RAW Center for Resources Across Worlds, Kassel

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Application deadline: Dec 15, 2026

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The RAW Center for Resources Across Worlds, a Käte Hamburger Kolleg based at the University of Kassel and funded by the German Federal Ministry of Research, Technology, and Space, is an interdisciplinary research center for advanced studies. The center is dedicated to interdisciplinary research on the global transformation of resource worlds and the profound cultural, aesthetic, political, economic, social, and ecological changes associated with them. Embedded in the University of Kassel's strong profile in research on sustainability, critical arts, the humanities, and global political economy, the center brings together international fellows and early career scholars. It offers a space for collaborative, theory-driven, and empirically grounded research on the possibilities and conflicts of contemporary material and cultural transformations and energy transitions.

RAW Center for Resources Across Worlds offers fellows a vibrant intellectual environment and diverse opportunities for exchange. All activities take place in Kassel and require a high level of attendance. Fellows are invited to participate in weekly seminars and workshops at the center and the University of Kassel; in lecture series, conferences, and public events; in collective publication formats; and in transfer-oriented outputs. Teaching opportunities in cooperation with the departments at the University of Kassel are possible. The center supports fellows to advance their individual scholarly and artistic projects related to Resource Worlds and the center's first funding phase on energy. It invites fellows to collaborate with the team to advance the center's research perspectives.

Profile Area I: Raw Material Cultures (Rohstoffkulturen)

This profile examines how cultural representations, visual productions, and material practices shape the Great Transformation toward post-fossil material worlds. Specifically, it examines whether narratives of transformation as conflict-free, manageable processes of modernization perpetuate, rather than disrupt, the power relations of carbon culture. These relations include extraction infrastructures, geopolitical rivalries over critical materials, and colonial legacies that determine how and under what conditions the transformation unfolds. Drawing on environmental and energy humanities, the profile area centers on more-than-human and planetary thinking. It approaches extractivism as a material and epistemic condition, tracing how it shapes the objects, images, subjectivities, law, and architectures through which the envisioned transformation towards more sustainable life forms becomes visible. Additionally, the profile area considers the arts as modes of knowledge production that expose and imagine alternatives to the terms of the transformation.

Guiding questions for this year’s thematic focus include:

How have earlier transformations been narrated culturally, and which images and vocabularies of progress carry over into today’s transformation?
What visual, material, and media cultures have shaped perceptions of a post-fossil future?
How do materials such as cobalt, copper, gold, and hydrogen or other more fundamental raw materials acquire cultural meaning? Which inherited, carbon-era meanings, such as mobility, democracy, and growth, are transferred onto them?
What forms of knowledge production and speculative future-making do the arts offer to contest dominant narratives of transformation and imagine alternatives?
How do museums, biennials, and cultural institutions contribute to the legitimization or contestation of the transformation?

Profile Area II: Raw Material Regimes (Rohstoffregime)

This profile area analyzes resource worlds as historically grown, politically contested, and institutionally stabilized regimes. It focuses on the institutional configurations, actor constellations, power relations, and distributional arrangements through which access to, control over, and benefits from raw materials are organized.

In the second year, the focus lies on the reconfiguration of raw material regimes in the context of global transformation. The global energy transition does not simply replace fossil resources with renewable energy, but reorganizes resource dependencies, infrastructures, markets, state strategies, and relations between resource-producing and resource-consuming regions. Emerging green technologies create new demands for raw materials and new opportunities for value creation and rent generation, while established fossil regimes and their institutional structures continue to persist. The profile area therefore examines the coexistence, competition, and entanglement of fossil and emerging green raw material regimes and asks how the Great Transformation redistributes power, risks, and benefits within and between societies.

Guiding questions for this year’s thematic focus include:

How does the global energy transition transform existing raw material regimes, and which institutional structures and path dependencies persist?
Which new raw material regimes emerge around renewable energy, critical minerals, and green technologies, and how are they institutionally organized?
How does the Great Transformation reshape relations between states, corporations, social groups, and other actors involved in the production, circulation, and use of raw materials?
How are value, rents, risks, and environmental and social costs distributed within emerging green raw material regimes and between the Global North and South?
Under what conditions do new resource demands reproduce existing patterns of extractivism and unequal specialization, and under what conditions do they enable different development trajectories and forms of resource governance?

Profile Area III: Raw Material Practices (Rohstoffpraktiken)

This profile area analyzes the social practices and collective action through which actors relate to

raw materials and examines how these practices contribute to the consolidation, reproduction, and transformation of resource worlds.

In the second year, the focus lies on the practices of the green economy: the actors, strategies, and practices driving the global green-tech energy transition, from renewable energy infrastructures and global production networks to the material, mediated, and ecological meanings of emerging renewable resource worlds. Particular attention is paid to how actors respond and adapt to the growing demand for “green raw materials,” and how new practices emerge, coexist, or conflict with established fossil-based practices.

Guiding questions for Great Transformation include:

How do raw material practices shape decarbonization processes and the transformation of resource worlds?
How does the materiality of raw materials enable, constrain, and shape the green-tech energy transition?
How do competing strategies and practices – for instance, fossil and “electro” pathways – shape the green-tech energy transition in the Global North and South?
Under what conditions do actors defend fossil-based practices, adapt existing practices, or prefigure new, decarbonized alternatives?
How do actors experience and navigate the contradictions between the urgency of decarbonization and the material and social realities that continue to bind them to fossil-based practices?

Cross-Cutting Methods Area: Critique/Reflection

The methods area Critique/Reflection transverses all profile areas and annual themes. It provides conceptual, philosophical, and methodological grounding by reflecting on the normative assumptions, epistemic frameworks, and conceptual architectures that shape how transformations of resource worlds are understood.

In the second year, the focus lies on clarifying key concepts and categories central to the notion of a Great Transformation from the perspective of critical theory. It critically examines contemporary transformation discourses and their underlying assumptions about change, persistence, technology, progress, and socio-ecological futures.

Guiding questions for Great Transformation include:

Against the backdrop of ubiquitous talk of “transformation,” what exactly is being transformed, what drives transformation, and what persists? How can we develop a more robust concept of transformation understood as a change in form?
What is the conceptual and normative significance of categories such as “exhaustion,” “expenditure,” “waste,” “progress,” and “transition” within contemporary transformation discourses?
How can we conceptualize the relationship between persistence and change in processes of socio-ecological transformation?
What role does technology play in transformation discourses, and which normative assumptions underpin technological visions of socio-ecological change?

How can we conceptualize the tension between technological and socio-ecological transformation when technology itself is conceived as a primary means of achieving socio-ecological goals?
We invite researchers from the humanities and social sciences to apply. Applications are welcome from scholars at the postdoctoral and senior levels; applicants must have completed their PhD by the time of application. Fellowships begin on 1 October 2027. The preferred duration is 10 months, with a minimum stay of 5 months. Fellows will receive either a competitive monthly fellowship or, alternatively, the center may cover the costs of a temporary substitute at the Fellow's home institution, in line with established Käte Hamburger Kolleg regulations. The center actively supports fellows in finding accommodation. One-time travel costs to and from Kassel will be covered in accordance with the University's applicable public travel expense regulations. During their stay, fellows are provided with a fully equipped workspace and full access to the University of Kassel's academic infrastructure.

Applications must be submitted by 15 December 2026 at the application portal of the University of Kassel (opens in a new tab).

Applications must include the following documents, combined into a single PDF file:

Research proposal (maximum 3 pages), which is clearly related to one profile area, demonstrates how the proposed project contributes to the center's overarching research theme, Great Transformation establishes meaningful conceptual, theoretical, or empirical connections with at least one additional profile area, drawing on the guiding questions outlined above; includes a brief work plan that includes a statement about the planned output.
Curriculum Vitae, including all relevant academic and professional information.
List of publications.
Syllabus for potential teaching interests or topics.

For further information, please contact us at rohstoffwelten@uni-kassel.de

Reference:
STIP: Fellowships 2027/28, RAW Center for Resources Across Worlds, Kassel. In: ArtHist.net, Oct 30, 2026 (accessed Oct 31, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/54784>.