

# Final report 2008–2017

Latin America programme  
– LATINAMERIKA





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# Preface

The Research Council of Norway launched the Latin America programme in 2008 after an increasing interest for the region. This was expressed as an increase in Latin-American/Norwegian partnerships within foreign policy, development, environment and investments in business. There was also a heightened interest among young people and students for Latin American culture and language.

The programme was funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and lasted for nearly ten years. It encompassed these research areas:

- Politics and governance
- Culture and society
- Economy, business and markets
- Natural resources: management, exploitation and conservation
- Poverty, inequality and human development

The programme was finalized in 2017 and this final report provides an account of activities and achievements.

# Introduction

Name of the programme: Latin America programme – LATINAMERIKA

The primary objective of the programme:

The primary objective of the Research Programme on Latin America was to enhance knowledge about Latin America in Norway by supporting high-quality research. This objective was to be achieved by improving the quality and viability of Norwegian research communities working on Latin American issues.

The secondary objectives of the programme were:

- To undertake research of high international quality.
- To ensure a wider scope and longer-term perspectives in research on Latin America.
- To enhance knowledge on issues relevant to Norwegian user groups.
- To contribute to the internationalisation of Norwegian research on Latin America.
- To ensure the communication of research findings and the development of meeting places and cooperation between researchers and users.

Programme period: **2008-2017**

Programme board: Programme board for Latin America

*Members from 2008-2011:*

- Rickard Lalander, Institute of Latin American Studies (LAIS), Stockholm - Chair
- Helle Munk Ravnborg, Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS), Copenhagen
- Detlef Nolte, German Institute of Global and Area Studies (GIGA), Hamburg
- Diego Sánchez Ancochea, Latin American Centre, St. Antony's College, Oxford
- Emily Boyd, Environmental Change Institute, University of Oxford
- Sissel Dyrhaug, Statoil Hydro, Stavanger
- Anthony Bebbington, IDPM - School of Environment and Development, University of Manchester – Deputy
- Rebecca Earle, University of Warwick – Deputy
- Kristian Ødegaard, Senior Adviser, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Oslo

*Members from 2012-2018:*

- Helle Munk Ravnborg, Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS), Copenhagen - Chair
- Detlef Nolte, GIGA German Institute of Global and Area Studies, Hamburg
- Rebecca Earle, Department of History, University of Warwick
- Kees Koonings, Utrecht University
- Charles Jones, University of Cambridge
- Barbara Göbel, Ibero-American Institute, Berlin
- Giuseppe Feola, University of Reading - Deputy
- Harald Martinsen, Sydvaranger Gruve AS

- Kjersti Rødsmoen, Head of Latin America section, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (from 2015-2018)

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- Politics and governance
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69 projects were funded. Among these the programme funded *The Norwegian Latin America Research Network* (NorLARNet); a network of scholars based in Norway conducting research in and on Latin America.

The Latin America programme was externally evaluated in 2017<sup>1</sup>, and the final report draws heavily on the evaluation. The last project will be finalized in 2020.

## Finances

The programme's funding sources: Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Total disposable budget 2008-2017: NOK 177 000 000

Funds spent on projects: NOK 165 662 399\*\*

Administrative costs: NOK 9 745 174

Funds remaining: NOK 1 592 425 \*

\*The reason for the large amount of funds remaining is because cost for administration have been covered by the budget from the Ministry of Education and Research from 2018. Funds spent on projects includes NOK 300 000 which will be disbursed to NorLARNet after the delivery of the final report in July 2020. Numbers are rounded up.

\*\* The programme has given NOK 500 000 to BIONÆR for funding of two ERANet-Lac projects in their portfolio and received NOK 3 million from INT-Bilat to cover two ERANet-Lac projects in its own portfolio.

The first funds for the programme were received in 2008, from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The yearly budget for the programme has varied from NOK 15 to 22 million:

- NOK 15 million for four years from 2008-2011,
- NOK 20 million for three years from 2012-2014,
- NOK 15 million in 2015
- NOK 20 million in 2016
- NOK 22 million in 2017

The programme received additional funding of NOK 2 million in 2017. The funds were spent on strengthening NorLARNet in a transition period after the ending of the Latin America programme.

<sup>1</sup> The evaluation can be found here: [Ex-post evaluation of the Latin America programme](#)

Administrative costs include salaries and travel expenses for RCN staff, costs for the programme board, costs for expert panels, travel, communication and dissemination and the external evaluation of the programme in 2017. From 2018 administrative costs have come from the Ministry of Education and Research and have not been drawn from the disposable budget of the programme.

The remaining funds will be returned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

## Activities

### Most important activities during the programme period

#### The calls and funded projects

In 2008, the programme published its first call for proposals for pre-projects and event support in order to gauge the interest and knowledge on Latin America among Norwegian research groups. Eight calls for projects have been published by the programme from 2008 to 2013.

During these years 414 proposals for projects were submitted. Of these, one was withdrawn and nine were rejected on formal grounds before being submitted to the review process. 69 were awarded funding after the review process, and 334 were not. In terms of academic discipline, most funded projects (48) fall into the category of *social sciences*. The remaining projects fall in under the disciplines of mathematics and *natural sciences* (9), *humanities* (6), *agriculture and fisheries* (6), *medicine and health sciences* (2) and *technology* (2). This has contributed to the diversity of projects and disciplines in the portfolio, even though the numbers for these projects are low.

The portfolio analysis done by the external evaluators showed that most projects could be defined as multidisciplinary, even if that was through the representation of different disciplines within the field of study of social sciences. The evaluation finds that project applicants were encouraged by the calls to emphasise multidisciplinary in their proposals, and states that this is another one of the programme's many achievements.

Examining the spread across the programme's own thematic focus areas, most projects, even though they are social science, fall within the theme of *Natural resources, management, exploitation and conservation* (22), followed by "Politics and governance" (14), "Economy, industry, business and markets" (13), "Poverty, welfare and human development" (11) and "Culture and society" (10). The programme has had broad and non-distinct boundaries between the research areas and has not strived to achieve an equal distribution between them.

The evaluation conducted a survey of project leaders funded by the programme. It showed that their main critique was that there was a lack of projects in the natural sciences. However, the programme board has followed the principle that projects should have some societal relevance as well as being localized in Latin America. The programme and the funded projects had a development focus since the funding was sourced from the Norwegian aid budget. This, in turn, has attracted more social science-oriented projects. It should be noted that throughout the entire period of the Latin America programme, the Research Council's other programmes and arenas have funded projects of various

disciplines with a focus on Latin America. For some examples; see footnotes below [Highlights and Findings](#).

## **Building capacity**

Prior to the establishment of the programme, research on Latin America in Norway was fragmented, and small scale. In order to increase capacity and quality of Norwegian Latin America research, the programme provided support for many types of projects: pre-projects, feasibility studies, support for events, researcher projects and PhD – and post-doctoral scholarships. The latter was a link in increasing recruitment to the field. The majority of funds have gone to researcher projects (28) and PhD and post doc scholarships (7). This includes projects funded through international calls in EULANEST and ERANet-Lac.

## **Communication**

Additionally, in order to meet the objective of "...ensuring the communication of research findings and the development of meeting places and cooperation between researchers and users" the programme supported a research network – NorLARNet - from 2008-2019.

NorLARNet provides a platform for interaction on research as well as acting as a resource centre and promoter of Latin American research. This was achieved by holding and funding networking events, workshops, conferences and seminars. The NorLARNet website contained information and resources and produced a weekly newsletter. The network has been allocated NOK 20,5 million from 2008-2018 and is the programme's largest funded initiative. As well as staffing and other administrative costs, a significant amount of this funding was redistributed to researchers organising events and other networking activities across the country. The external evaluation found that communication and dissemination of results from projects in the portfolio has been impressive. NorLARNet has contributed immensely to spreading knowledge on Latin America in Norwegian media. The leader of the network, Benedicte Bull, has in the period from 2008 to 2017 given over 200 interviews in media, the network has funded 128 seminars across the country and organized four large conferences. A clear recommendation of the evaluation was that further funding for the network should be provided because that could solidify the gains made by the programme.

In 2017, the last year of the programme and the network, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs provided additional NOK 2 million for NorLARNet. The operation of the network was extended until the end of 2018. This was done in order to secure the competence that had been built up for the last decade. However, the work on organizing, analysing and making the results of NorLARNet's work available took longer than expected, and the new end date is now June 2020.

The programme itself created arenas for communication and dissemination by organizing seminars for Latin American embassies, having projects present at the funding ministry, supporting project leaders and members to present at conferences and contributing to the academic programme on official Norwegian delegations to Brazil. In the spring of 2018, a final seminar presenting ten years of the Latin America programme was conducted together with NorLARNet.

## **International cooperation**

To further enhance international cooperation, the programme participated in joint international calls through EU schemes EULANEST and ERANet-Lac in 2009, 2014 and 2016. Four projects were funded



through the calls in 2009 and 2014 and were a part of the Latin America portfolio. In 2016, the programme enlisted several other programmes at the RCN to commit funds to the call. These were the HELSEVEL programme focusing on health, care and welfare services research, the BIONÆR programme focusing on innovation in food and bio-based industries and NORGLOBAL – the development research programme. In total NOK 8,5 million NOK was provided and four projects funded. These were included in the HELSEVEL and BIONÆR programme portfolios. Here, the programme enhanced cooperation with Latin America in other research programmes.

## Key figures, activities

Number of projects: 69

Number of doctoral fellows: 10. Female fellows: 8

Number of doctoral degrees awarded: 3. Female candidates: 3

Number of post-doctoral fellows: 11. Female fellows: 5

## Results

### Highlights and findings

The programme has funded 69 projects over a ten-year period, and it is difficult to present highlights from all. All projects can be found in Prosjektbanken by using the key word [Latin-Am](#).

Four projects presented their findings at the closing conference, they were:

- Elin Skaar, CMI: [Implementing Latin American Truth Commission Recommendations](#)<sup>2</sup>
- Thorbjørn Haugassen, NMBU: [Rainforest degradation, oil palm agriculture, and the world's hottest hotspot of biodiversity](#)<sup>3</sup>
- Marit Ursin, NTNU: [The impact of the crack trade in the everyday lives of marginalised youth in urban Brazil](#)<sup>4</sup>
- Yuri Kasahara, OsloMet: [The Developmental State Reloaded : Brazilian Industrial Policy in the XXI Century](#)<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Elin Skaar has been funded by the programme on several occasions, building up a knowledge base on Latin American truth commissions. All three projects funded by the programme are linked to here. The PI has subsequently secured funding for a project on female judges in fragile states, including states in Latin America from Norglobal2.

<sup>3</sup> Torbjørn Haugaasen has had several projects in the Latin America portfolio and has subsequently secured funding for several large projects on the Amazon from FRIPRO, MILJØFORSK and KLIMAFORSK.

<sup>4</sup> Marit Ursin's project was a personal post doc scholarship. She has since become associate professor at the Faculty of Social and Educational Sciences, NTNU.

<sup>5</sup> Yuri Kasahara has continued to work with Brazil in a project funded by FRIHUMSAM.

## Performance indicators

### Publications 2009-2019

Scientific publications: 408

- 15 books/monographs
- 152 articles published in anthologies
- 241 articles published in scientific/scholarly journals or series)

Other publications/communication: 1749

- 389 popular science publications (articles/books, books/articles in the public debate, documents formally circulated for review, exhibitions, fiction)
- 516 new publications in the media (newspapers, radio, TV)
- 844 reports, memoranda, articles, presentations held at meetings/conferences for project target groups

## Overall assessment and challenges ahead

### Overall assessment of progress, performance and benefit

The evaluation found that the Latin America programme has achieved its goal of enhancing knowledge about Latin America in Norway by supporting high-quality research. The projects have a high degree of publications; in peer-reviewed journals and popular science dissemination. The programme has high levels of satisfaction from its users, and it has been successful in providing a vehicle for high quality research in Latin American studies. The programme has been successful in strengthening research networks both within Norway and with Latin America. The goal of internationalizing Norwegian research on Latin America has been achieved.

### Supporting high quality research

The evaluation examined the quality of the portfolio of funded projects and the quality of results from projects by looking at publications. 404 projects went through the RCN's review process, but some were not graded<sup>6</sup>. Of the projects that were funded, most were awarded a 6 (Excellent) or 7 (Exceptional) by either an individual expert or panel review. In total across all 69 projects;

- five were awarded a grade 7;
- 27 were awarded a grade 6;
- one was awarded a 5.5;
- five were awarded a grade 5;
- and three were awarded a grade 4.

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<sup>6</sup> Of the projects awarded funding, 27 were either not graded or the grades were not made available to the evaluation team. 23 of those without grade were from the first two calls in 2008 before the grading and panel review systems became the norm. The remaining four which were not graded were the call for the establishment of a Latin America network with the remaining three from the "Broad thematic call for proposals for research funding for 2011".

The distribution of funded projects across this grading scale changed slightly over time with all nine funded projects that had been awarded a 4 (Good) or 5/5.5 (Very good) emerging from earlier calls in 2008, 2010 and 2011. Only one research project awarded a grade 4 was allocated funding (in the 2008) while the other two funded projects awarded a grade 4 were personal scholarships<sup>7</sup>. The quality of the outputs was measured through a bibliometric analysis of publication in the Scopus database. Only journal articles authored or co-authored by project leaders of researcher – or PhD/post doc projects have been included. If an article was written by one or several project members, it was not included in this analysis.

936 articles written by project leaders or PhD and post doc project leaders were found in Scopus. The dataset also contained the number of citations per publication as well as the Field Weighted Citation Score (FWCI). The FCWI is the “ratio of the total citations actually received by the denominator’s output, and the total citations that would be expected based on the average of the subject field”. The evaluation then looked at the citations before and after the researchers were funded by the programme.

The result was (mean and median) that the citations went down after the researchers are funded by the programme. The analysis looks at different time lags to see if there are changes to this main result, but the citations are still lower when a researcher receives funding from the programme. However, the differences are smaller when taking the time lag into account. Several things can explain this; project leaders are not so productive when coordinating a large project, the time lag analysis ends in 2014 and the majority of projects were finalized 2015/2016/2017. Based on experience and other programmes at the RCN, most projects deliver a large number of publications after the project period is over.

However, field citation weighted impact (FCWI), meaning how articles are cited based on the average within their field and where 1.0 is the world average, varied between 1.7 and 1.6. That means that researchers supported by the programme were cited six or seven times more than the world average. Due to budget constraints, the evaluation team only used one database for their bibliometric analysis. Scopus is generally biased towards English, European journals within mathematics, natural sciences, and technology. The outputs of the projects, where a majority is within social sciences and many publications are in Spanish/Portuguese/Norwegian, are likely not well represented in Scopus. This was pointed out to the evaluation team many times by the administration and the programme board.

A weakness of ex-post evaluations is that they are often done in the last year of the programme and usually capture the short-term effects. The programme board remarked this in its comments to the evaluation report.

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<sup>7</sup> In 2012, the RCN procedures for reviewing proposals were altered from individual expert reviewers to panel reviews. The individual experts would not take the broader objectives of the programme into account, they looked at one individual application, while the panels would be more generalists and take the broader objectives of the programme into account. This methodology change makes it difficult to make comparisons on the evolution of grades through-out the programme period.

## **Viability of Norwegian research communities**

As mentioned earlier, Norwegian research on Latin America prior to the programme was fragmented and small scale. The objective of the programme was to improve the quality and viability of Norwegian research communities. In order to achieve that, the programme supported PhD and post doc students. The programme has funded 21<sup>8</sup> doctoral or postdoctoral scholarships, either directly or awarded as part of a research project. The survey results show that PhD students who had worked on projects have continued work in their field in 13 projects surveyed, five of whom had moved to associate professorships. Project leaders, on a personal level, also generally found the programme helpful to their career goals, expressing high levels of satisfaction with the programme.

The programme has funded 10 PhD fellows either directly or as part of a research project, but only three of these have completed their degrees. It has been a challenge to get the PhD students to complete their degrees. Many of the fellows never returned after parental leaves while some ran into initial problems that caused delays and consequently ran out of funding before delivering their thesis.

The evaluation finds that a majority of projects have been awarded to universities with University of Oslo as the largest project owner (13 projects). University of Bergen had 8 projects, the same as the University of Life Sciences. NTNU, University of Tromsø and University of Agder had respectively 5, 4 and 1 project. When it comes to partnerships between Norwegian institutions, 19 partnerships between Norwegian institutions were registered and Norway is the largest country for partnerships. This is an indication that the programme has contributed to building research groups around the major universities in Norway. In terms of institution building, survey respondents generally felt that the programme provided benefit in attracting more researchers in Latin American studies, with the majority stating that it provided moderate support.

The evaluation also examined if researchers would continue to work on Latin America after their projects and the programme were finalized in order to evaluate the sustainability of the programme. In a survey of project leaders, respondents were asked whether they intended to apply for funding on subjects around Latin America from another source other than the Latin American programme. Of the 38 respondents to this question, 17 indicated that they had applied for other projects.

As mentioned earlier, in order to attract interest and build capacity the programme issued calls for different project types: pre-projects, feasibility studies, support for events, researcher projects and PhD – and post-doctoral scholarships. While the number of simplified projects such as event support, project establishment support, feasibility study/pre-projects is higher than traditional researcher projects, the total amount of funding is much lower (figure 10 and 11 in the evaluation report). The evaluation points out that the application award process appears front-heavy in terms of project numbers with 43 percent of all projects being allocated in the programme's launch year 2008. But looking at expenditure throughout the programme period, it shows a logical progression, growing steadily in the programme's early years to then level out before tapering off at programme end. Still, this "front loading" where 33 of the 69 projects were allocated funding in the early period may have

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<sup>8</sup> The evaluation mentions 19 PhD and post-doctoral fellows which is incorrect. Unfortunately, this was discovered after the report was delivered.

reduced the scope to adjust future calls and allocate more budget to future projects based on early experiences.

## **Internationalization of Norwegian research on Latin America**

The evaluation showed that a third of all projects have at least one partner from Latin America, and 62 percent of all partnerships in projects are with an institution based in Latin America. The majority of partnering institutions are from Brazil (17), followed by Argentina (12), Colombia (7) and Chile (5). These are among the largest geographies in Latin America, so they are not surprising as partners. In 2012, the programme issued a call to encourage projects with partners from Brazil, so the large number of Brazilian partners is a result of that. The evaluation shows that the projects also have partners from USA, UK, Belgium, France, Germany, Russia, Spain, Sweden, and Romania. Partnering institutions are mostly universities or research institutes. The programme has also been active in EU joint calls, through EULANEST and ERA-Net Lac, and the latter projects have later been added to the portfolios of other more thematically relevant programmes at the RCN. This has helped to increase internationalization of these programmes.

However, the survey of project leaders showed that the programme helped to reinforce existing partnerships more than in helping to forge new ones. The evaluation found that the programme has not been a strong vehicle for *further* internationalising Norwegian research on Latin America. The percentage of projects with new international partners is relatively low (even though existing partnerships are quite international), and the field-weighted internationalisation score for the project leaders has not shown any increase over time. One could argue, however, that it has helped to maintain its existing international presence, which may have decreased without the programme.

## **Enhancing knowledge for relevant Norwegian user groups**

The programme has exercised an impressive level of communication, both within and outside of the programme, particularly in its engagement with local media. By funding NorLARNet, it has managed to reach out to an impressive number of Norwegian media outlets and thus to have an influence on a wider media landscape. Looking at the outputs of the projects from 2009 to 2019, their communication and dissemination to user groups has been equally impressive; 516 instances of new publications in the media, 389 popular science publications and 844 reports, memoranda, articles, presentations held at meetings/conferences for project target groups during these 10 years. The programme has been successful in reaching a wider audience.

A recommendation from the evaluation is to better define and prioritise the audiences it intends to reach. Spreading projects across all target audiences from any academic discipline from any country in Latin American threatens to dilute the sustainability of the programme, as resources are spread widely, reducing its overall impact on any one user group or stakeholder.

With regards to enhancing knowledge for relevant user groups, the Board pointed out in their self-assessment that what is often needed is a reliable cohort of informed, competent experts familiar with different aspects of Latin America, on whom ministries and media can draw on. The specific details of particular research projects are not as important as the existence of this cohort of experts. The way to develop this pool of researcher is precisely by funding relevant and high-quality research projects.

## **Gender balance**

Regarding the gender balance of the entire portfolio, the evaluation found that the gender of project leaders for all funded projects was skewed slightly in favour of men (57 percent to 43 percent). This is in line with the RCN guidelines on a gender balanced portfolio of having 40 percent female project leaders. For the 27 research projects, the balance was 63 percent male project leaders and 37 percent female. Across the 19 doctoral and postdoctoral fellowships awarded, the balance was in favour of women who made up 68 percent of this group.

## **Challenges ahead**

The Latin America programme was launched when the interest in the region was high, while research activity and capacity in Norway were low. A reason to launch the programme was to ensure that the knowledge about Latin America was not presented through a British or American lens but took Norwegian perspectives into consideration. A wider knowledge base on Latin America in Norway was needed. The programme was designed to serve as a foundation for developing Norway's capacity for cooperation with Latin America in the areas of society, culture, the environment and the economy. The programme has had broad thematic orientation about one region, spanned many disciplines and communicated research and results to users via a network. In that sense, it was quite unique in the programmatic fauna of the Research Council of Norway.

Ten years later and the programme has contributed to increasing capacity for research on Latin America in Norway. The question is what will happen when there is no longer a dedicated funding stream for Latin America research? The evaluation found that many groups are viable and ready to seek and obtain funding elsewhere.

There is still a need for research-based knowledge on Latin America in Norway. Norwegian investments in oil, gas, aquaculture and maritime sector are still high in Latin America. Norway and Latin America have a common interest in environmental and climate research, Norway promotes peace, development, democracy, human rights and equality in the region. All of these topics can be found in different funding arenas at the Research Council. But the work of bringing about new knowledge on Latin America is now more dependent on the ability that existing researchers and their groups have to make research on Latin America relevant and of high enough quality to obtain funding in these arenas.

The programme has been able to capture the massive changes the Latin American continent has gone through in the last decade. This will be more challenging in the future without a dedicated programme. However, the work done by NorLARNet will continue, although in a scaled down manner. The network is funded by the University of Oslo's Centre for Development and Environment and currently focuses on providing a gateway to research on Latin America in Norway through disseminating Latin America research-related news and informing about research activity and publications. Recently a Nordic institute of Latin American studies has been established at the University of Stockholm. The idea is to create more opportunities on Nordic collaboration on Latin America. There are also discussions on a joint master programme between the Nordic institutions. This will create a new generation of students and hopefully researchers interested in Latin America.





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