



Critical
minerals
and the
futures
they
invoke

SPECULATING WITH LITHIUM

Round table discussion

Tuesday, November 18, 2025, 16.15 - 17.45

University of Bern, Mittelstrasse 43, Room 224

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Organized by the Institute of Social Anthropology
and the Capitalism in Context research group
Funded by the SNSF and the Walter Benjamin Kolleg

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by an
Apéro!

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Given its historical trajectory, it is hard to imagine industrial society without fossil fuels. Yet amid unfolding ecological disaster, we are asked to do precisely that. The energy transition promises a livable future, but depends on large quantities of 'critical minerals' like lithium, reproducing old dependencies and contradictions. While its extraction puts local communities and ecosystems at risk, lithium becomes a site of speculation: about which risks matter and to whom; about past harms and future benefits; about what counts as justice at a global scale. Join four experts who will draw on their experiences across histories, laboratories, mining sites, and trading rooms to explore these contested visions. What futures does lithium evoke, where, and for whom?