

Fri 28.11.25 – Sun 30.11.25

Against Neutrality!

**Interventions on Decolonizing
Swiss Economies and Ecologies**

Free entry
**Kunsthalle Bern
& Grand Palais Bern**

In Switzerland, a system of “neutralization” has been at play for decades, which denies or relativizes her role in colonial historical violence and in current global exploitation. **“Against Neutrality!” is a collaborative artistic, ethnographic and activist intervention,** which deconstructs processes of “neutralization” and instead makes tangible Swiss complicity in global economic and ecological violence. To this end, a transdisciplinary group of **artists, researchers and students make accessible their research** on commodity trade, energy imperialism and conservation and negotiate it with the audience as well as with national and international guests. **Talks, screenings, workshops, conversations, social gatherings within the multimodal archive space** will activate knowledges, affects and relations needed to inhabit and build transnational worlds of resistance and solidarity.

Program

Friday, 28.11.25: Commodity Trade

18.30 Opening and Keynote by Prof. Stefan Leins (Uni Bern) (KH)

20.00 Screening “Voids in Earth” (2024, 40’) by Rami Msallam & conversation (KH)

22.00 Sounds & Party with Encoder Experiment (GP)

Saturday, 29.11.25: Energy Imperialism

15.00 Workshop “Energy Imperialism: The case of Palestine” by WeSmellGas (GP)

18.30 Apéro & light buffet (KH)

20.00 Screening “Powerlands” (2022, 75’) and conversation (KH)

Sunday, 30.11.25: Global Conservation

11.00 Networking Brunch (GP)

14.00 Talk by Prof. Tobias Haller (Uni Bern)

15.00 Research conversations by Alexandra Baumgartner and Antsa Arimalala (KH)

17.00 Closing

Saturday and Sunday from 11.00 till the end of the evening program: Additional opening of the Research Archives in Kunsthalle Bern (KH) und Grand Palais Bern (GP).

Friday, 28.11.25

Commodity Trade

How are a Supreme Court landmark case in Canada, a labour strike along the Swiss–Italian border, and Italian colonial mining operations in Eritrea connected?

Rami Msallam’s ongoing research makes visible how normative systems of causation are entangled with the extreme violence of gold extraction. It investigates the material and immaterial causality chains that make extractive violence possible – and that operate across nonlinear, heterogeneous, and ruptural ecologies, temporalities, and geographies. In the installation “Counter Causalities” Msallam opens his research archive and invites visitors to explore materials that trace the aesthetic, legal, spatial, material, and discursive forces and events that are active in producing and neutralizing every single gram of “Swiss Gold.”

Rami Msallam is an architect, researcher, and spatial investigator based in Zurich. He is trained as an architect at ETH Zürich and graduated with distinction from the Centre for Research Architecture at Goldsmiths, University of London. Currently, he is a member of the research team led by Prof. Mariam Issoufou at the Chair of Architecture Heritage and Sustainability, ETH Zürich.

Program Friday

“Against Neutrality!” is opened by economic anthropologist Prof. Stefan Leins (Uni Bern) with the **mini-keynote “A simple trading hub? On neutralizing complicity in Swiss global economies”**, which is based on his rich ethnographic research on commodity trading, mining and finance.

The **screening of the two-channel-video-investigation “Voids in Earth”** (2024, 40’) by Rami Msallam then draws the audiences into a forensic analysis of gold traveling from Eritrea to Switzerland. In a **discussion with actors from the Eritrean community and NGOs**, Swiss complicity in geopolitical extractivism is critically mapped and debated.

Afterwards, **sounds by the Malagasy sound artist Encoder Experiment (aka Antsa Arimalala)** open a space for critical deep listening and shaking off neutrality.

Saturday, 29.11.25

Energy Imperialism

The archive “Working on Energy Imperialism” examines neocolonial interdependencies in the global energy sector and forms of resistance that emerge in response. It assembles books, videos, artistic and aural works, and cartographic projects, showcasing various approaches to knowledge production and dissemination. This diversity of media allows visitors not only to learn about energy imperialism but also to experience the polyphony of the actors involved and the different aesthetics of political communication.

Mia Manaila is currently studying Social Anthropology at the University of Bern and is part of the Public Anthro Lab. Her interests lie in forms of resistance, collective organizing and practices of solidarity.

Mara Businger is a student of Social Anthropology and Gender Studies at the University of Bern. She is particularly interested in projects at the intersection of culture and the arts, activism and research.

Program Saturday

To what extent does Gaza’s offshore gas field contribute to Israel’s militarization? How does wind power reinforce the illegal occupation of the Golan Heights? What role do the EU and Switzerland play in this, and how can we resist this complicity? In the **Workshop “Energy Imperialism: The case of Palestine”** by WeSmellGas, participants explore these questions in a space for exchange and collective learning, followed by an open apéro welcoming everyone to continue the conversation.

Energy imperialism is further examined in a **screening of the documentary „Powerlands“ (2022, 75’)**, which portrays the displacement of indigenous communities and environmental destruction caused by energy and raw material extraction. Navajo filmmaker Ivey Camille Manybeads Tso fosters a dialogue between frontline activists and highlights the resilience and resistance of affected communities. After the screening, **activist collectives discuss Switzerland’s role in global energy imperialism and strategies for transnational collaboration and resistance.**



For the workshop please register here. It requires no previous knowledge. Space is limited, so early registration is recommended.

Sunday, 30.11.25

Glokal Conservation

“Tany Fivelomana – between land and forest” is a research-based art project by Antsa Arimalala and Alexandra Baumgartner. In this work-in-progress they critically enter the structures, narratives, sounds and practices of international biodiversity conservation that tie the Masoala peninsula in Madagascar to urban centers in the Global North – for instance, through the Masoala Hall at Zoo Zürich. In their residency in Grand Palais Bern and Kunsthalle, Antsa and Alexandra invite audiences to enter their research archive and to engage in a conversation on strategies of transnational and posthumanist solidarity in the face of ecological crisis and extractivist capitalism.

Antsa Arimalala is a sound artist working as Encoder Experiment. Active in Madagascar’s experimental scene, he co-runs the collective BSKMG, promoting cultural heritage and electronic music.

Alexandra Baumgartner is a multidisciplinary artist working with photography, sound, and installation. Her research-based practice explores ecological and agricultural relations and the politics of biodiversity loss.

Program Sunday

Sunday’s session opens a space for dialogue between academics, activists and artists studying Swiss involvement in nature conservation projects.

After a **networking brunch**, social anthropologist and political ecologist Prof. Tobias Haller (University of Bern) addresses the audience with a **critical toast on “Stop Making Sense ?! The Tragic Comedy of Nature Conservation and its Profiteers”**.

Against the backdrop of these ethnographic insights, Alexandra Baumgartner and Antsa Arimalala engage in their ongoing research dialogue: In an **exchange with members of the artist collective Groupe 50:50** strategies of transnational artistic collaborations and decolonial research practices are explored. In a **research conversation with anthropologists and Malagasy activists**, current political-ecological developments in Madagascar are addressed.