ngbk
neue Gesellschaft für bildende Kunst
Oranienstraße 25 10999 Berlin
www.ngbk.de

Press release. Berlin, May 16, 2022

Title: The Driving Factor
Duration: June 11–August 27, 2022
Format: Experimental tours, exhibition/storage, forum, website
Opening (exhibition): Friday, June 10, 2022, 6pm
The Money Tree Tour (Berlin): Saturday, June 11, (all day)
Taube Erde Tour (Erzgebirge): Saturday-Sunday, June 18-19 (all day)
Am Ende Landschaft Tour (Lausitz): Saturday, June (all day)
Forum-POWER BANK: Saturday, July 2, from 2pm
Venue: Exhibition at station urbaner kulturen/nGbK Hellersdorf, Auerbacher Ring 41, 12619 Berlin, entrance Kastanienboulevard; **Forum** on the Place Internationale, Carola-Neher-Str./Maxie-Wander-Str., 12619 Berlin
Digital repository and storage unit: thedrivingfactor.net
Press meet: Saturday, July 2nd, 12 (noon). Please register via presse@ngbk.de

Untitled © Daniele Tognozzi, courtesy: The Driving Factor/nGbK

Artists: Ana Alenso, Inge Broska, Aurora Castillo, Constanze Fischbeck, Eva Hertzsch & Adam Page with Mozart Schule Berlin/Victor-Klemperer-Kolleg Berlin, Sonja Hornung, Maryam Katan, knowbotiq (Yvonne Wilhelm, Christian Huebler), Leni Roller, Jack Wolf

The Driving Factor

The project takes the Lithium-ion battery as an occasion to critically reflect on the promise of the so-called green energy transition. It traces electric currents, power grids, and supply chains, in order to draw attention to the transformations and destruction experienced within social and material geographies of extraction and accumulation. In doing so, it fosters alternative spaces of experience and collective action. *The Driving Factor* is conceived by a group of theorists and practitioners in the fields of art, anthropology, and urban sociology.

What fuels the power that is accrued through the storage of energy? *The Driving Factor* was instigated in response to the contradictory reactions of politics and civil society when a Tesla Gigafactory was constructed in Grünheide, Brandenburg. Local and national politicians celebrated the factory's pioneering work in apparently environmentally-friendly technology, as well as its creation of new jobs. At the same time, countless objections pointed towards grave repercussions for already-depleted groundwater reserves, and argued against the clearing of the forest. These were largely ignored or even inhibited. Was the promise of "green" mobility, which goes hand-in-hand with the promise of a "green" transition globally, simply a cover-up for profound violations of ecosystems and civil rights?

Both promises—that of electric mobility and that of the energy transition—have one object in common: the battery. The Driving Factor takes the lithium battery, viewed as a key storage technology for "green" energy, as the starting point for multi-disciplinary and artistic investigations. These question the narrative that the battery is a storage block providing harmless energy to everyone, everywhere—whether for mobile phones, cars, or the stabilisation of the power grid. Working from local contexts, the project seeks to establish links to the global lithium supply chain, while highlighting intransparent and often environmentally damaging practices of raw material extraction. In doing so, it draws attention to the appropriation of natural and human forms of labour as a continuation of imperialist and colonial logics—whose repercussions can also be traced in Germany.

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In three experimental tours, *The Driving Factor* invites participants to move through social and geographical landscapes of extraction and accumulation in Berlin, Brandenburg, and Saxony. Conceived of as journeys through both space and thought, each tour follows various cycles in the valorisation and devaluation of raw materials and landscapes through the "energy transition": from the reactivation of the vision of electric mobility in Berlin-Oberschöneweide and Grünheide, to the resumption of mining in Saxony's Erzgebirge, where lithium deposits have been found, to the revaluation and production of new landscapes following the phase-out of coal mining in Lusatia.

The artistic, scientific, and activist contributions brought together by *The Driving Factor* address intersectional forms of injustice relating to the production of batteries, from the contamination of ecosystems to related expulsions of humans, animals and plants. Once promised as a means to stabilise an electricity grid fuelled by renewables, batteries were supposed to contribute to a transition to the emissions-free and resource-saving energy provision that many expected from the European "Green Deal". At least since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, debates around "energy security" demonstrate that this promise was built on the false assumption of a linear model of growth and investment that is capable of securing nothing more than private capital.

For the duration of the project, the station urbaner kulturen/nGbK Hellersdorf will be transformed into a storage unit in which new and pre-existing artistic works, research materials, podcasts from the working group, as well as incoming impressions of the tours will be displayed in varying assemblages. These stored energies will be gathered by the Forum *POWER BANK*, which brings the project's contributors and visitors together in order to discuss alternative spaces for action. It seems clear that it is necessary to make a break from pre-existing power and property relations in the production, distribution and accumulation of energy. How civil society and translocal groups might contribute to this remains an open question. As a digital repository and storage unit, the website thedrivingfactor.net collects voices, materials, and topics from the project for a wider audience. Here, artistic documentation of the tours will be published and further cross-references made accessible.

nGbK project group: Elisa T. Bertuzzo, Jan Lemitz, Daniele Tognozzi, Mercedes Villalba, Neli Wagner

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Press images

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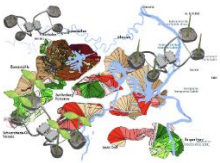
01_ Sanema homage © Ana Alenso, 2020. The Driving Factor/nGbK

02_ © Constanze Fischbeck. The Driving Factor/nGbK

03__ The Last Mile. Ein Projekt zur Verkehrswende von Eva Hertzsch & Adam Page, Mozart Schule Berlin und Victor-Klemperer-Kolleg Berlin © Hertzsch & Page, 2022. The Driving Factor/nGbK



04_© knowbotiq (Yvonne Wilhelm, Christian Huebler). The Driving Factor/nGbK

05_Ohne Titel. © Daniele Tognozzi. The Driving Factor/nGbK

06_ Aktie der Berlin City Elektric Company, Inc., 1930 © Daniele Tognozzi. The Driving Factor/nGbK

07_Tour Erzgebirge © Ana Alenso. The Driving Factor/nGbK

08_Tour Lausitz © Jan Lemitz. The Driving Factor/nGbK

09_Wanderer I by Aurora Castillo, 2021. Courtesy: the artist and Martín Nuccillo y Diego Antista collection ©Fernando Paredes

All participants: The Driving Factor
Exhibition: Aurora Castillo, Eva Hertzsch & Adam Page with Mozart Schule Berlin/Victor-Klemperer-Kolleg Berlin, Leni Roller, The Driving Factor
Tour Berlin-The Money Tree: Aurora Castillo, Oscar Choque (Ayni, Verein für Ressourcengerechtigkeit e.V.), Sonja Hornung, Manu Hoyer (Bürgerinitiative Grünheide, tbc), Susanne Reumschüssel (Industriesalon Schöneweide), Thomas Turnbull (Max-Planck-Institut für Wissenschaftsgeschichte), Jack Wolf
Tour Erzgebirge-Taube Erde: Ana Alenso, Helmuth Albrecht (TU Bergakademie Freiberg), Aurora Castillo, Oscar Choque (Ayni, Verein für Ressourcengerechtigkeit e.V.), Maryam Katan, Andrea Riedel (Stadt- und Bergbaumuseum Freiberg), Jens Weber (Grüne Liga Osterzgebirge e.V.), Featuring “In the Name of Lithium” directed by Tian Cartier and Martin Longo.
Tour Lausitz-Am Ende Landschaft: Inge Broska, Aurora Castillo, Constanze Fischbeck, knowbotiq (Yvonne Wilhelm, Christian Huebler), Mercedes Villalba
Forum-POWER BANK: Michelle Geraerts (Worlds of Lithium ERC, University of Amsterdam), Cristóbal Bonelli (University of Amsterdam, Principal investigator ERC Worlds of Lithium), Oscar Choque (Ayni, Verein für Ressourcengerechtigkeit e.V.), Heidemarie Schröder (Wassertafel Berlin Brandenburg). Featuring “In the Name of Lithium” directed by Tian Cartier and Martin Longo.