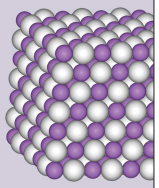
Exhibition: Storage

June 10 — August 27, 2022
station urbaner kulturen/
nGbK Hellersdorf

Opening:
June 10, 18:00
Closing inventary:
August 20, 16:00

With: Aurora Castillo, Eva Hertzsch & Adam Page with Wolfgang-Amadeus-Mozart-Gemeinschaftsschule and Victor-Klemperer-Kolleg Berlin, Sonja Hornung, Leni Roller, The Driving Factor



Tour: The Money Tree

Saturday, June 11, 2022
full day (de/en)
Berlin/Brandenburg

With: Aurora Castillo, Oscar Choque (Ayni, Verein für Ressourcengerechtigkeit e.V.), Perpeto Dyese Wabanza, Sonja Hornung, Bürgerinitiative Grünheide, Esther Kasongo Muntwabene, Éric Mutombo, Susanne Reumschüssel (Industriesalon Schöneweide), Thomas Turnbull (Max-Planck-Institut für Wissenschaftsgeschichte), Jack Wolf

Taking as its point of departure the presence of US-American electric vehicle and energy company Tesla in Brandenburg, the *Tour: Money Tree* will investigate how contemporary climate and infrastructural crises relate to global financial markets and supply chains. In conversation with researchers on the electric grid, market data analysts, and citizen activists, the tour will offer insight into the convoluted economy of electricity and its socio-material aspects, problematizing dominant narratives relating to sustainability and corporate governance. The tour will depart from Oberschöneweide, a locus of past and future speculative development set to host the Behrens-Ufer innovation and technology hub, as well as historical site of the Kabelwerk Oberspree (KWO) and electric car producer NAG from the conglomerate AEG. It will end in Grünheide, Brandenburg, where Tesla's fourth Gigafactory recently began production in the face of environmental impact concerns and an extensive dispute relating to its water supply. Along the way, artistic interventions will constitute the stage for exchanges between tour participants moderated by experts and activists. These discussions will focus on the impact of financialization on natural and collective resources, shedding light on opaque financial dynamics, asking who profits from the energy transition.

Tour: Taube Erde

Saturday & Sunday
June 18 & 19, 2022
two full days (de)
Erzgebirge (Zinnwald/Freiberg)

With: 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 (2021)

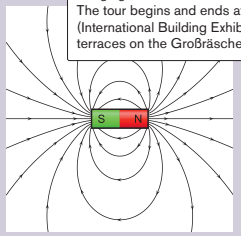
The battery, feeding the myth of progress and the vision of an unlimited electricity supply when the run for energy is increasingly fueling proxy conflicts worldwide, continues to be a black box. To try to unpack this black box, the two days *Tour: Taube Erde* focuses on one of its main components, lithium, looking towards the effects of its extraction in multiple localities. Anchoring the enquiry in Freiberg and Zinnwald (Saxony), where the domestic extraction of lithium is planned to kick off soon, we will trace socio-material ecologies of past and present extraction in the region and throw light on the global repercussions of one of its least known exports, "scientific mining". Through contributions from artists, experts, local residents, and activists, we will reconstruct long disappeared sites of extraction, analyze common trajectories between historical and current mining-rushes and bring to the fore pre-existing and potential modes of resistance among humans and non-humans alike. While reflecting and refracting the continuing history of mining, including its representation, we will also discuss the ways and possibilities of the (care) labour of environmental activism in "de-populating" regions and dialogue about the elusive utopia of the battery, asking how both scientific and everyday practice can step out the paradigm of growth.

Tour: Am Ende Landschaft

Saturday, June 25, 2022
full day (de/en)
Lausitz (Großräschen)

With: Inge Broska, Aurora Castillo, Constanze Fischbeck, knowbotiq (Yvonne Wilhelm, Christian Huebler), Mercedes Villalba

The planned end of coal mining brings with it not only socio-structural change but also the reshaping of the landscapes that have been formed by open cut mining. This tour to Lusatia traces ongoing devastation caused when entire villages are engulfed by mines, while grappling with attempts at re-naturalisation and embodied experiences with extraction and its consequences. Moving between past, present, and future insights into places and landscapes in Lusatia, the tour draws on associative imagery, ties it to global perspectives, as well as the documentation of personal memories from the Rheinish coalfield, bringing these to the Lusatian context. The tour begins and ends at the IBA (International Building Exhibition) terraces on the Großräschen Lake.

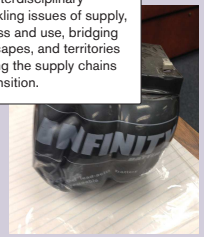


Forum: POWER BANK

Saturday, July 2, 2022
14:00–18:00 (de/en)
station urbaner kulturen/
nGbK Hellersdorf

With: Michelle Geraerts (Worlds of Lithium ERC, University of Amsterdam), Cristóbal Bonelli (University of Amsterdam, 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 (2021)

The *Forum: POWER BANK* will gather artists, activists, scholars and experts at the station urbaner kulturen/nGbK Hellersdorf, Berlin. It is intended as an occasion to access the specificity of the debate surrounding energy supply from an interdisciplinary perspective. Tackling issues of supply, ownership, access and use, bridging struggles, landscapes, and territories of extraction along the supply chains of the energy transition.



Registration for the tours via anmeldung@ngbk.de up until two days before each tour. First come, first served!

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What powers power? *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 the quality of drinking water, the already-depleted groundwater reserves, and argued against the clearing of the forest. These were largely ignored or even inhibited. Criticism of the factory's future environmental collateral as well as concerns regarding working conditions and further environmental damage along transnational supply chains, were considered to be irrelevant. Was the promise of "green" mobility, which goes hand-in-hand with the promise of a "green" energy transition, not covering up profound violations of ecosystems and civil rights, as in other parts of the world?

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 stabilization 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 mechanisms of appropriation of natural and human labor that perpetuate imperialist and colonial logics – and whose repercussions can also be traced in Germany.

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 valorization and devaluation of raw materials and landscapes linked with 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. By facilitating a shared experience of movement through concrete places and landscapes, the project aims to generate practices of collectively speaking, thinking, and perceiving issues that are often presented as "too specialized" or abstract, and are rarely considered within a broader frame.

The project brings together artists, cultural workers, scientists, and activists, whose practices deal with opportunities, risks, and contradictions relating to energy's production, storage, and distribution. At the same time, it recognizes in the battery an allegory of stored possibilities: ways of producing, collaborating and solidarizing that operate invisibly, in the underground, capillary, which are often invisibilised or suppressed but remind of the fact that the story is not written yet: resistance is taking place. By bringing different forms of engagement between visitors and contributors into dialogue with one another, the project complicates often familiar perspectives and prevailing narratives. Above all, it endeavors to harness the potential of artistic perspectives to trigger a debate about scientific and political issues that is neither inhibited by the fear of being "unfinished", nor renounces to provoke and embolden via poetic inspirations.

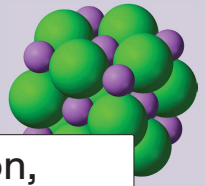
The artistic, scientific, and activist contributions brought together by *The Driving Factor* address intersectional forms of injustice relating to the production of batteries, from the contamination of ecosystems to related expulsions of humans, animals and plants. Through its focus on the lithium battery, the project illuminates historical continuities of capitalist accumulation in today's encroaching financialization of land, natural resources, and work, as well as increasing speculation on the "green" economy. Once promised as a means to stabilize an electricity grid fueled 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 aimed at 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 project 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 art and cultural workers, as part of civil society, might contribute to this in translocally organized groups, remains an open question.

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

thedrivingfactor.net

THE DRIVING FACTOR



Tours, exhibition, forum, digital storage

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neue Gesellschaft für bildende Kunst

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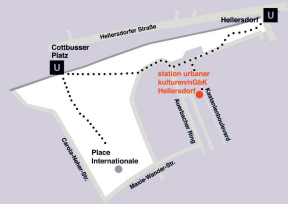

The nGbK location in Hellersdorf was initiated by members who have been active in this late-GDR housing project since 2014. Over time, it has become an exhibition and event space, and a place for artists and local residents to work together, with activities including forms of urban practice as well as open-air events and exhibitions in the nearby green land, known as Place Internationale.

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+49 (0)173.200 96 08

Opening hours:
Thu+Sat, 15:00–19:00

www.ngbk.de

Please refer to our website for the latest information on program and accessibility of our exhibition space.

station urbaner kulturen/
nGbK Hellersdorf is part of
Urbane Praxis.

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What powers power?