

INVITATION

OPENING EVENT OF THE SNSF CONSOLIDATOR. GRANT PROJECT & PUBLIC GUEST LECTURE

Launch of the SNSF Consolidator Grant Project
**The Battle of Materials: Commodity "Research and
Propaganda" and the Road Towards Immoderate Consumption,
1900 - 1980.**

led by Prof. Moritz von Brescius

Monday, 16 March 2026 | 4:15 pm

Institute for European Global Studies (EIG), University of Basel
Riehenstrasse 154, Lecture Hall 00.015, CH-4058

Opening remarks by Prof. Moritz von Brescius, followed by a public guest lecture.

Prof. Erika Rappaport (UC Santa Barbara)

"Aims of Industry": Big Sugar, Public Relations and the Fight for Free Enterprise in Decolonizing Imperial Britain

This lecture examines how large multinational corporations invested in the manufacture, trade, and sale of imperial commodities turned to the new field of public relations during the political crises and transformations of the postwar decades. Focusing on "Aims of Industry," a PR firm/front group backed by the sugar, automobile, and steel industries, it explores how corporate actors battled the Labour government's planned nationalization of sugar refining by promoting consumer sovereignty and "free enterprise." The campaign helped legitimize public relations as a key political technology—mobilized in the metropole, across Empire and Commonwealth, and in newly independent states in Africa and Asia. More broadly, the talk shows how advertising and public relations both profited from and shaped the policies and meanings of decolonization and capitalism from the 1940s to the 1970s.

All welcome

In celebration of the inauguration of the SNSF Consolidator Grant Project:

The Battle of Materials: Commodity “Research and Propaganda” and the Road Towards Immoderate Consumption, 1900–1980, led by Prof. Moritz von Brescius and including team members Dr. Adam Przywara and Miguel Cadórniga Martínez (MA), you are cordially invited to the opening event.

Snacks and drinks will be served after the lecture.



Image: Plastic Oceans International (blog “Plastic: It’s Not All the Same”), via plasticoceans.org.

Join the lecture on zoom:

