



CSLS GUEST LECTURE

**Sean Smith**

KU Leuven

# Pro-nature, anti-litter: Environmental discourses, social media, and the paths to change in Oman

**Tuesday, 1 November 2022**

**16.15 - 17.45, Hauptgebäude 206, University of Bern**

**or join the Lecture on Zoom: <https://unibe-ch.zoom.us/j/63406648756>**

Increased enthusiasm for nature-based activities is a global phenomenon, paralleling if not produced through the rise of social media. In the Arabian Gulf country of Oman, social media has helped foment widespread engagement with the natural environment over the past decade, yet it has also contributed to a problem: litter, or improperly-discarded rubbish. In response, an anti-litter discourse has consolidated among local social media publics, in which users seek to moralize the act of littering or encourage others to clean up. Drawing on in-person interviews, digital ethnography, and participant observation, this talk examines anti-litter discourses on social media platforms in Oman in three parts. First, anti-litter Instagram posts in Oman are evaluated as multimodal texts which signify in economies of symbolic value, both within networked publics and in offline settings. Next, an historicization of global anti-litter discourses indicates that local recontextualizations orient to broader concepts of modernity, even as they conceal the provenance of these discourses and the relations of power that perpetuate litter itself. Finally, mediatized anti-litter discourses are evaluated as potential mobilizers of social change, as the context of Oman suggests insights for global engagements with the structural problematics of waste production and disposal.

**Dr. Sean P. Smith** is a postdoctoral fellow at the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology, KU Leuven, and a visiting scholar at the Center for the Study of Language and Society, University of Bern. His research examines how discourse shapes development and consumption in the contexts of the environment, tourism, and social media.

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