



KÄTE HAMBURGER CENTRE
FOR APOCALYPTIC AND
POST-APOCALYPTIC STUDIES



UNIVERSITÄT
HEIDELBERG
ZUKUNFT
SEIT 1386

APOCALYPSE
QUARTERLY
1/22



**DID YOU EVER
BELIEVE IT
COULD
HAPPEN?**

DEAR READERS,

War is raging in Europe. Several million people are on the run and there is no end in sight to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. "Did you ever believe it could happen?" Ukrainian researcher Ganna Krapivnyk from the Kharkiv State Pedagogical University asks in her essay. In January, one month before the war started, she participated in the first CAPAS Network Meeting. Here and now, however, she recounts for CAPAS she recounts for CAPAS how she experienced the first weeks of the war in Kharkiv in the northeast of the country.

The Russian Invasion in Ukraine is further addressed by two essays. Other articles in this issue challenge the methods by which we assess and respond to apocalyptic scenarios (p. 10/11) and deal with the sensitive recognition of the denied existences of indigenous peoples (p. 19). Furthermore, seven of the current CAPAS Fellows introduce themselves and their work.

Despite the disturbing events globally we wish you an insightful read!

If you have feedback concerning the newsletter, please let us know: capas@uni-heidelberg.de

DID YOU EVER BELIEVE IT COULD HAPPEN?

by Ganna Krapivnyk, Kharkiv, Ukraine

Even those politically indifferent have been at least mentally involved in the apocalyptic situation of the past weeks in the heart of Europe. Is the devastating Russian invasion of Ukraine the dawn of WWII?

A new reality faced by many Ukrainians: destroyed buildings due to heavy bombardment by the Russian invaders.

For millions, the 24th February 2022 split their lives into before and after. Although talks about the Russian invasion had been around for a while, raising insecurity and anxiety levels both globally and locally, the situation seemed to be rather static. The war of words between the confronting par-

ties and global powers had been practiced extensively, while the battlefield, Ukraine, being already crippled, had just been closely observing, gathering its own forces and hoping for effective preventive measures. Measures which were in vain, as the latter were limited to deep concerns and a potentially high price to pay in any case.

The point is that the process started much earlier than last autumn. Cutting off some parts of the Ukrainian state body in 2014-15 was accompanied with appeasement policy, which entailed understanding of its impunity by the aggressor. The first wave of Apocalyptic events and thoughts shocked Ukrainians, though mainly in the affected



regions. Furthermore, gradually, due to natural human adaptability, common Ukrainians began putting up with the new reality as to survive, since it was both mentally and physically impossible to keep living under severe pressure for years. As such, it did not mean that Ukrainians forgot about the bleeding wound and ignored it, but they refused to let it be the key inhibitor in their lives, which could also be in the interests of the aggressor. The situation of simmering uncertainty lasted until spring 2021, when the Russian Federation built up its troops around the Ukrainian border as a new threat of invasion. That wave of escalation did not result in open aggression and eventually subsided. Later that year, voices in the West began informing the public about another wave of escalation and a threat of a full-scale war.

The end of 2021 to early 2022 was a turning point in history, reflecting the pre-apocalyptic stage. This period featured mixed internal, as well as common, feelings of fear, anxiety, anger, hatred, and horror. The precarity grew throughout the country, making the community nervous and businesses highly cautious about their future security. Driving along Kharkiv's evening streets on 23rd February, I happened to recall a Soviet story entitled "Tomorrow Was the War", as

there were no visible signs of being on the verge of war. Nonetheless, the next morning peaceful citizens woke to the sounds of shelling and the sight of fires here and there on the horizon.

“Those experiencing apocalyptic events discover the emergence of parallel worlds both internally and externally.”

According to Maslow's hierarchy, the apocalypse in action means that a person swiftly switches over to face new purely deficient needs. These needs cause immense suffering, prompt the sufferer to hide, flee, or fight for freedom, rights, and life in general. The injustice of war sets basic existential questions of personal and common responsibility, as well as the freedom of choice. It is this situation that has clearly unveiled real attitudes and shown genuine friends and foes. At the interpersonal level, numerous families terminated any communication whatsoever due to the existential misunderstanding or unwillingness to listen and hear each other. Those experiencing apocalyptic events discover the emergence of parallel worlds both internally and externally.



The contact with **GANNA KRAPIVNYK** was established through the first CAPAS Network Meeting in January this year. The meeting brought together various scholars and disciplines working on different aspects of the apocalypse (please read more on page XXX). Ganna Krapivnyk holds a DSc in Philosophy and a PhD in Philology. Currently, she works at the Department of Foreign Languages, H.S. Skovoroda Kharkiv National Pedagogical University. Her research focuses on text analysis, intertextuality, intermedial and interdisciplinary, communication and media cultural studies. In 2020, she published on "Apocalyptic motifs and images in media texts on Brexit and Ukrainian elections" (*Przegląd Wschodnioeuropejski*, 11(2), 117–129. <https://doi.org/10.31648/pw.6495>).



Kharkiv, where Ganna Krapivnyk lives and works, is considered a prime target for the Russian military. Many buildings in the city are completely destroyed.

In particular, staying in shelters and outside them makes a difference. People's activities and preferences, their solidarity and will to survive lead to establishing new groups and communities. Thus, the initial stupor of the shock is replaced by steps taken to survive. For instance, it was astonishing to see how at the underground station, where we had to live for a week, co-dwellers self-

“The initial stupor of the shock is replaced by steps taken to survive,” says Ganna Krapivnyk.

organized and distributed routine tasks in order to meet their physiological and safety needs. Outside those hot spots, there are also parallel worlds of anticipating or ignoring potential life threats. These are obvious in the west of Ukraine, since they have been subject to a limited physical effect of the war whereas mental pressure has been severe. People there still reassure themselves that the apocalypse is far away but fear that they can easily become the next target of the end-of-the-world horrors already in place elsewhere. The latter is also confirmed by the ongoing flood of IDPs and refugees travelling westwards.



“How long will people turn a blind eye to the actual scale of the developing events?”

The essential question is how long will people turn a blind eye to the actual scale of the developing events, since they set existential issues to the very ability of humanity to survive and feel catharsis. ●

Iterated Interactions

WHY ESCHATOLOGICAL NARRATIVES ARE A BAD IDEA FOR POLICY MAKING

How does the war in Ukraine even make sense? That must be one of the most often asked, and most resoundingly unanswered questions in March of 2022: How does this make sense?

by Boris Steipe, Yi Chen, Thomas Meier & Rolf Scheuermann

HOW DOES THE WAR IN UKRAINE EVEN MAKE SENSE?

Here we look at the issue from the perspective of game-theory, which analyses how cooperation can establish, thrive, or degrade, into confrontation. A simple game in which interacting players can cooperate or choose conflict can be intuitively mapped to recent real world events, and doing so is intriguingly explanatory. We find that a common trope of the apocalypse – the “End” – plays a crucial role. Whenever a relationship is perceived to have an “End” that looms in the future, then cooperation between players must break down. Such an End can take several forms: framing the game as a winner/loser struggle makes an ultimate End inevitable; in a multi-player setting, marginalizing a player and preventing them to “play” results in a perceived End as well; and finally, when ideologies take hold, and a player no longer seeks to maximize their own gains, but to minimize the gains of the other, that too results in an inescapable cycle of confrontation.

“Whenever a relationship is perceived to have an ‘End’ that looms in the future, then cooperation must break down.”

This simple model is a useful pattern that we can apply to the multiple entangled realities

of international politics; not only does it help us to understand some of the motifs that determine such relations, it also highlights how individual events may depart from the premises of this model, and lead to unexpected outcomes.

Once this is realized, the contours of a way forward become more clear. A framework is required that is open ended and inclusive, alliances that are committed to a common good and are jointly robust against exploitation, and, perhaps, a framework that is value-based and transcends our current, transactional relations.

Let us start with teasing apart a pattern in behaviour that we commonly simply view as “evil”: here too, the medium is the message.

THE POLITICS OF POISON

An assumption for policy decisions – and that includes the decision to invade a neighbouring country with military force – is that they are fundamentally rational; while a decision may be taken by an erratic individual, it needs to be implemented by many – and if we only see collective madness, we miss the fact that there are actually beliefs and values at play.

What would be an example for this?

●●● [read more on PubPub](#)

FASCIST NARRATIVES

THE UNDERLYING DYNAMICS OF THE RUSSIAN INVASION by Anna Fees, University of Trier

It has been debated a lot in previous weeks, if the Russian invasion of Ukraine might be or become World War III, or if this framing of doom and impending apocalypse is problematic in itself. While war is still raging on the battlefields of Ukraine, let us contemplate from a future perspective the hypothetical question of the exact date of when WW3 might have started. As in the case of WW2, it is difficult to pin an exact date.



Anna Fees

is the co-ordinator of the DFG Research Training Group "Russian-Language Poetry in Transition"

at the University of Trier with aPhD from Bohuslav Grinchenko University Kiev. Her research focuses on political and contemporary Russian, Ukrainian, and American poetry.

Did WW2 start in 1939, when the allied forces of Germany and the Soviet Union attacked Poland, which is what is taught in German schools? Or was it in summer 1941, when Germany invaded the Soviet Union, as children in Russia and Ukraine learn? Or was it in December 1941, with the attack

on Pearl Harbour, when the war truly went global? Or might it not be worth to search for the roots of such conflict at earlier stages, before the first bullet was fired? Might we point to 1937, the year of the Hoßbach memorandum, when Hitler outlined his plans for war in Europe, the same year that the Japanese launched their invasion of China? Might contemporaries have considered the coup d'état of some reactionary generals in Spain in 1936 the first forebodes of the war?

Did WW3 start in February 2022 with the attack of the Russian Federation on Ukraine? Was it the 26th March, when US President Biden explained the war as a conflict between freedom and tyranny, liberal democracies and autocratic countries on the march? Or should we not look at earlier stages, again? If we move backwards in time, we pass the putsch of Mr. Lukashenko in Belarus, look into the mass graves of Syria, consider the Maidan revolution in Ukraine 2014, see civil unrest in Russia 2011 and wars, already, and always, wars in Chechnya, Georgia, in between another revolution in Ukraine and war in Chechnya again.

It can be argued that this campaign is just the latest and the extreme manifestation of a war that was declared on the very idea of liberal democracy, freedom and life itself by Russia a long time ago. Nor is Ukraine likely to be the last country to be attacked, should it fall and have to surrender to brute force or should Western powers force Ukraine into a muddy peace deal with Russia.

“Over the last 20 years, Russia has been transformed into the blueprint of a fascist country and society.”

If this is a path towards a new world war, as argued from different perspectives or not is probably not a priority question for the moment. But it is worthwhile to look into the underlying developments that have led to the moment.

●●● [read more](#)



IN THE SPOTLIGHT YI CHEN

What were your first thoughts when you saw the call for applications for the fellowship?

Yi Chen: “What?” I thought. I was surprised: “How could ‘apocalypse be a serious *topos*?’ The world must have gone MAD!” You know, in China, where I grew up, one would consider the idea of an “End of the World” as quite mad, a weird “superstition” at best, no more worthy of serious thought than the fear of ghosts. But if you think about it, the idea of apocalypse contains a paradox that actually raises some important theoretical questions about the continuity of the self.

And now, here we are, in March of 2022, every day sliding closer to a potential nuclear apocalypse.

What does the apocalypse and/or post-apocalypse mean for you?

The apocalypse changes the self to an it. For me, such an apocalypse is a visceral moment of rupture, a complexity of helplessness, desperation. But it is not the end; if it were, you would not be there to think about it. I guess the challenge of the post-apocalypse is to recover the self. This means of course that the self must persist in some way. If it does not persist, if you lose your humanness, whoever it is who then lives on, is no longer you.

How does the fellowship project build on or connect to your previous career or biography?

I am a philosopher and literary scholar. Questions that move me deeply include: What does it mean to be human? How can I understand humanness? What is it like “to

understand” a thing? And, what is understanding anyway? I explore these questions through works of literature, or the visual arts, bridging the gap between Western and Eastern cultures, and I apply my thinking to questions of ethics and aesthetics. Central to my work is an understanding of an *autonomous self*, and the joy of self-cultivation. This is the starting point for my CAPAS project.



What would be the three things you would definitely need in a post-apocalyptic world?

There would be two things actually: *agency* and *empathy*, and both are crucial. *Agency* preserves our identity in the face of the absolute. I act, something happens. Even in uncontrollable circumstances agency needs to be retained. If you can’t build, hunt, sleep, at the moment, then draw, sing, rhyme, move... whatever; assert yourself in real or fictional ways. *Empathy* gives quality to our agency, that quality of humanness in which we encounter the other, which finds joy in the kinship of being, which keeps us connected with the world and thereby keeps us sane. Mere existence is not enough, preserving the self requires those two. Fortunately, those two are not heavy to carry.

Yi Chen completed a Bachelor of Chinese Literature and a Master in Philosophy at Fudan University, Shanghai, where she also received her PhD in Philosophy. Her topics range from comparative literature to sustainability, the subtleties of Chinese philosophy, and Japanese aesthetics.

●●● [read more](#)

SHARING THOUGHTS & IDEAS

CAPAS' FIRST NETWORK MEETING



CAPAS is one of few academic institutions devoted exclusively to a broader, trans-disciplinary study of apocalypses and post-apocalypses. Among researchers in this field, the founding of CAPAS did not go unnoticed. After receiving repeated inquiries from all over the world over the past year, we organized a first hybrid Network Meeting at the end of January with our research fellows and academics on site as well as interested participants from Germany and abroad. The meeting brought together various scholars and disciplines working on different aspects of the apocalypse with the aim to provide an opportunity to get in contact with one another, discuss research projects and ideas, as well as to build a platform for an international research network with the goal of expanding beyond our fellows.

At the beginning of the meeting, two researchers gave short presentations about their work as a basis for later discussions among the participants. We are pleased that we were also able to engage JOSHUA SCHUSTER and DOROTHY L. ZINN for guest contributions to our newsletter, which you will be able to read on the following pages.

ERNESTO DE MARTINO'S "THE END OF THE WORLD"

ON THE FUNDAMENTAL PARADOX OF SECURITY AND INSECURITY

by Dorothy L. Zinn, Free University of Bozen-Bolzano

CAPAS warmly welcomed me on 26 January to speak about the project I am currently working on, a first-ever English translation of "The End of the World", by Italian anthropologist Ernesto de Martino (1908-1965). The book is a dense and ambitious comparative study of apocalyptic thinking in various periods and settings, and de Martino masterfully brings to bear studies from a wide range of disciplines: religious history, literature, ethnology, philosophy, psychology and psychiatry. And for a study dating from the mid-1960s, it speaks to us today in a surprisingly current way.



© Cynthia Karalla

De Martino was working on the book at the time of his death, and the first edition was published posthumously in 1977, edited and introduced by de Martino's former student Clara Gallini. Until recently, the book has always been problematic as an assemblage from de Martino's notes, yet it was tan-

talizingly promising in many of its passages. Now, thanks to scrupulous archival work by three new editors – Giordana Charuty, Daniel Fabre, and Marcello Massenzio – a revised edition (published first in French in 2016 and then in Italian in 2019) has proven to be a game changer, making the work more

cohesive and, the editors argue, truer to de Martino's original intent.

De Martino was well aware that the planned title of his last book, *La fine del mondo* [The End of the World] would be provocative. He tempered the title's unsettling impact by adding the subtitle, "A Contribution to the Analysis of Cultural Apocalypses".



Dorothy L. Zinn is professor of Socio-cultural Anthropology at the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano. In January, she spoke at the first CAPAS Network Meeting about "The End of the World" by Italian anthropologist Ernesto de Martino, a dense and ambitious comparative study of apocalyptic thinking.

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Here, he did not use the term "apocalypse" in a merely negative sense as cataclysmic destruction, but also as it is employed by historians of religion to refer to visions of better times to come. De Martino explores cultural apocalypses under four broad categories: primitive Christianity,

millenarian or prophetic movements of the Global South, Marxian apocalypse, and apocalypse in contemporary Western art and literature. He compares these cultural apocalypses to a key fifth category, psychopathological apocalypse, drawing on evidence from phenomenological and existential psychology and psychiatry. De Martino's social-philosophical thought subtly weaves back and forth between a micro level of attention to individual psychopathology and the role of ritual in treating it, and a concern with cultural apocalypse both within Western culture itself and in relation to its Others.

"Modern technology has led to the risk of humanity's annihilation on an unprecedented scale."

The volume is a prescient new contribution to international apocalyptic studies not only due to its interdisciplinary scope, but also for new philosophical territory it charts: it dissects the crisis of the hegemonic Western world on individual and social levels, and it yields a unique theorization of personhood.

Through the lens of his ontological formulation of "presence" (a reworking of Martin Heidegger's *Dasein*), de Martino delves into a fundamental paradox of modernity's security and insecurity. In comparison to conditions historically and in the Global South, modern Western societies have, for their majorities, secured presence to the point that many forms of ritual and religious practice appear to be unnecessary relics or worthy of backward "Others". At the same time, however, modern technology has led to the risk of humanity's annihilation on an unprecedented scale: de Martino refers to the death camps of the Holocaust and nuclear war, while today's reader may think especially of terrorism and the environment. Having abandoned traditional rituals and languages for dealing with crisis, modernity is left without eschaton.

The alienation and psychopathology that de Martino explores through psychiatric and existentialist literature are anything but surpassed conditions in the 21st century. He gives us a means to reflect on the loss of domesticity in a world experiencing an unbridled global interchange and dramatically reconfigured social relations through new technologies. We can also understand how a presence at risk becomes prey to the millenary lure of extremist sirens, as fundamentalists of all stripes spread their apocalyptic gospel throughout cyberspace. With increasing inequalities, groups that had secured their status in the postwar boom of de Martino's day have, decades later, experienced downward mobility. Such conditions suggest the need for a return to Marxian analyses, but with a renewed, Gramscian-influenced perspective as proposed by de Martino. Finally, the volume suggestively probes the very bases of what it means to be human, a necessary reflection in an epoch of cyborgs and robotics, and one in which our relationship to nature can be ignored no more, if not at the risk and peril of an end to our world. ●

ANTI-APOCALYPTIC METHODS FOR APOCALYPSE STUDIES

by Joshua Schuster, Western University, London, Canada

Is it possible to think about the apocalypse without thinking apocalyptically? Humanities methods that include practices of consultation, consent, dialogue, critique, speculation, and sharing can be applied towards the comprehension of the existential or apocalyptic risks of the world while also resisting these. Even to address apocalypse one needs a method. Our methods need to be built from democratic, participatory, and hopeful means of interpretation and engagement – even when they are applied to the study of the dystopian destruction of these very practices.

In recent decades, a new philosophical field has arisen that is concerned with the study of existential risk and has a bias towards spectacular apocalyptic events with remedies of technological salvation.

In recent decades, a new philosophical field has arisen oriented towards the study of existential risks. Nick Bostrom, a philosopher at Oxford University and the leading proponent of this field, defines an existential risk as “one where an adverse outcome would either annihilate Earth-originating intelligent life or permanently and drastically curtail its potential.” This definition, from an essay written in 2002, has remained

prominent in the development of existential risk studies. Note, however, the strange wording: the primary value is not specified as human life, nor all life, but “Earth-originating intelligent life,” which perhaps in the future could be some form of artificial intelligence. Note also the association of existential risks with not just the annihilation of “intelligent life” but anything that would “permanently and drastically curtail its potential.” This definition suggests that any socio-political tendencies that would forestall or prevent the furthering of intelligence towards ultimately techno-utopian ends also should be treated as an existential risk.

“Is it possible to think about the apocalypse without thinking apocalyptically?”

Bostrom’s 2002 essay on existential risks did provide important arguments for how to study any apocalyptic scenario, near or far in time and place, including hypothetical future crises. His essay lists already known risks including nuclear war, pandemics, runaway global heating, and a comet strike, while adding speculative ones including the notion that we are in a computer simulation that could be shut down, or that a super-intelligence of our own creation becomes destructive even despite our best intentions. Bostrom certainly has been right to emphasize that all these existential risks require urgent study and should be of paramount importance across all levels of decision making. But Bostrom’s work is shaped of the field of existential risk with terms that are too limited and lack a robust self-critique.





Joshua Schuster holds the position of associate professor of English at the Western University, London, Canada. At the CAPAS Network Meeting he presented his new book “Calamity Theory: Three Critiques of Existential Risk”. © Joshua Schuster

In our book “[Calamity Theory: Three Critiques of Existential Risk](#)” (University of Minnesota Press, 2021), Derek Woods and I argue that the methodology that Bostrom uses is based on problematic definitions of key terms and neglectful of how existential risk studies must be based on collaborative and anti-exploitative approaches across the humanities and the sciences. We claim his work is founded on a narrow set of philosophical principles focused primarily on utilitarian maximization, probabilistic scenario planning, and transhumanist advocacy. As a result, Bostrom’s thinking has a built-in bias towards spectacular apocalyptic events with remedies of technological salvation and misunderstands the need to attend to the hard, everyday work of building a shared world together.

“We don’t need to change the existential structure of existence or the planet to ‘save’ these.”

The limitations of methods in the field of existential risk inspired by Bostrom make for analyses of apocalyptic events too blunt and unnecessarily callous to historical events of mass violence (including genocides) that Bostrom categorizes as “catastrophes” but not ultimately existential risks. This kind of

existential risk thinking does not provide sufficient care towards those whose lives and lifeways across the planet continue to be threatened existentially on a regular basis in being marginalized, subject to racist and colonialist policies, and forced to carry the burdens of exploitative and extractivist economies.

Our book discusses how the methods by which we assess and respond to apocalyptic scenarios needs to build in practices that enact a better way to live cooperatively. We can make a pathway towards an anti-apocalyptic and ecologically sustainable planet. This will require not just ecological infrastructure – renewable energies, more bikes, fresh water for all – but also ecological methods based on environmental justice principles of reciprocity, consent, collaboration, critique, imagination, and sharing the burdens and benefits of living on a planet together.

These practices don’t need spectacular new forms of superintelligence or human enhancements – Bostrom’s answers to apocalypse are themselves laden with apocalyptic and anti-democratic potential. We don’t need to change the existential structure of existence or the planet to “save” these. Providing people existential tools and time to be creative and participatory and not be exhausted will make the world safer. ●



To answer to apocalypse, we don’t need spectacular new forms of superintelligence or human enhancements claims Joshua Schuster.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

ADRIAN HERMANN

What were your first thoughts when you saw the call for applications for the fellowship?

Adrian Hermann: When I first heard about CAPAS, I primarily saw it as a chance for some of the younger members of my research group and network. I forwarded the call and the other positions on offer to them. But I soon realized that I had actually been working on a topic that would fit perfectly with apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic studies and would

allow me to continue my foray into a (for me) new research field: analog game studies and particularly the study of (tabletop) role-playing games.

So, I put together a proposal and I think came

up with a good argument of why studying both the history and here and now of these games is important for CAPAS: they can be understood as versatile ‘constructions kits’ for (post-)apocalyptic stories.

What is your fellowship trying to achieve?

Visions of the apocalypse and the building and exploration of (post-)apocalyptic worlds have been a central aspect of the history of tabletop and computer role-playing games. I want to argue that these games can be understood as attempts to model, simulate, and make playable (post-)apocalyptic worlds through creating a setting, providing a system of rules, and facilitating the creation of characters to play in these

emergent narratives. The main point in my treatment of the material that I am working on, which are apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic (tabletop) role-playing games from the last 50 years, is to treat them as an archive that represents popular ways of thinking about the end of the world and what comes afterwards. And these games do so not in the linear ways of most novels, TV series, or films, but rather – with tabletop roleplaying-games being improvisational media (Aaron Trammell) – by providing a construction kit and building blocks; a ‘story engine’ with which a group of players can tell a potentially unlimited number of apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic stories.

What would be the three things you would definitely need in a post-apocalyptic world?

What one learns from post-apocalyptic role-playing games (and role-playing games in general) is that a well-structured travel party is the most important prerequisite for success. Therefore, the first thing would be: the right travel companions. Secondly, most of the games I work on include fantastic elements. In the language of the game *Apocalypse World*, one should be prepared to “open your brain to the world’s psychic maelstrom”. Or whatever other powerful supernatural force might be out there after the catastrophe. And lastly, in light of our discussions of (post-)apocalyptic fiction at CAPAS and also in regard to the way in which most (post-)apocalyptic tabletop role-playing games involve dealing with the – technological, social, or architectural – remnants of the past, a “sense of history” is always helpful.

●●● [read more](#)

#FELLOWS
APOCALYPSE



Since 2017, **Adrian Hermann** has been the Professor of Religion and Society for the Forum Internationale Wissenschaft, at the University of Bonn (Germany). He specializes in the global history of religion in the 19th and 20th centuries and has recently begun to engage in the field of role-playing game studies.

CAPAS EVENTS

THURSDAY-
SATURDAY

28-30
04

📍 Marsilius Kolleg
CAPAS Annual Conference

WORLDS ENDING – ENDING WORLDS?

“Worlds ending - Ending worlds?” is the theme of the first annual conference organised by CAPAS from 28-30 April 2022, at the Marsilius Kolleg, Heidelberg. Topics discussed by the forty-five international participants are the following: How do we conceptualise the end of the world? What of the many worlds that have already ended? And how do we conceptualise new, post-apocalyptic worlds? What of the many new worlds that have been conceptualised in the past?

THURSDAY

28
04

🕒 6.00 PM – 7.30 PM 📍 Neue Universität, HS 13
CAPAS Annual Conference

DISTINGUISHED LECTURE

Prof. Dr. Nicole Deitelhoff, executive director of the Peace Research Institute Frankfurt, holds the distinguished lecture at this year's annual conference.



TUESDAY

17
05

🕒 6.15 PM – 7.45 PM 📍 Neue Universität, HS 14
CAPAS Lecture Series

“THE MEANINGS OF MASS MORTALITY IN A JAPANESE VOLCANIC WINTER”

Public Lecture by Fabian Drixler (Yale University & CAPAS Fellow)

[Digital stream available here](#)

TUESDAY

24
05

🕒 6.15 PM – 7.45 PM 📍 Neue Universität, HS 14
CAPAS Lecture Series

“SOCIAL MEDIA, MARKETING, AND ISLAMIC PROPAGANDA FROM THE ARAB SPRING TO TODAY”

Public Lecture by Sasson Chahanovic (CAPAS Fellow)

[Digital stream available here](#)

TUESDAY

31
05

🕒 6.15 PM – 7.45 PM 📍 Neue Universität, HS 14
CAPAS Lecture Series

“FORGET MALTHUS. A DEATH-DEFYING ATTEMPT TO REWRITE GLOBAL FOOD HISTORY”

Public Lecture by Frank Uekötter (University of Birmingham & CAPAS Fellow)

[Digital stream available here](#)

THURSDAY

02
06

📍 ZKM Karlsruhe
Symposium

CYBERPUNK 2077

CAPAS, together with the Badisches Landesmuseum Karlsruhe, the ZKM Karlsruhe and the Macromedia University of Applied Sciences Stuttgart is hosting the Symposium Cyberpunk 2077. The symposium brings together different scientific and practical media perspectives on the computer game “Cyberpunk 2077” and the wider Cyberpunk cosmos.

TUESDAY

07
06

🕒 6.15 PM – 7.45 PM 📍 Neue Universität, HS 14
CAPAS Lecture Series

“IMMANENT APOCALYPSE: READING ART AS PHILOSOPHY”

Public Lecture by Yi Chen (CAPAS Fellow)

[Digital stream available here](#)

TUESDAY

14
06

🕒 6.15 PM – 7.45 PM 📍 Neue Universität, HS 14
CAPAS Lecture Series

“PLAYING THE END OF THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT: TABLETOP ROLE-PLAYING GAMES AS (POST-)APOCALYPTIC STORY ENGINES”

Public Lecture by Adrian Hermann (University of Bonn & CAPAS Fellow)

[Digital stream available here](#)

TUESDAY

21
06

🕒 6.15 PM – 7.45 PM 📍 Neue Universität, HS 14
CAPAS Lecture Series

“SELF-PORTRAITS AT THE EDGE. DEVICES FOR STUDYING APOCALYPTIC IMAGINATIONS IN THE ANTHROPOCENE”

Public Lecture by Christine Hentschel (University of Hamburg & CAPAS Fellow)

[Digital stream available here](#)

FRIDAY

24
06

🕒 9.00 PM 📍 Open Air in the MATHEMATIKON Atrium
Apocalyptic Cinema

REY

In the summer semester, CAPAS, in cooperation with Heidelberg University's Faculty of Mathematics and Computer Science, will be showing four films on the topic of the (post-)apocalypse. The screening of the movie “REY” by director Niles Atallah (2017 |

Spanish, Mapudungun with English subtitles) will be accompanied by a scientific commentary by Robert Folger (Heidelberg University, CAPAS).



TUESDAY

28
06

🕒 6.15 PM – 7.45 PM 📍 Neue Universität, HS 14
CAPAS Lecture Series

“APOCALYPTIC AND ANTI-APOCALYPTIC COSMOLOGIES IN MODERN HINDUISM”

Public Lecture by Richard Weiss (Victoria University of Wellington & CAPAS Fellow)

[Digital stream available here](#)

FRIDAY

01
07

🕒 9.00 PM 📍 Open Air in the MATHEMATIKON Atrium
Apocalyptic Cinema

SOYLENT GREEN

Directed by: Richard Fleischer (1973 | English with German subtitles | FSK 16).

Scientific commentary: Maya Dietrich (Medienforum Heidelberg e.V.) & Philipp Schrögel (Heidelberg University, CAPAS).



FRIDAY-
SATURDAY

01-02
07

📍 Neue Universität, HS 1
Workshop

RACIONALIDAD, ESPIRITUALIDAD Y TEMPORALIDAD AFRODIASPÓRICA

Se trata de un espacio de exploración y acercamiento a los principios de vida, las epistemologías y espiritualidad que rigen los mundos organizados por los descendientes de África en Abya Yala. Invitamos a reflexionar la manera en que estos mundos confrontan y desafían la experiencia y la idea de temporalidad lineal y finita de la modernidad occidental. Contaremos con la participación de Agustín Lao-Montes (Puerto Rico), Yuderkys Espinosa-Miñoso (Rep. Dominicana) y Ashanty Dinah Orozco (Colombia) y Danielle Almeida (Brasil).

All CAPAS events on our [event website](#)

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

BRUNA DELLA TORRE

What does the apocalypse and/or post-apocalypse mean for you?

Bruna Della Torre: My generation is living through some tough times. We have seen the September eleven attacks and the war on the middle east; we have lived with and through the 2008 economic crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, the continuing environmental crisis, and now the rebirth or the acceleration of atomic war. Not to mention precarity, anxiety, and depression as social conditions. In the so-called global South, this is even worse. The contradictions in the center of capitalism, hidden or tamed, appear in their most robust features in countries like Brazil, which has been living with a social reproduction crisis, unemployment, mass incarceration, indigenous genocide, and labor precarization for many years now.



Bruna Della Torre is a post-doctoral researcher at the Sociology Department at University of Campinas. She holds a PhD in Sociology and a Master's degree in Social Anthropology of the University of São Paulo.

So, the idea of living in the end times seems to be a realist perspective for someone experiencing this epoch and trying to be a critical intellectual in times like these.

Personally, I took an interest in the Frankfurt School very early in my career, especially in Adorno's work. I came into contact with it through literature. In my masters, I researched Brazilian modern art, and Adorno's readings of literature, especially modernist literature, are very oriented by this perspective. How to write poetry and novels after Auschwitz? How to discuss art, philosophy, society after the apocalypse? How to live after

the world ended and how to keep going because we must not lose hope?

What is your fellowship trying to achieve?

I am currently working on Brazilian right-wing propaganda inspired by the Frankfurt School and other critical theories of authoritarianism, such as feminists, queer and anti-racist scholarship. It is well known that the internet and, especially, social media had a significant impact on recent politics. So, I aim to understand the relation between aesthetics and politics in right-wing propaganda and address the topicality of the concept of (digital) "culture industry" nowadays. I also intend to address the problem of the impact of this "digital culture industry" in countries of the periphery of capitalism with fragile democracies. To do so, I am investigating this propaganda on Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, Gettr, and Twitter. I follow some far-right groups in Brazil, the president, his sons, and relevant "influencers". It is a very unpleasant endeavor.

What would be the three things you would definitely need in a post-apocalyptic world?

Considering we already live in a post-apocalyptic era, which is insufferable, I choose books, music, and wine. These things keep me going on an individual level. But since we are not Robison Crusoe, more critical than 'what', I guess, is the 'who'. In this kind of world, we need to reunite all those who are preparing for the world not to end – the ones that are holding the fortress – this is, in my perspective, the only way to achieve the redemption apocalypse promises.

#POPULAR
APOCALYPSE

A REVIEW OF THE TV SERIES SLØBORN BETWEEN FANTASY AND REALITY – A FINE LINE

by Rolf Scheuermann

Sløborn is a successful (post-)apocalyptic TV series by Christian Alvert who acted as producer, film director, screenwriter, and even as the cameraman. It proved to have extraordinarily good timing as the initial season underwent post-production during the first lockdown of the Corona pandemic in Germany. Consequently, it gained international attention and the Guardian even called it “the German-Danish series that foresaw COVID-19”.

WHAT'S THE SERIES ABOUT?

Season 1 starts out with the depiction of life on the small island which, inevitably, takes a sudden turn with the outbreak of the pandemic and culminates in a state of emergency along with the following devastating consequences for the community of islanders. Seen as if in fast-forward, it carefully sets the individual reactions to the pandemic in scene and shows, as if from under a burning magnifying glass, what damage an even deadlier disease than COVID-19 could cause to a community.

While Season 1 centres around the events that unfold immediately after the outbreak of the pandemic, Season 2 shifts the fo-

cus to a post-apocalyptic setting. In its first scene, we see a romantic bird's-eye view of Sløborn, but then move on to its empty beaches and deserted streets, where we once again meet the pregnant teenager Evelin Kern (impersonated by Emily Kusche) on her bicycle. Towards the end of season 1, Evelin, who is immune to the pigeon-flu, had increasingly become a

Sløborn is planned for four seasons. Since it collided with the *zeitgeist* and its second season was already on the screens, fans are currently waiting eagerly for news about the release of season three.



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leading character. In season 2, we follow her fate and that of her three brothers as well as a couple of different small groups that evaded the evacuation to one of the camps on the mainland.

The fate of mainland Germany remains unclear until the end of season 2, when there is first contact with the outside world such as radio contact with a mainland hospital and the intrusion of pirates who systematically plunder the houses of the island. Season 2 ends with the arrival of a small group at the hospital on the mainland, which Evelin needs to reach due to an expected complication with her pregnancy. Having moved away from the focus of the island to the

mainland at the end of season 2, viewers are, of course, curious about the fate of the mainland, which we may learn more about in season 3 of the ZDF Neo original series.

Sløborn is not always entirely convincing and has been criticized for its theatrics. Evelin Kern's self-diagnosis of a *placenta previa* via an ultrasound examination in the deserted office of the island's doctor at the beginning of season 2 is certainly one of the most unrealistic episodes of the series. Still, Alvar's TV show is entertaining and, especially in view of the current COVID-19 pandemic, it makes one wonder: what if COVID-19 was, and continues to be, even deadlier than it is? ●



APPEARING INDIGENOUS

RESISTANCES, RESTITUTION, AND UTOPIAN MONTAGE

by Alejandra Bottinelli

#PUBLIC
APOCALYPSE

This is the story of Damiana-Kryygi (2015) shown in the documentary by Argentinean director Alejandro Fernández Mouján that follows the process of Damiana's life from the time she was abducted from her village to the recovery of the parts of her body scattered between Argentina and Germany. It is also the story of the artists who work to collect and re-discuss the archive, faced with the complete dispossession of the indigenous subjects in this Second Conquest of Aby Yala, and activate the heterogeneous forms of memorial restitution, propitiating the imaginal appearance of these peoples, as a utopian resource that aspires to reopen historical time to empathy and the sensitive recognition of the existences denied by colonial predatory vanity.

●●● [read more on PubPub](#)

#POPULAR
APOCALYPSE

WHAT COMES AFTER THE END?

AN EXHIBITION ON DISASTER FILMS

Only the tip of the Statue of Liberty protrudes from an ice desert, Los Angeles lies in ruins, Pompeii is engulfed in smoke and fire, the luxury liner is drifting up the hull: the exhibition “CATASTROPHE. What comes after the end?” at the DFF – Deutsches Filminstitut & Filmmuseum in Frankfurt focuses on disaster films. It can be visited until 22 May 2022.

The extinction of the human species, of life on Earth, the complete destruction of flora and fauna by a man-made or natural “catastrophe” – this scenario has fascinated filmmakers all over the world for decades. Therefore, we were glad that the DFF agreed to cooperate with CAPAS for the #ApocalypticCinema series in the winter of 2021/22 for the film selection and also through a talk by curator Stefanie Plappert.

The exhibition and also the accompanying catalogue cover perspectives from art, literature, and mass media as well as perspectives of natural sciences (the Senckenberg Natural History Museum is a cooperation partner for the exhibition): “real” ideas of catastrophe versus the “imagined” ones of art or cinema. But artistic ideas of the worst possible scenarios always have a true core and a real cause; while scientific illustrations often refer to well-known artistic images to illustrate their research and sometimes also their warnings. ●



CATALOGUE "CATASTROPHE"

Publisher: DFF - Deutsches Filminstitut & Filmmuseum e.V.

Editor: Stefanie Plappert

Year of publication: 2021

Format: hardcover, 172 pages (numerous illustrations); 18 cm x 24 cm

ISBN: 978-3-88799-107-4

Language: English or German

#FELLOWS
APOCALYPSE

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

HOLGER HESTERMAYER

What does the apocalypse and/or post-apocalypse mean for you?

Holger Hestermeyer: My discipline (law, in particular international and European law) does not think in terms of apocalypse or post-apocalypse. We do, however, have narratives that follow a similar structure. Take for example the standard account of the history of international governance. According to that account, every new system of governance was born out of the catastrophic failure of the previous one.

From the Thirty Years' War arose the Westphalian System, from the ashes of the Napoleonic wars the Concert of Europe, World War I ushered in the League of Nations and the catastrophe of World War II and the holocaust gave birth

to our current system – the United Nations, the World Bank, the IMF, the WTO, the European Union, and the Council of Europe. The reason for this is, partly, that reforming international governance is difficult. Paths to incremental but meaningful reform are sometimes closed and we only change things after a major crisis. Partly, though, this is also how we tell stories as human beings: we want clear turning points, well-defined constitutional moments.

What is your fellowship trying to achieve, which questions is it addressing, and with which methods?

I am trying to obtain a better understanding of disintegration processes in the international system. This starts with a precise understanding of processes of disintegration; and as a lawyer that first of all means understanding the provisions of a legal system that allow for disintegration. Thus, I am currently taking an in-depth look at Art. 50 TEU: the provision that gives EU Member States a right to withdraw from the EU. My goal for the second half of my fellowship is to establish contact with researchers in non-legal fields to help me, over time, fill gaps in my understandings. Thus, I would love to establish contacts with social psychologists and historians interested in disintegration processes. Ultimately the research is meant as a starting point for a larger interdisciplinary project with the goal to try and make mechanisms of international governance more resilient.

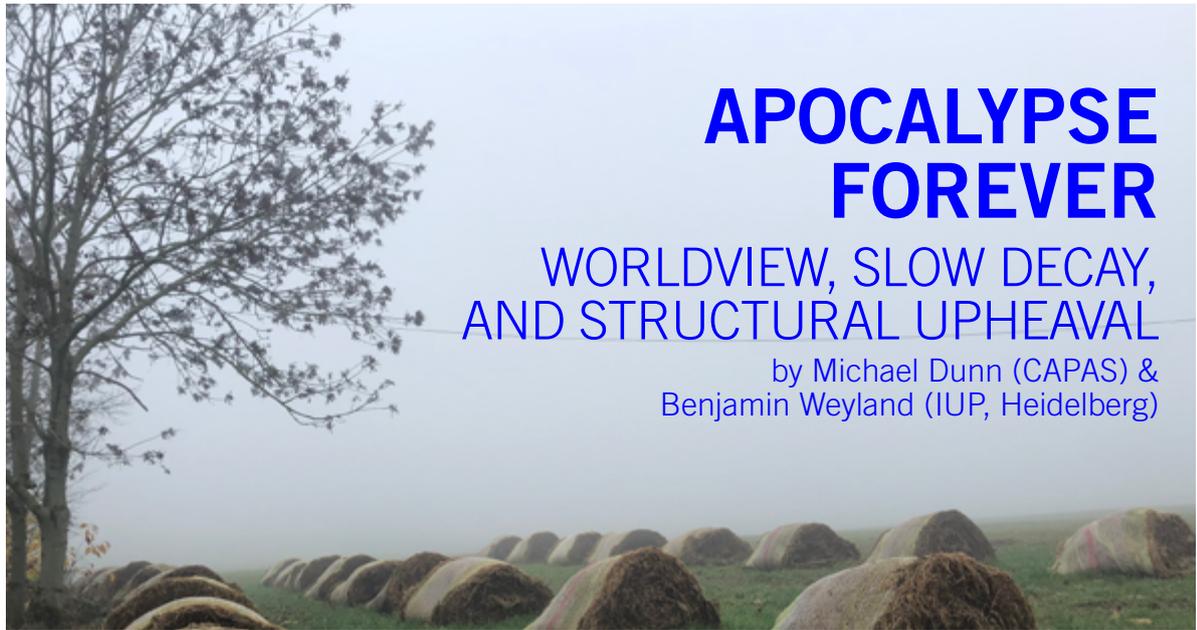
What do you hope to take with you from the project and its results?

First and foremost, the work at CAPAS will help me obtain a more interdisciplinary outlook. Interdisciplinarity is often held out as a worthy goal – and it is, because our real-life problems are not contained within well-established disciplinary borders – but academic reality does not match the lip-service we pay to interdisciplinarity. That reality is that career paths in academia are often rigidly structured along the lines of your discipline. CAPAS is one of those few lighthouse projects where interdisciplinarity actually means something.



Holger Hestermeyer is a Professor of International and EU Law at King's College London. He is a graduate of the universities of Münster and UC Berkeley, holds a Ph.D. from the University of Hamburg, and is admitted to the New York state bar and the German bar.

●●● [read more](#)



APOCALYPSE FOREVER

WORLDVIEW, SLOW DECAY, AND STRUCTURAL UPHEAVAL

by Michael Dunn (CAPAS) & Benjamin Weyland (IUP, Heidelberg)

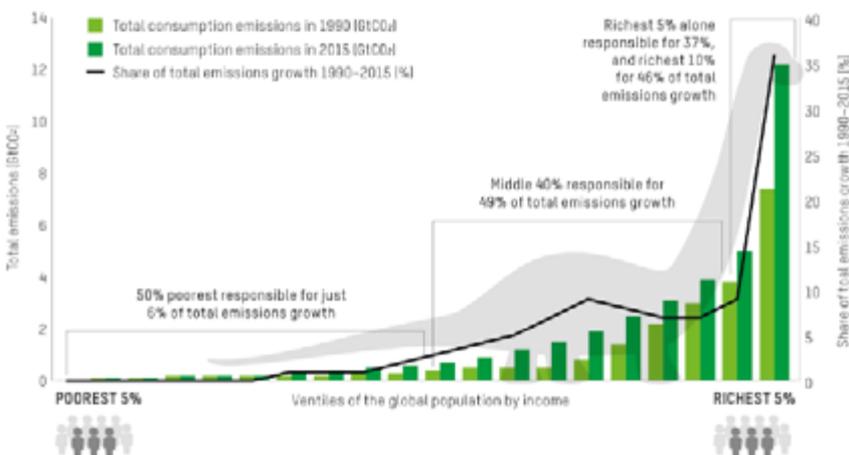
Apocalypse is one of those words with lots of baggage. It's also one of those words that is highly politicised and means an insurmountable array of things for a broad spectrum of people; to be crystal clear from the outset: what we mean by an apocalypse is an uncovering, an unveiling, and/or a revelation.

Arguably, we are living in a post-apocalyptic world and we have been since 1988 at the latest, when James Hansen revealed to a broader public that our energy use has global consequences; the unveiling we speak of is the ongoing climate apocalypse. However, 'our' energy use doesn't necessarily mean all of us and, in fact, in such a construction lies the crux in our understanding of the

post-apocalypse, climate culpability, and the difficult task of structural upheaval necessary to navigate the climate apocalypse. Žižek, in reference to Heidegger, states that "[c]atastrophe is not our ecological ruin, but the loss of home-roots which renders possible the ruthless exploitation of the earth" (2014: 32). The climate apocalypse began long ago, and was predicated by our relationship to nature and the earth upon which we reside.

The "dinosaur diagram" of uneven growth in carbon emissions 1990-2015 clearly shows the stark correlation between wealth and CO2 emissions.

If we are to realise that the planet is undergoing a defining time of revelation, it is important to realise that said revelation, the current slow post-apocalypse, is undeniably important in revealing the colonial and structurally racist conditions of technological productions, resource extraction, and maritime economy to name just a few areas of 'existence' culpable for climate change. Airlines, energy corporations, and plastics polluters have already put the metaphorical nail in the coffin of our discontent as the obsession with profit margins and business models leads to the continued destruction of the ecosystem. And although establishing a multiplicitous way in which we can also discuss and disseminate climate change is, of course, not only important but



necessary, it also simultaneously disregards the necessity to focus efforts on the long history of petrochemical capitalism and in the process open our eyes to the most detrimental forces; forces which have ultimately acted in perpetrating the climate apocalypse. In the face of such forces, the future of climate activism will inherently “consist of some large hopeless battles and some smaller battles that can be satisfyingly won” (Franzen, 2021: 58).

N. K. Jemisin’s *The Fifth Season* starts with a similar profound end: “Let’s start with the end of the world, why don’t we? Get it over with and move onto more interesting things” (2015:1). We argue that one of the most interesting things is precisely the cognitive dissonance of considering our contradictory calamity and the unequal distribution of climate culpability.

●●● [read more on PubPub](#)



COLLISION COURSE

“DON’T LOOK UP” AND THE POLITICIZATION OF SCIENCE IN AMERICA

by David F. Eisler

On last Christmas Eve, Netflix released the star-studded satirical disaster movie “Don’t Look Up” about two American astrophysicists who face ignorance, apathy, and political hostility as they attempt to persuade the government to act after they discover a planet-killing comet on a collision course for Earth. Perhaps capitalizing on the current cultural moment where a Twitter account like the “Sweet Meteor o’Death” has more than 130,000 followers and the apocalypse itself has become a major subject of academic research, “Don’t Look Up” annihilated its competition to become the top streamed movie on any platform, racking up more than one hundred million viewer-ship hours in only three days.

The film’s message isn’t exactly subtle: listen to the scientists, or we’re all going to die. That the comet is a metaphor for climate change isn’t just a narrative interpretation, it’s one of director Adam McKay’s primary intentions. The film lampoons everything about the American response to the comet (with only a handful of nods to the rest of the world): cynical politicians and greedy tech tycoons, pop stars hoping to “raise awareness” through sold-out concerts, and TV morning show hosts who mask the reality of their impending doom

The article was originally published on the [HCA GRADUATE BLOG](#)

with plastic smiles and celebrity gossip. Not to mention the average American citizens whose “belief” in the reality of the comet is inexorably tied with their political allegiance until the moment the hurtling mass of ice and rock begins to burn up in the Earth’s atmosphere. Satire? Yes. But the movie is also a perfect example of how representations of scientists in literature, television, and film have come to reflect — and possibly even contribute to — the politicization of science in American society.

●●● [read more on the blog](#)

#ART APOCALYPSE



A VISIT AT MUSEUM HERXHEIM

A group of CAPAS team and fellows explored the museum in Herxheim by curator Lhilydd Frank and familiarized themselves with Neolithic tools and weapons.



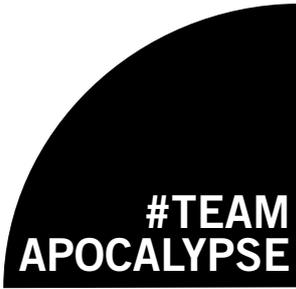
The archaeological site of Herxheim is a mass grave with an estimated 1.000 individuals of the Linear Pottery culture. The exact background of it is still unknown.



The Museum Herxheim called on artists to create art on the theme ENDZEIT for a Mail-In Art exhibition.



CAPAS Director Thomas Meier presented a talk on **“The Archaeology of End Times”** for the accompanying programme of the ENDZEIT exhibition.



INTRODUCING CAPAS PUBLICATION MANAGEMENT

Who are the people working at CAPAS? What are their backgrounds and what are their areas of expertise and interests? In this issue, we are focussing on the CAPAS Publication Management Team.

As research area coordinator [Jenny Stümer](#) is a co-editor of the journal *Apocalyptica* as well as responsible for the Centre's publication management. Originally from Berlin, Jenny spent time in the U.S and Australia before moving to Aotearoa, New Zealand. She received her PhD from the University of Auckland, where she subsequently taught media and film for several years. Her research investigates the mediation of border walls through cinema and art practices, and her book *Walled Life: Concrete, Cinema, Art* has just appeared with Bloomsbury. Going



The Publication Management Team: [Jenny Stümer](#), [Michael Dunn](#) and [David Eisler](#)

forward Jenny is particularly interested in apocalyptic affect as a (potentially) transformative force in a doomed world.

While Jenny was on maternity leave from September 2021 through April 2022, [David Eisler](#) managed the CAPAS publication team completing a PhD at the Heidelberg Center for American Studies. David grew up in Florida before earning a bachelor's degree in astrophysics from

Cornell University, a master's in international affairs from Columbia University, and serving as an officer in the United States Army. His book *Writing Wars: Authorship and American War Fiction from WWI to the Present* will be published this year by the University of Iowa Press.

All good editorial teams need a pair of extra, experienced eyes and [Michael Dunn](#) is responsible, as research associate, for assisting the publications team as well as copyeditor for the journal *Apocalyptica*. He received a bachelor's degree in English Language and Literature from Brighton University where he won the *Routledge English Language Prize 2015* for the best bachelor thesis. He subsequently took part in the Erasmus exchange programme at Heidelberg University where he decided to return for his master's de-

gree in English Studies specialising in Linguistics and Litera-

ture. He has previously worked at the Institute of Sinology at Heidelberg University. Prior to that he was also a student assistant at the Cluster of Excellence "Asia and Europe in a Global Context". He is also a translator, writer of fictions, poet, and songwriter. He is currently a PhD candidate at Heidelberg University where he is working on a thesis about ecological end times in modern classic literature. ●

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

DANIEL A. BARBER

What does the apocalypse and/or post-apocalypse mean for you?

Daniel A. Barber: I live in a general state of panic about the end of the world, especially relative to the prospects for my children and future generations. As a scholar of architecture, I feel an obligation to embrace these fears and paranoias, to sort of swim in them, in order to think clearly about how the discipline and profession can change;

timistic position that by accepting that some end has happened we can move through the present into a somewhat more realistically considered future. It is going to get worse before it gets better.

What is your fellowship trying to achieve?

My project at CAPAS is focused around the ‘aftermath’. I’m trying to understand how we can think about architecture as operating in an ‘after’ relative to fossil fuels, to the global energy system and to petroculture. This involves framing buildings as energy systems, considering the IAE’s ban on fossil fuel generation; it involves thinking about preservation, retrofit, adaptive reuse, etc.; thinking about comfort and adaptive comfort and different ways of living in interiors. I am also trying, as a scholar, administrator, critic of sorts and convenor of discussions with engineers, architects, natural and social scientists, policy makers and others; in this context I am trying to talk about, bring into discourse, find ways to encounter the urgency of the moment, the desperate need to transform our economies and relations to ecologies.

In some ways, this is a lot about mourning, about recognizing what we and future generations have lost by what has already been wrought, emitted, by the “baked-in” nature of the climate crisis. This, again, is sort of the post-shuttering that I am interested in, the aftermath. Buildings, architecture – the design of buildings – as the creative medium of that transformation and taking on the project of building ways of life in the aftermath of carbon-fueled, growth oriented modernity.

how it can focus on mitigating the worst of ongoing and increasingly violent climate disasters. The temporal exceptionalism of the apocalypse is an important cultural trope and conceptual driver for thinking about how urgent change can happen. I suppose the irony is my interest in the apocalypse as a concept is also some naïve or at least op-



Daniel A. Barber is Associate Professor of Architecture and Chair of the Graduate Group in Architecture (PhD Program) at the University of Pennsylvania Stuart Weitzman School of Design. He received a PhD in Architecture History and Theory from Columbia University, and a Master of Environmental Design from Yale University.

●●● [read more](#)

#ART
APOCALYPSE

APOCALYPTIC ENCOUNTERS OF PAST AND FUTURE



The history of coal is the history of the world. It is the history of extraction, of industrialisation, of colonialism and a way of humans relating to the rest of the natural world. It initiates a dependency on fossil fuels that we are struggling to unlearn. It created a world and sowed the seeds of that world's destruction.

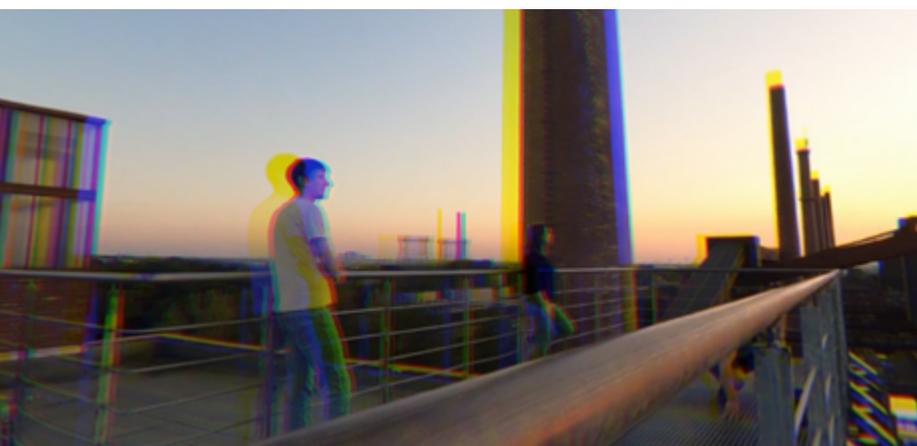
In this sense, coal is an example of what Jason Moore calls 'cheap nature': a 'civilizational strategy that is dependent on 'uncommodified human and extra-human natures (slaves, forests, soils)' that are appropriated, accumulated and exploited. A 'new now' requires the end of 'cheap nature'. It requires the end of the world.

The apocalypse is not a coming catastrophe, but the revelation that the world is not all that there is. The apocalypse is not about the future, but about the way that our

'now' is already filled with the possibilities of newness and ways of resisting the world.

We explored this intersection through apocalyptic encounters of past and future, of the ends of worlds and new worlds arising and of art and science on the occasion of the NEW NOW Festival at the *Zeche Zollverein* in 2021. From our visit to NEW NOW we brought back a 360 degree film we produced, which you can watch [HERE ON OUR YOUTUBE CHANNEL](#). ●

Overlooking
the coking
plant – gigantic
remnants of
industrial coal
exploitation.



APOCALYPTIC ENCOUNTERS A 360 DEGREE FILM

Director: Philipp Schrögel

Writer: Tommy Lynch

Director Sound & Photography:
Gregor Kohl

Co-Directors / Co-Writers / Cast: Eva Bergdolt, Gregor Kohl, Tommy Lynch, Rolf Scheuermann, Philipp Schrögel

Music: M.P. Dunn

Artists / Cast: Bryndís Björnsdóttir (Dísa), Cibelle Cavalli Bastos, Elliot Woods / Kimchi and Chips, Julijonas Urbonas, Portrait XO

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

NINA BOY

What does the apocalypse and/or post-apocalypse mean for you?

Nina Boy: My work is situated at the so-called finance-security nexus. Finance and security are the two principal modern ways of engaging with the future, but they place antagonistic value on it: for finance the future is the chance for profit; for security the future is a threat. Something fundamental has been happening to this relationship since the 2008 Global Financial Crisis and the/an apocalypse plays a crucial role here. Before the crisis, orthodox economics believed that financial crises could only ever be caused exogenously. Now the self-destructive capacity of the financial system has been recognized in the concept of systemic risk and the corresponding model of governance of macroprudential regulation. But systemic risk is a notion of risk that bears no return. Not only does this go against the fundamental premise of modern finance, but it also means that the boundaries between 'security' and 'finance' are shifting. The spread of an apocalyptic imaginary raises the question whether capitalism has met its nemesis in the form of security? Or how is this relation being reconfigured?

What is your fellowship trying to achieve, which questions is it addressing, and with which methods?

To better understand the shift in the finance-security relation invoked by the/an apocalypse, my project situates apocalypse conceptually within key notions informing anticipatory security governance such as tail risk, resilience and preparedness that have also been seeping into finance. At first these seem incompatible: they conceive of

the future as radically uncertain, whereas apocalypse is characterized by inevitability, that is, epistemic certainty. The question is, however, at what point this inevitability is revealed – does the end reveal itself only at the end? Resilience, in fact, also anticipates that crisis is inevitable – it just doesn't know when it will happen. But there's a certain functionalism to resilience that doesn't fit well with the epic narrative of apocalypse. The distinctive element of apocalypse is this meaning-making aspect of revelation.



What do you hope to take with you from the fellowship at CAPAS?

I hope to further understand the complex place of security in financialized capitalism, which seems both essential to and in conflict with it. But through the collective work at the Centre I've also been inspired to look into other aspects of the apocalypse, from populist resentment and the platform economy to (trans)historical questions of witness, testimony and evidence. How do we know something has happened or something will happen, or more precisely, end? How do we witness the end? And finally, this is yet another very interesting exercise of interdisciplinarity in practice.

●●● [read more](#)

#FELLOWS
APOCALYPSE

Nina Boy is currently Research Fellow at the DFG-funded Centre for Advanced Studies on the Foundations of Law and Finance (LawFin) at Goethe University Frankfurt and Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Warwick. She holds a PhD in Politics from Lancaster University, an MA in International Studies & Diplomacy from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London and an MA (Joint Honours) in French and Philosophy from the University of Edinburgh.

BOOK REVIEW by Stephen Shapiro

THE DAWN OF EVERYTHING: A NEW HISTORY OF HUMANITY

Politics and scholarly possibility converge in the posthumous study, co-written by David Graeber and David Wengrow, "The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity" (2021). This volume was the first of planned four, which may or may not appear after Graeber's decease. An expansive study of non-European societies until the Enlightenment-era, *Dawn* is a moveable feast of ideas about the varieties of human social relations.

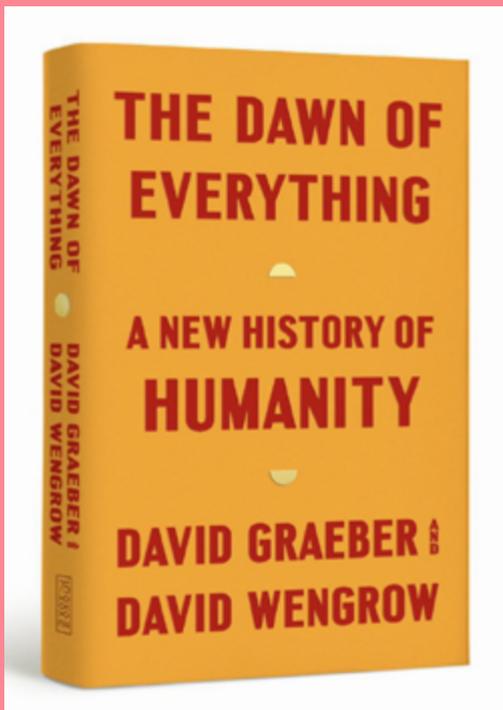
varied their farming settlement and hunting itinerancy. By replacing a (marxist) notion of the modes of production for the "means of subsistence," Graeber and Wengrow use the regime of food creation, rather than commodity production, as their historiographic metric. The study begins with the decolonizing claim that Enlightenment notions of democracy came from North American indigenous peoples.

The study has met claims that it cherry-picks historical evidence and often falls into a confirmation bias. Another question is the way it assumes no difference in scale between the relatively small number of Eastern North American Native Americans living in the forests and the vastly larger Central American megapolises. Left unsaid in this volume is the looming riddle: why, if there is no predetermined direction in human organization, then how did we end up with the capitalist world-system in inter-state competition after all? And why does it seem, as Fisher suggests, so difficult to imagine leaving the State behind? Given that agricultural production involves a historically smaller number of people than before the eighteenth century, changing the means of subsistence does not necessarily seem to impact the dominance of capitalism. Whatever our responses, *Dawn* will doubtless be a touchstone for the next decade, especially in context of the recent return to a kind of state violence that many of us had hoped that we would never see again in our lives. ●

A main thread is Graeber and Wengrow's attack on the idea of human linear development from nomadic hunters and gatherers to sedentary agricultural societies (and then following Adam Ferguson's sequence to mercantile, bourgeois long-distance traders). Graeber and Wengrow argue that there were a greater historical variety of mixed positions (what Trotsky called uneven and combined

development) than our standard textbooks insist and that any step in any direction was possible to be abandoned. Disputing claims that agricultural settlement led inescapably to a (modern) centralized, bureaucratic, and military nation-state, *Dawn's* political motivation seems most evident with their notion of "play farmers," peoples who seasonally

#BOOK
APOCALYPSE



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IN THE SPOTLIGHT

SASSON CHAHANOVICH

What were your first thoughts when you saw the call for applications for the fellowship?

Sasson Chahanovich: My first thoughts were: “Can this be real? A center dedicated to apocalypticism?!” I was personally very excited to see that the subject of my thesis [a pseudographical Ottoman-era Islamic apocalypse] actually had some wider resonance/relevance.

#FELLOWS
APOCALYPSE



Sasson Chahanovich holds a PhD in Islamic Intellectual History from Harvard University. His interests are grounded in the long history of eschatological apocalyptic thought in Islamic history from Muhammad’s revelation, throughout the Early Modern Period, and also in contemporary Islamic militant movements.

What does the apocalypse and/or post-apocalypse mean for you?

Personally, apocalyptic or post-apocalyptic thinking is quite an optimistic Weltanschauung, if I may be so bold. It is predicated on the idea that all problems, all the complex systems and their attending negative con-

sequences for us as humans and for our planet as we know it is somehow – beyond our capacities – on a collision course to a definitive end. Anyone more familiar with history knows that things are never solved so quickly; so easily. Our global problems, if they really are so cataclysmic, will linger; their negative effects will not dissipate in the blink of an eye but stay with us for much longer. Systems rarely, if ever, collapse so quickly.

From the perspective of my discipline, I find the eschatological apocalypses the most thrilling mode of revelation. The long history of this genre clearly indicates that mankind has always been interested not only in the plans of the gods. The attending depictions of damnation and salvation at the Final Judgment for Jewish, Christian, and Islamic apocalypses is, moreover, what really intrigues me. That mankind can think up of supernatural organization and some idea of absolute justice in cosmic perpetuity after the universe is dissolved is, I think, revolutionary in the history of human imagination.

What would be the three things you would definitely need in a post-apocalyptic world?

Since I have no desire to linger in a world that has collapsed – nor, for that matter, do I think I have the rough survival skills to stay among the living –, for those of us who would not like to take part in some kind of End-Times hunger games, I suggest: a stool, some rope, and a strong wooden beam. For the rest, let gravity take over and free me from a dismal post-apocalyptic existence...

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#SCIENCE
APOCALYPSE

CLIMATE IS NOT WEATHER

An excerpt from Daniel A. Barber's introduction to the volume "Accumulation: The Art, Architecture, and Media of Climate Change"

The climate is not the weather. Weather can be experienced, but to understand climate, media is necessary. As the computational capacity to manage meteorological data emerged in the middle of the twentieth century, so did the means of visualizing and disseminating these new forms of complex information. Scientific knowledge of global and regional climate systems has been advanced through expressive, technical, and speculative images. Media provide access to processes of accumulation that are endemic to the contemporary socio-biotic condition of climate instability. If media do not precisely determine our situation, in the wake of Friedrich Kittler, they nonetheless provide access to the material and cultural outlines of possible futures.



The current epoch is one of accumulation: not only of capital (primitive or otherwise) but also of raw, often unruly material: from people, buildings, and cities to plastic in the ocean, carbon in the atmosphere, and viral loads in the air and in the lungs. It is an epoch of accumulating anxiety, and of a recognition of the difficulty of finding effective means for intervening in the behaviors and practices that engender these seemingly intractable patterns of growth.

Alongside these material accumulations, images of accumulation are everywhere, from International Panel on Climate Change reports and news platforms chronicling the spread of wildfires, floods, and excessive heat to stock market tickers indexing skyrocketing economic inequities. Meanwhile, discussions of degrowth, of retrofitting and moratoria on new construction, and novel modes of horizontal distribution struggle to take hold.

Images of accumulation are essential to opening up the climate to cultural inquiry and political mobilization. Historically, climatic media in architecture ranged from

technical images of thermal comfort and considerations of solar paths to speculative forms of region-specific living. More recently, the manipulation of false color diagrams and their correlate climatic effects are taken as a space of creativity. For similar to the weather, buildings can be experienced, but we need media to understand architecture: its forms and materials, its relationship to social and geophysical patterns, its changing claims to cultural relevance. ●

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