



KÄTE HAMBURGER CENTRE  
FOR APOCALYPTIC AND  
POST-APOCALYPTIC STUDIES



UNIVERSITÄT  
HEIDELBERG  
ZUKUNFT  
SEIT 1386

APOCALYPSE  
QUARTERLY  
2/22

A stylized profile of a person's head and shoulders, rendered in a gradient from yellow to orange. The person is wearing a camera and holding a lens up to their eye, looking towards the right. The background is a dark purple gradient.

# ARTS, APOCALYPSES, EXPERIENCES

# DEAR READERS,

One of the central concerns of CAPAS is to make research accessible to a broader public and to engage in an open and reciprocal discussion. This is part of our broader understanding of the role of science in society. After all, potentially apocalyptic threats like climate change, pandemics, and war do affect us all. The arts play a central role in creating these possibilities for interaction and providing new perspectives on the research topics.

In this issue, we will highlight some of our outreach activities: In late June,

for example, CAPAS co-organized the Cyberpunk-Symposium in Karlsruhe (report on p. 2-4). This summer we will be participating in a series of activities with METROPOLINK Festival in Heidelberg (please see p. 14-15) and of course we are again presenting apocalyptic films with scientific commentaries in our regular APOCALYPTIC CINEMA series (programme p. 13) as well as at the Schulkinowochen Baden-Württemberg (report on p. 24-25).

The CAPAS team wishes you an interesting and inspiring read!

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

## THE CYBERPUNK EXPERIENCE

by Philipp Schrögel, Johannes Bernhardt & Dominik Rinnhofer

***Neuromancer*, *Blade Runner*, and *The Matrix* – then at the end of 2020, cyberpunk experienced a powerful revival with the release of the computer game of the same name. As a cultural discourse, cyberpunk stands for aestheticized retrofuturism, post-apocalyptic visions of society, and anthropological dissolution of boundaries. With a joint symposium, Baden State Museum, Macromedia University, CAPAS, and the Center for Art and Media (ZKM) went on a quest to explore the topic further.**

The term “cyberpunk” first appeared in 1980 in a short story by Bruce Bethke. As a cultural phenomenon, cyberpunk was fleshed out and popularized primarily by films such as Ridley Scott’s 1982 *Blade Runner*

and Katsuhiro Otomo’s 1982 cult manga *Akira* as well as William Gibson’s 1984 novel *Neuromancer*. At the centre of such stories are mostly post-apocalyptic (although this characterization remains open for di-

Cyberpunk visions usually center on post-apocalyptic dystopias characterized by megametropolises and corporations.





© Hannah Cooke

With a joint symposium, Baden State Museum, Macromedia University, CAPAS and the Center for Art and Media (ZKM) went on a quest to explore the phenomenon of cyberpunk.

discussion, as the symposium has shown) dystopias characterized by mega-metropolises and corporations, in which physically and mentally optimized people struggle for self-determination and survival at the interface with cyberspace. In contrast to the typical utopias of many other classic science fiction scenarios, the cyberpunk world is not sterile, clean, and shiny but rather marked by dirtyness, violence, and pessimism; as only half-jokingly remarked upon recurringly during the symposium: it typically rains all the time, and it ought to be so.

As a cultural discourse, cyberpunk stands for aestheticized retrofuturism, post-apocalyptic visions of society, and anthropological dissolution of boundaries.

In her opening talk *Mirrorshades Cheap Truth and Punkish Violence: The Emergence of Cyberpunk*, [Jiré Gözen](#) positioned cyberpunk in the science fiction and technoculture spectrum from Frankenstein to Neuromancer. While these earlier phases can be seen as more of a revolt—more Punk so to say—before the phenomenon entered the mainstream. This aspect was further explored by [Julia Grillmayr's](#) talk *All the -punks! Dystopias and Utopias of a bustling suffix*, critically reflecting on the abundance of new “-punk” genres,

which might be seen as empowerment, but could also merely be a label or a pose. [Lars Schmeink](#) also elaborated on these inherent ambivalences and paradoxes in cyberpunk; with a strong anticapitalistic pose and at the same time a clear market logic throughout the phenomenon and in the overall “cyberpunk business”.

As the subject of artistic counterworlds, cyberpunk is still present today in various forms. After all, many of the visions of the cyberpunk cosmos have become reality in the meantime, just think of globally acting megacorps or the gradual transformation of the internet into a metaverse. This reciprocal relationship, the interdependencies between fiction and factual developments such as the Neuralink project were also raised by Gözen in a critical reminder (who wants to realize a proposed fictional dystopia?) but also with the potential to positively and productively shape socio-technical developments.



© Valentin BEAUVAIS on Unsplash



© Hannah Cooke

On the podium at the Cyberpunk Symposium: Philipp Schrögel, CAPAS director Robert Folger, Julia Grillmayr and Adrian Hermann, fellow at CAPAS.

Cyberpunk has a long history of computer games with various adaptations, which were impressively, visually, and appealingly summarized by [Dominik Rinnhofer](#). One fascinating aspect of the digital aesthetics of cyberpunk was pointed out by [Jacob Birken](#), who made the connection between the dominant colours of cyan and magenta in typical cyberpunk imagery to the availability of the CGA colour palette of the computers at that time. Although, his presentation of the identical visual appearance of Miami

Opening of the Cyberpunk Symposium by Philipp Schrögel, Johannes Bernhard and Dominik Rinnhofer.

Vice television series and the overall colour preferences in design in the later 80s show that at the same time, this might be a question of aesthetic zeitgeist.

With the release of the computer game *Cyberpunk 2077* at the end of 2020, the phenomenon has once again experienced a renaissance of global proportions, as discussed with journalist and games expert [Gunnar Lott](#): on the one hand, it was the most hyped game of all time, sold millions of copies and used by the largest simultaneously active community of players, allowing deep immersion and experience of the world of cyberpunk and its stories. On the other hand, since its release, the game has also been sharply criticized and has become one of the most controversial titles ever. The sprawling glitches in the early version of the game creates an interesting cross connection to a feminist theoretical perspective on cyberpunk with the concept of [Glitch Feminism](#), as presented by [Janina Loh](#) among others in her talk. Another fascinating coincidence is that the influential *Cyborg Manifesto* by Donna Haraway was published the same year as *Neuromancer*.



© Hannah Cooke

●●● [read more](#)

## IN THE SPOTLIGHT

# CHRISTINE HENTSCHEL

#FELLOWS  
APOCALYPSE

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

**Christine Hentschel:** Mine! Seriously, it was quite an immediate ‘I have to try’ impulse and I had fun imagining my project.

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



**Christine Hentschel** is a professor of criminology, security and resilience at the Social Sciences Department at the University of Hamburg. Her interests revolve around apocalyptic imaginations with regard to the climate crisis, right-wing sentiments and thought, the sociology of in/security and resilience.

I don't mean apocalypse as something that is, was, or will come; even though I am writing from a world that is falling apart. I am interested in the apocalypse in the present progressive, e.g. how we are facing, narrating, or

prepping for apocalypse; or as an adjective, as in apocalyptic attunements, apocalyptic sensitivities, or apocalyptic imaginations. This allows me to create an approach for thinking of our world at the edge of ecological devastation, planetary insecurity, and unbearable injustice, as well as how “we” work through all that.

I depict apocalyptic mobilizations in the face of ultimate ecological ruination as edgework. By edgework I mean the modes of attending to, living with, and struggling over catastrophic realities and prospects that come with intense emotional, physical, and intellectual demands. Take the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic tones in contemporary climate activism who call out last chances, put their bodies on the line, and declare themselves to be the last generation (of this world and the first generation of the new world). Apoca-

lyptic matters are not necessarily a common sociological theme but I believe them to be very important for understanding how societies are struggling with and making sense of dark futures and catastrophic presents.

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

The apocalyptic lens of my work helps me to critically read the present and societies' dis/engagement with the future: What does the widespread apocalyptic sense of the present tell us about our times and how does it shape political capacities for radical transformation? How can we grasp the affective sway and imaginative force of apocalyptic attunements in a world at the edge? I am building an inventory of devices that can make sense of all the different affective investments at play. My affective devices are also, in a way, methods: not as ethnography, narrative analysis, or interviews (which I all use in my work) are methods, but as enablers that operate through questions and areas of attention.

**What are the aspects you are looking forward to at CAPAS?**

Ideas on apocalyptic reasoning, readings I have never heard of, as well as more Spanish seeping into my system in this astonishing bilingual context. I also look forward to concrete ideas for future collaboration and I enjoy witnessing how interdisciplinarity, exchange, and outreach in such a centre works, e.g. when CAPAS takes part in urban festivals or helps inspire a dance company to kick off their apocalyptic piece.

●●● [read more](#)



# CAPAS ANNUAL CONFERENCE

## “Worlds Ending - Ending Worlds?”

The CAPAS Annual Conference took place from 28.04.-30.04. at the Marsilius Kolleg in Heidelberg. Around 50 international researchers from various disciplines discussed the conference theme “Worlds Ending – Ending Worlds?”, and historical and contemporary perspectives on crises, upheavals, and apocalypses. The plenum addressed the following questions: **How do we conceptualize the end of the world? Which of the many worlds have already ended? And how do we conceptualize new, post-apocalyptic worlds? Which aspects of the many new worlds have been conceptualized in the past?**

Around 50 international researchers from various disciplines met at the CAPAS annual conference and discussed the conference theme “Worlds Ending – Ending Worlds?”.

As anthropogenic climate change, increasingly polarized politics, and the COVID-19 pandemic foreshadow the end of worlds, the idea of the apocalypse is gaining traction in popular and scholarly discourses. Apocalyptic imaginaries saturate artistic practices, media narratives, political debates, socio-economic discourses, and speculative imaginations. Simultaneously, apocalypses, and their imagined aftermaths, produce emancipatory and creative potentials that engage the possibility of plural worlds, embodied futurities, and non-linear temporalities. The premise of a/the ‘world’ (as the object of end-time scenarios) provides an acute lens on these above-stated developments. It also suggests prospective theories of the convergence of crisis and world-making activities and explores the possibilities of new worlds.



The ‘world’ as a conceptual problem, in this sense, is central for understanding apocalyptic transformation, and its wide-ranging entanglements with past, present, and future experiences of catastrophe



We asked several participants about their impressions of the conference and created short videos. To see what they had to say, please follow the links below:

>>> [ADRIAN HERMANN](#)

>>> [JULIA GRILLMAYR](#)

>>> [DANIEL BARBER](#)

>>> [CHRISTINE HENTSCHEL](#)

>>> [JAIDEEP UNUDURTI](#)

>>> [ISABELLA HERMANN](#)

>>> [JIAJUN DALE WEN](#)



“The Day After: Ukraine and the Future of European Security” was the topic of the Distinguished Lecture, delivered by political scientist and peace research expert **Nicole Deitelhoff**.

(including colonialism, disaster, racial capitalism, anti-migration sentiments, epidemics, securitization, economic disparity, algorithmic governance, nuclear threats, anthropocentrism, sexism, white supremacy, etc.). However, the concepts of ‘world’, ‘worlds’, and ‘worlding’ also have consequences for engaging with the ontological and epistemological premises of the ‘end’ and its real and imagined ‘aftermaths’.

#### **DISTINGUISHED LECTURE**

On Thursday, the first evening of the conference, Prof. Dr. Nicole Deitelhoff, Executive Director of the Peace Research Institute Frankfurt, presented the 2022 Distinguished Lecture.

**“The apocalypse is not merely the end of everything, the destruction of the world, but a process of renewal as well.”**

In her lecture “The Day After: Ukraine and the Future of European Security”, the political scientist referred to the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the resulting global security implications, which have tragically brought the topic of apocalypse into the focus of public atten-

tion. At one point, she emphasized that for her, the apocalypse is not merely the end of everything, the destruction of the world, but a process of renewal as well. It is a phase of pitilessly revealing the truth, finally dividing good and bad within the existing world, and bringing into life a new world replacing the old one. On the cessation of destruction, a new world is blooming. However, the new world/order she referred to will not automatically be an improved version of the former one. According to her, it would already be a gain if we got a new world/order since a quick move to peace or settlement is not likely at this point. In the end, the international order needs common norms, institutions, and interdependence between its members. Clearly, for the order to function, there must be at least a basic level of transparency and trust between the various actors.



Hence, Nicole Deitelhoff stressed: “The new world is now a world of our making. It is one in which we must not let the perceived apocalypse blind us to our duties. The new order will not come about automatically; it needs to be crafted. Now is the time to plant its seeds.” ●



## CALL FOR APPLICATIONS **FELLOWSHIPS**

**#FELLOWS  
APOCALYPSE**

It is with great pleasure that we announce the new Call for Fellowship Applications for the 2023-2024 academic year! From October 2023 for the 2023-2024 academic year, we invite applications for up to 10 Fellowships. Fellowships are available for a duration of up to 12 months, including at least one academic term (October to February or April to July).

Our mission at the Centre is to encourage the dialogue between the humanities, the social, the natural and the life sciences, therefore we would like to extend an invitation to scholars and researchers from various disciplines to apply to our Fellowship programme.

The focus of the 2023-2024 academic year is on the imaginaries and concepts of the (post-)apocalypse, with special regard to

Europe and Asia. The aim is to explore the imaginary of apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic worlds in a transcultural and transdisciplinary perspective. Proposals regarding the theoretical or methodological frame of CAPAS and on inter- and transdisciplinary approaches are also welcome.

The deadline for applications is **1 August 2022**. For further information please refer to our [website](#). ●





## IN THE SPOTLIGHT

# RICK WEISS

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

**Rick Weiss:** I like to think about apocalypse cross-culturally, since people in diverse times and places have thought about the end of the world, often in very different ways. From my perspective, people use apocalyptic references to make arguments about the world, arguments that are meant to persuade others and to change behaviour. It is used in a wide range of contexts, but my interest in apocalypse lies in its political and social uses. Because of my background in religious studies, I think of apocalyptic narratives as a type of myth. By “myth” I do not mean that they are fictitious or simply wrong, but rather I highlight that these are authoritative stories that shape people’s behaviour and world views.

**Rick Weiss** is an adjunct professor of South Asian religions at Victoria University of Wellington. His research currently focuses on tracing the genealogies of Hindu apocalyptic narratives in colonial South Asia and examining the impact of print on religion in colonial India.



**What is your fellowship trying to achieve?**

My specific research at CAPAS focusses on a South Indian Hindu community called

“Ayya Vazhi”, a community consisting of marginalised castes. Their myths centre on apocalypse, and their practices and doctrines criticise the oppressive social and political structures of South India. In the 1840s, one of their early leaders wrote an apocalyptic narrative that describes the oppression faced by the community: severe taxation, social exclusion, labour exploitation, and violence. My research focusses on how this community uses this apocalyptic narrative to mobilize people in opposition to social and political oppression.

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

There is a real lack of study of apocalyptic thinking and practice in South Asia, so my research will bring to life an important mode of social assertion in the region that has been neglected to date. I expect, or at least hope, that my published results of this research will suggest a range of other productive topics of study in Hindu studies. Given that studies of apocalypse tend to focus on Western material, I hope that my perspective on Asia will also offer something new to existing scholarship on apocalypse.

**To get some practical advice: What would be the three things you would definitely need in a post-apocalyptic world?**

This is a hard question, since much of what we now possess would probably be useless! I would hang on to my tent, sleeping bag, and Swiss Army Knife. That way I’m assured a warm place to sleep, and you never know when you might need a knife, a scissors, or a corkscrew.

●●● [read more](#)

# CAPAS EVENTS

MONDAY

11  
07

🕒 07.30 PM 📍 Aula der Neuen Universität  
Ruperto Carola Ringvorlesung "KRISENFEST?"

## VÖLKERRECHT IN DER KRISE

Public Lecture by Holger  
Hestermeyer (King's College  
London & CAPAS Fellow)



TUESDAY

12  
07

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

## "FROM WITNESSING TO REMEM- BRANCE – THE DOCUMENTARY OF WUHAN LOCKDOWN"

Public Lecture by Meng Xia (Fellow, Joint Center for Advanced  
Studies "Worldmaking from a Global Perspective").

[Digital stream available here](#)

TUESDAY

19  
07

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

## "THOUGHTS ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN APOCALYPSE AND IDYLL IN THE LITERATURE OF THE 'LITTLE ICE AGE'"

Public Lecture by Joana van de Löcht (Fellow, Joint Center for  
Advanced Studies "Worldmaking from a Global Perspective").

[Digital stream available here](#)

THURSDAY

21  
07

🕒 7.00 PM – 9.00 PM 📍 CATS Greens

Lecture Series “The (Re-)Invention of Latin America”

## TERRORTICHLÁN – CRISÁLIDA (2021)

A performance & discussion with Rojo Córdova & Jazzael Sáenz (Mexico), moderated by Robert Folger (Heidelberg University, CAPAS). [Digital stream available here](#)

SATURDAY

23  
07

🕒 1.00 PM – 10.00 PM 📍 Fantasy Kolosseum Heidelberg

Apocalyptic Game Day

## BOARDGAMES AND TABLETOP-RPGS

Just stop by and join a game! New sessions start at 1:00 PM / 4:00 PM / 7:00 PM. [More information here](#)

TUESDAY

26  
07

🕒 6.15 PM – 7.45 PM 📍 Neue Universität, HS 14

CAPAS Lecture Series

## “VOICES OF PLANTS AND LANDSCAPE IN ARTFUL SPACES OF THE MING-QING TRANSITION”

Public Lecture by Wang Yizhou (Fellow, Joint Center for Advanced Studies “Worldmaking from a Global Perspective”).

[Digital stream available here](#)

FRIDAY

29  
07

🕒 9.15 PM 📍 Open-Air in the MATHEMTIKON Atrium

Apocalyptic Cinema

## DIE WOLKE

Directed by: Gregor Schnitzler (2006 | German with English subtitles | PG 12).  
Scientific commentary: Frank Uekötter (University of Birmingham & CAPAS Fellow).



© DIE WOLKE - LEONINE Studios

28  
07 –  
07  
08

📍 Patrick Henry Village

## METROPOLINK FESTIVAL

The Metropolink Festival in Heidelberg offers one of Germany's largest venues for street art on 4000 square metres of indoor and outdoor space. This year's central topic is "Transformation, Metamorphosis, and Utopia". One of the large murals that are being created during the festival will be designed by the Mexican artist SANER – a collaboration that was established through CAPAS. Furthermore, the Centre is organizing a creative information point, various workshops and talks with CAPAS fellows, and an "Apocalyptic Cinema" evening.

For the detailed program organized by CAPAS, please see page 15 of the newsletter.

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

SANER, study for "Monstrous men", 2022, artist collection.



OPEN-AIR  
CINEMA

Summer 2022

MATHE-  
MATIKON

Im Neuenheimer Feld 205  
Heidelberg

FRIDAYS  
9.15 PM

Entry 8.45 PM

FREE  
ENTRY

Limited Admission



# APOCALYPTIC CINEMA

**24  
06** **REY NILES ATALLAH**

2017, OV Spanish and Mapudungun with English subtitles  
Scientific commentary: Niles Atallah, Director and Robert Folger, CAPAS

**01  
07** **SOYLENT GREEN** RICHARD FLEISCHER

1973, PG: 16, OV English with German subtitles  
Scientific commentary: Maya Dietrich, Medienforum Heidelberg e.V. and Philipp Schrögel, CAPAS

**08  
07** **I AM MOTHER** GRANT SPATORE

2019, PG: 12, OV English with German subtitles  
Scientific commentary: Ullrich Köthe, Faculty of Mathematics and Computer Science, Heidelberg University

**29  
07** **DIE WOLKE** GREGOR SCHNITZLER

2006, PG: 12, OV German with English subtitles  
Scientific commentary: Fank Uekötter, CAPAS Fellow, University of Birmingham

[www.capas.uni-heidelberg.de](http://www.capas.uni-heidelberg.de)

SPONSORED BY THE



Federal Ministry  
of Education  
and Research

#ART  
APOCALYPSE

# CAPAS AT METROPOLINK

## TRANSFORMATION, METAMORPHOSIS, AND UTOPIA

Graffiti and street art have been creative nuclei of major metropolises for decades. They bring our cities to life. The Metropolink Festival in Heidelberg offers one of Germany's largest venues for street art on 4000 square metres of indoor and outdoor space. With numerous murals by internationally and nationally renowned artists, the festival is a melting pot of urban art and a place for creative experiments, workshops and light shows.

© DNA Creative Collective

During the festival, Mexican artist SANER will create a mural at Julius-Springer-Schule in Heidelberg. Here, his study for “a bolt of lightning”, 2022, artist collection.

The arts are a central part of our research interest. Art has a double importance, since it both expresses and shapes a particular cultural imaginary about ends of worlds. This can mean transmitting and strengthening, but also questioning, contesting, and reimagining what (post-)apocalypse means. So, we were delighted when CAPAS-fellow Adolfo Mantilla approached us with the idea of cooperating with Mexican artist SANER. Implementing this idea at Metropolink seemed natural, since they have a great impact on the urban landscape of Heidelberg – we really value the work they do! Collaborating with Metropolink also connects with our goal of making research accessible to a broader public and engaging in an open discussion on what can be seen as an apocalypse and how differently people may be affected depending on their situation. Potentially apocalyptic threats like climate change, pandemics, and war do affect us globally, but also have specific local consequences. Listening to

and engaging with our local context while pursuing research on a global scale is part of our understanding of the role of science in society. Metropolink is the perfect place to do that; even more so since the festival has made Transformation, Metamorphosis, and Utopia central topics for this year.

During the festival, Mexican artist SANER will create a mural at Julius-Springer-Schule in Heidelberg, which will remain part of the city for the upcoming years. At the festival we'll engage the public through various formats. For example, we invite the public to participate in our creative information point and write down their perception on apocalypse and utopia. There will also be several possibilities to discuss CAPAS research topics with us and our fellows. On Sunday, the author of the children's book 'Die besten Weltuntergänge' reads and gives a workshop for children above the age of four. During our “Apocalyptic Cinema” event, we will show Mel Gibson's *Apocalypto* (2006) and discuss controversies.

We are really excited and thankful to be part of Metropolink 2022 and are looking forward to seeing you there! ●



# CAPAS AT METROPOLINK

## OUR PROGRAM

© Metropolink

🕒 28.07.–07.08. 📍 Julius-Springer-Schule Heidelberg  
**CREATION MURAL SANER**

🕒 28.07.–07.08. 📍 Metropolink Festival – Patrick Henry Village  
**CREATIVE INFO-POINT WITH PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

What is your apocalypse? What is your utopia?

**EXHIBITION AND CREATION PROCESS TO THE ARTWORKS OF SANER**

**WORKSHOP WITH SANER** – time & date tba –

🕒 30.07. 📍 Metropolink Festival | Patrick Henry Village

**7.30 PM & 9.30 PM: DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES ON APOCALYPSE**

Short talks with CAPAS fellows Christine Hentschel and Bruna Della Torre

**8.30 PM: ARTIST TALK & INAUGURATION EXHIBITION WITH SANER**

🕒 31.07. | 3.00 PM 📍 Metropolink Festival | Patrick Henry Village

**INTERAKTIVE KINDERBUCHLESUNG "DIE BESTEN WELTUNTERGÄNGE"**

mit Autorin Andrea Paluch [De], Alter: 4+

🕒 04.08. | 9.00 PM 📍 Metropolink Festival | Patrick Henry Village

**APOCALYPTIC CINEMA OPEN-AIR: "APOCALYPTO" BY MEL GIBSON, 2006**

Scientific input and discussion with Robert Folger

🕒 05.08. | 7.30 PM & 9.30 PM 📍 Metropolink Festival | Patrick Henry Village

**DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES ON APOCALYPSE**

Short talks with CAPAS fellow Adolfo Mantilla and director Robert Folger

🕒 6.08. 📍 Julius-Springer-Schule Heidelberg

**ARTIST TALK & INAUGURATION WITH SANER** – time tba –

Full programme: <https://www.metropolink.art>

#FELLOWS  
APOCALYPSE

## IN THE SPOTLIGHT

# FRANK UEKOTTER

**What does the apocalypse mean for you?**

**Frank Uekotter:** I see the apocalypse as a figment of the imagination. There are many apocalyptic tropes, but they all have a tendency to stifle debates. Apocalyptic scenarios have a remarkable ability to shock-frost debates that should be held in an open manner, with clarity about arguments, knowledge, and underlying interests. It would be great if we could overcome apocalyptic thinking, but that seems unlikely: the apocalypse has deep roots in the intellectual household of the Western mind. But maybe we can work towards a more sophisticated and critical understanding.



**Frank Uekotter** is professor of Environmental Humanities at the Department of History of the University of Birmingham. His research focuses on environmental issues, both past and present, in a global context.

**What is your fellowship trying to achieve?**

My fellowship deals with the global history of food, where the toll of apo-

calyptic thinking is particularly glaring. Malthusian scenarios are a classic *carte blanche* for the modern food industry. Who would want to ask critical questions about agrobusiness if it is the only thing that stands between us and mass starvation? Of course, the rational response would be to ask critical questions about a crucial industry, but that is not the stance that the apocalypse commands.

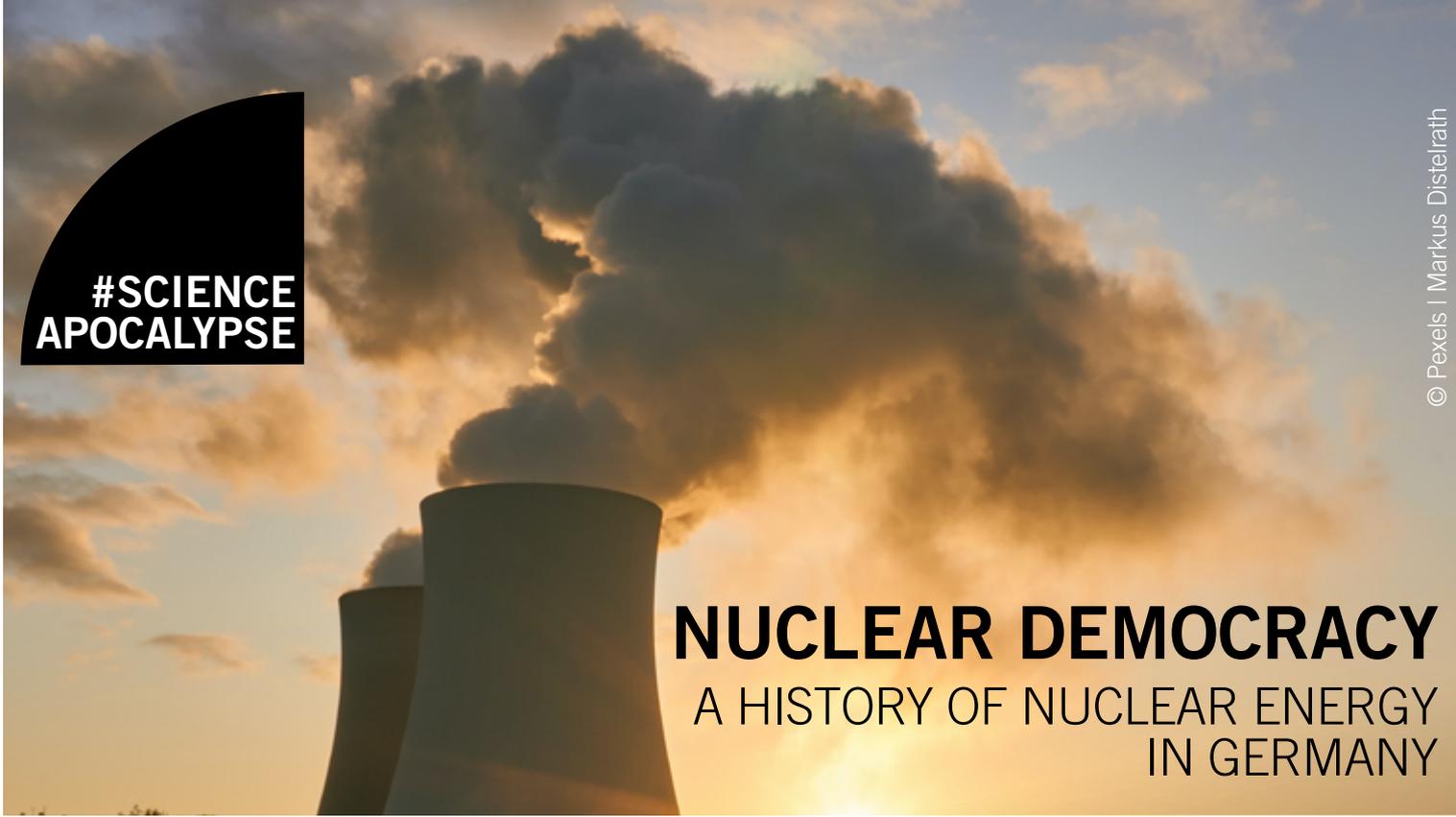
**What would be the three things you would definitely need in a post-apocalyptic world?**

Truthfulness, transparency, accountability – because these are some of the essentials for open communication on the challenges of our time. Apocalyptic tropes do not survive long in the glaring light of a critical enlightened public.

**What are some of your favourite pop culture references to the/an (post)apocalypse?**

It's not a favorite in the classic sense of the word, but the Ride of the Valkyries scene in "Apocalypse Now" does a nice job bringing out the absurdity – or shall I say obscenity? – of the concept. It should have been enough to render it obsolete, but the apocalypse has survived greater guns. In fact, it can be disproven without being discredited. Like it or not, we may need to live with apocalyptic tropes for the foreseeable future. But that makes it even more important to get a grip on them, intellectually speaking.

●●● [read more](#)



#SCIENCE  
APOCALYPSE

© Pexels | Markus Distelrath

# NUCLEAR DEMOCRACY

## A HISTORY OF NUCLEAR ENERGY IN GERMANY

**The economic miracle gave rise to nuclear energy in the German Federal Republic. In the 1970s, it moved to the center of a public controversy in which the major issues of an open society were negotiated: The meaning and legitimacy of protest, the role of the media, the power of large corporations, political control, and the consumer citizen's claim on cheap energy.**

In his new book "Atomare Demokratie – Eine Geschichte der Kernenergie in Deutschland" (Nuclear Democracy – A History of Nuclear Energy in Germany), Frank Uekötter traces the development of nuclear energy from its beginnings to the present and shows how the controversies surrounding nuclear energy triggered learning processes in society, politics and, ultimately, the nuclear industry itself. The nuclear phaseout, which Germany will seal with the shutdown of the last nuclear power plants at the end of 2022, appears here as the final chapter of a cross-generational experiment that deserves attention in view of the energy transition, but also against the backdrop of the current crisis of democracy.

Frank Uekötter is a lecturer in 19th and 20th century history at the University of Birmingham. His work focuses on environmental and agricultural history, the history of science and technology, and environmental studies in the humanities. He is also an affiliated researcher at the Käte Hamburger Centre for Apocalyptic and Post-Apocalyptic Studies (CAPAS). ●

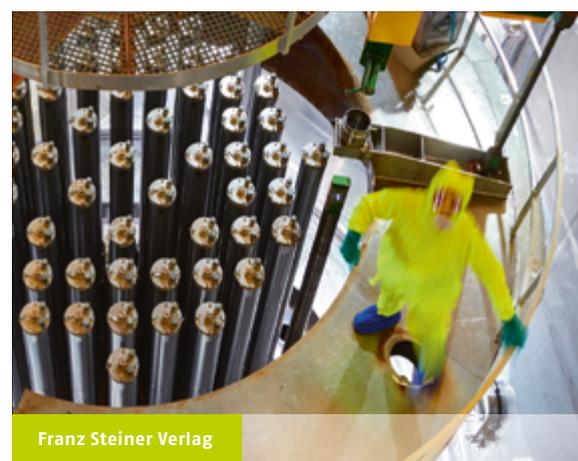
**Nuclear Democracy –  
A History of Nuclear  
Energy in Germany**  
FRANK UEKÖTTER

**Publisher:**  
Franz Steiner Verlag

**Number of pages:**  
380

**Year of publication:**  
2022

**ISBN:**  
978-3-515-13257-2



FRANK UEKÖTTER

## Atomare Demokratie

*Eine Geschichte der Kernenergie  
in Deutschland*

#CALL  
FOR PAPERS

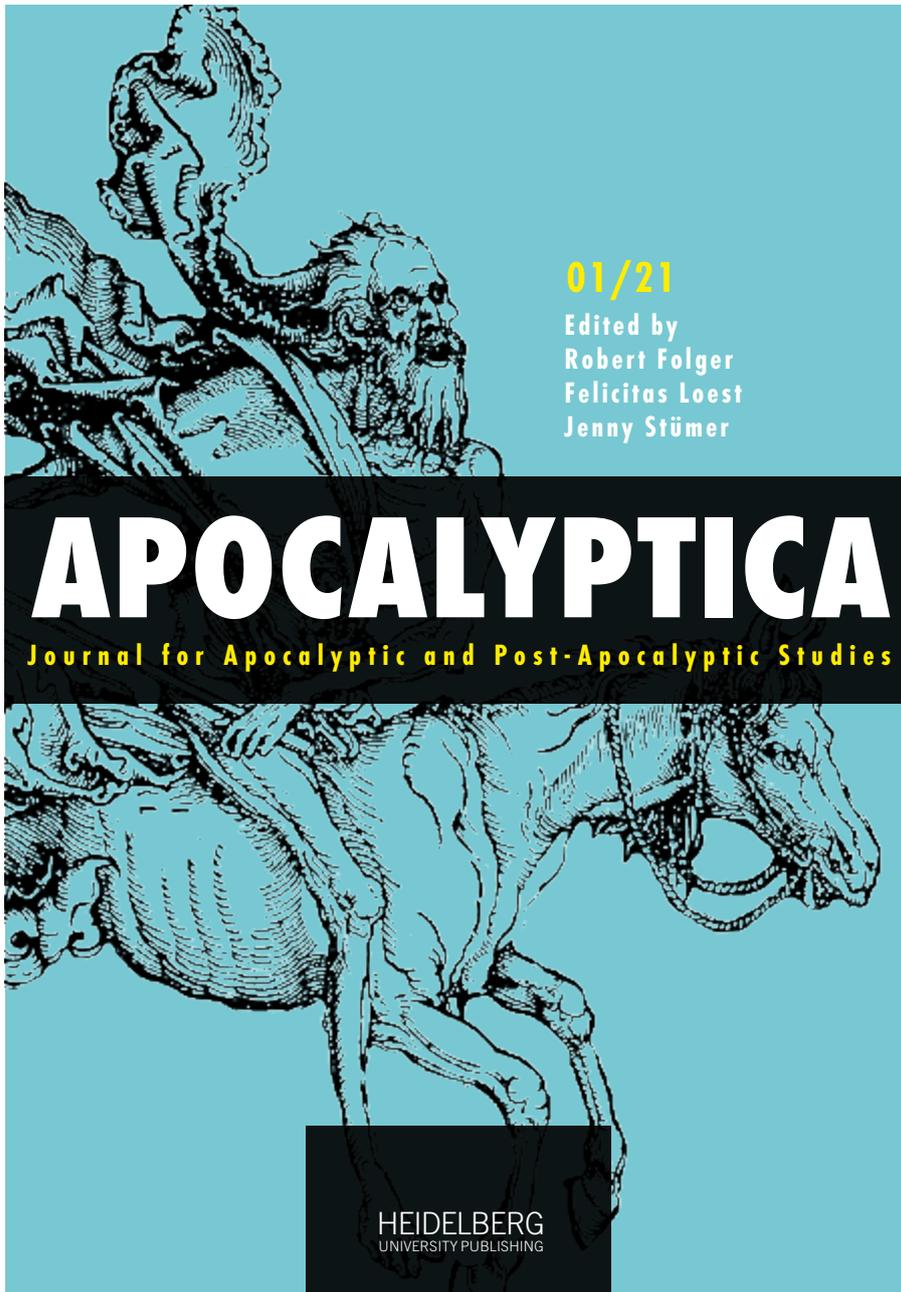
# CALL FOR PAPERS *APOCALYPTICA*

## THINKING WITH THE END(S) OF WORLDS

*Apocalyptic* is an international, interdisciplinary, open-access, double-blind peer-reviewed academic journal published by CAPAS. The journal uncovers the apocalypse as a figure of thought (a practice, relationship, form, experience, aesthetic, or theme) in order to grapple with the cultural politics of disaster, catastrophe, and the (up)ending of worlds.

**Editors:** Robert Folger, Felicitas Loest and Jenny Stümer

We seek contributions that explore what it means to think with, against, and beyond the apocalypse today. What movements, politics, ideas, geographies, sensibilities, stories, and images might be considered (post)apocalyptic or invoke debates and feelings about the end of the/a world? How do apocalypses entangle temporalities of past, present, and future? How do crisis and catastrophe shape human and non-human actors and their relationships? What are we to make of the concepts of 'world', 'worlds' and 'worlding'; or indeed, 'the end' and its 'aftermath(s)'? And, how does the apocalypse as an idea help us to address escalating global as well as local challenges which (also) articulate the promise of diverse futures and (perhaps) more just, political compositions, alternative collectivities, and fuller relationships with each other and the world? ●



## SUBMISSIONS

Please submit your article (**8,000-9,000 words**) including abstract (**250 words**) and bibliography) to: [publications@capas.uni-heidelberg.de](mailto:publications@capas.uni-heidelberg.de)

- > [More information about \*Apocalyptic\*](#)
- > [Call for Papers online](#)

HEIDELBERG  
UNIVERSITY PUBLISHING

# CALL FOR PAPERS *APOCALYPTICA*

## SPECIAL ISSUE: NUCLEAR GHOSTS

#CALL  
FOR PAPERS

Karen Barad, Gabriele Schwab, and Elaine Scarry have long warned about the silencing of (anti) nuclear debates, theorizing the unfinished business of nuclear disaster. In this sense, the pressing forward of nuclear apprehensions in recent years is symptomatic of what Avery Gordon identifies as “ghostly matters” or a particular idea of haunting that allows us to “think through repressed forms of violence that bring ‘something to be done’ in the present.” In this special issue, we summon these formations of nuclear ghosts to explore the return of the (repressed) nuclear ethos in popular culture, literature, art, politics, poetry, and philosophy.

Nuclear ghosts conjure up a critical moment or point of creative anxiety that exposes the cracks in repressive infrastructures of denial. They draw attention to the onto-epistemological ruptures and limits of the nuclear project, while illuminating the political and sociocultural pressure points of the deeply racialized and gendered genealogies of nuclear threat. The ghosts we seek in this issue articulate the entanglements between nuclear violence and the ongoing assaults of colonialism, sexism, war, environmental destruction, etc. They trouble dominant notions of temporality, space, and materiality, paying witness to post/human atrocities.

Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Chernobyl, and Fukushima mark defining moments in nuclear history, producing eerie points of reference to spectacular extinction. At the same time, the slow violence of nuclear toxicity mediates the cataclysmic endurance of colonialization, primarily targeting indigenous peoples in the Marshall Islands, French Polynesia, Australia, Newe Sogobia, Hawaii, New Mexico, etc.

We are interested in contributions that face up to these nuclear hauntings, engaging the entanglements between political violence

and nuclear annihilation as tethered to specific modes of (Western) domination. What are the cultural politics of nuclear haunting? How do ghosts invoke the gendered and raced violence of nuclear trauma? When and why do nuclear repressions seize to work? How do nuclear politics reconceptualize notions of temporality and materiality? Under what conditions do nuclear ghosts invite (collective) actions or meaningful narratives about life and death? What does the nuclear imaginary tell us about past, present, and future endings of the world/s? ●

## SUBMISSIONS

Please send your abstract (**250 words**) and a short biographical note (**50 words**) to [publications@capas.uni-heidelberg.de](mailto:publications@capas.uni-heidelberg.de) by **Tuesday, 9 August 2022**. Full papers (**8,000-9,000 words**) are due **1 November 2022**.

- > [More information about \*Apocalyptic\*](#)
- > [Call for Papers online](#)

Header Image: The "Baker" explosion at Bikini Atoll, Micronesia, on 25 July 1946. Source: United States Department of Defense. Digitally altered version: Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

# IMAGINING THE END-TIMES

## NARRATIVES OF THE END OF A WORLD IN THE MEXICAN IMAGINARIES by Adolfo Mantilla Osornio

**The National Museum of Anthropology (Museo Nacional de Antropología) in Mexico City hosts the world's largest collection of ancient Mexican art. While Mexican cultures are the focus of its permanent exhibition halls, international exhibitions related to anthropology are featured as well. Next year, the result of a collaboration with CAPAS at Heidelberg University, developed by CAPAS fellow Dr. Adolfo Felipe Mantilla Osornio, will be presented here: an exhibition regarding the narratives and representations of the end of a world in Mexican imaginaries.**

Throughout centuries, cultures have envisioned the end-beginning of a world in many different ways. Thus, the multi-

faceted character of these expressions will be examined as a way of exploring eschatological and axiological narratives. Providing an overview of different collapsing experiences, the project will explore the complexity of the Mexican cultural context and the different ways in which narratives of the end of a World express connections between verbal and visual representations.

Currently, the term Anthropocene – coined in the 1980s, then popularized in 2000 by Paul J. Crutzen and Eugene F. Stoermer – suggests that the most recent geological epoch is marked by our species' significant impact on the Earth and its inhabitants. Considering this narrative, and using a transdisci-

plinary research approach, one aim of this collaboration is to investigate the idea of extinction as a trans-cultural and trans-historical topic. Looking at the relationship between the order of time and the eschatological and axiological order of the world, the project attempts to provide an understanding of cosmopolitics, while also exploring the interplay of eschatology and

#ART  
APOCALYPSE

Model of City of Tenochtitlan with Mural Backdrop.

Image: Courtesy of the secretary of culture, the National Museum of Anthropology, Mexico.





All images: Courtesy of the secretary of culture, the National Museum of Anthropology, Mexico.

The National Museum of Anthropology contains significant archaeological and anthropological artifacts from Mexico's pre-Columbian heritage such as the sculpture of an Ocelotl-Cuahxicalli and the 22-ton Aztec "Sun Stone" (see below).



science. Among several representations of ending – of life, epochs, the world, and the universe – this exhibition will concentrate simultaneously on the social and cultural aspects of apocalyptic dimensions.

Since 2020, when Covid-19 broke out globally, different narratives on the massive effects of highly infectious diseases have emerged. The selection of around one hundred featured artworks offers an overview of the present day post-apocalyptic imaginaries in Mexican culture and the critical and theoretical responses to end-time scenarios in the Mexican cultural production.

Hence, the exhibition tries to shape a comprehensive space for examining catastrophic imaginaries in their cultural and axiological dimensions. On this idea, the exhibition *Imagining the end-times. Narratives of the end of a world in the Mexican imaginaries* at National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City will try to contribute to topical debates on potential ecological and social breakdown, itself being a platform for reflection and analysis that helps strengthen societal and political resilience to end-of-life scenarios of all kinds. ●





# INTRODUCING CAPAS SCIENCE COMMUNICATION

**Who are the people working at CAPAS? What are their backgrounds, interests and areas of expertise? Last but not least, we introduce the CAPAS Science Communication Team.**

The creative heart and driving force of CAPAS' Science Communication Team is research area coordinator [Philipp Schrögel](#). His qualifications are as varied as his interests in science communication. After receiving a Diploma in physics from the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg he went to Harvard University as a McCloy fellow, where he earned a Master's in Public Policy (MPP). In addition to working as a freelancer and consultant in the field of science communication, he subsequently held a position as a research associate at the Department for Science Communication at the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT). His approach

to science communication is determined by dialogue and participation and creative forms of science communication. Examples are combinations of art and science, science comics, science gaming / serious gaming and science street art.

*ter Heidelberg* before joining CAPAS. Here, she took on the cooperation with the creative scene by implementing formats such as the "Apocalyptic Cinema," one of CAPAS's continuous outreach activities. Eva earned a bachelor's degree in International Relations and International Organization from University of Groningen, and obtained the Marco Polo Grant to study at Pontificia Universidad Javeriana. Further, she received the Erasmus Mundus international joint degree Master of Excellence in "Euroculture: Society, Politics and Culture in a Global Context" from University of Deusto, Uppsala Universitet, and Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. Her research interests focus on end-time narratives in performative arts, and geopolitical discourse on climate change.

Manifesting the activities of CAPAS in print and media is the focus of [Ute von Figura's](#)

work. For example, she is responsible for editing and designing the newsletter you are currently reading. She also supports the team with her many years of experien-



**The Science Communication Team: Philipp Schrögel, Eva-Maria Bergdolt and Ute von Figura**

ce within the structures of science communication at Heidelberg University where she has been working for over ten years. Ute holds a Master's in media and communication science of the University of Göttingen. While she doesn't conduct research on the (post-)apocalypse like many of the staff at CAPAS, she is actively involved in environmental protection and regularly runs workshops on the subject with elementary and high school students. ●

Predestined for driving forward and connecting projects with creative minds is [Eva-Maria Bergdolt](#), who worked as international production manager at *Theater und Orches-*

#PUBLIC  
APOCALYPSE

# THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE

## DOOMSDAY WITH BRITISH HUMOR

In the face of catastrophic images from war zones around the world or the latest environmental disaster, would you also sometimes like to bury your head in the sand? If so, we recommend reading a book instead! Best: “The Zombie Apocalypse”, a delightful little volume in a series of Ladybird books specially planned to help grown-ups in dealing with the world around them.

With a good amount of irony, cynicism and black humor, the authors Jason A. Hazeley and Joel P. Morris devote themselves to a world invaded by zombies, grandiosely illustrated by a team of 12 artists. Using typical clichés about zombies and some pop culture references, they paint a vivid and satirical picture of what a zombie apocalypse would be like. The large clear script, simple language, frequent repetitions and thoughtful matching of text with pictures all enable grown-ups to think they have taught themselves to cope.

“When there is no more room in Hell, the dead will walk the earth. But there are still lots of interesting things you can do.” This opening statement sets the tone of the whole book. There’s a polite optimism about the end of times, as well as educational discussions about the nature of



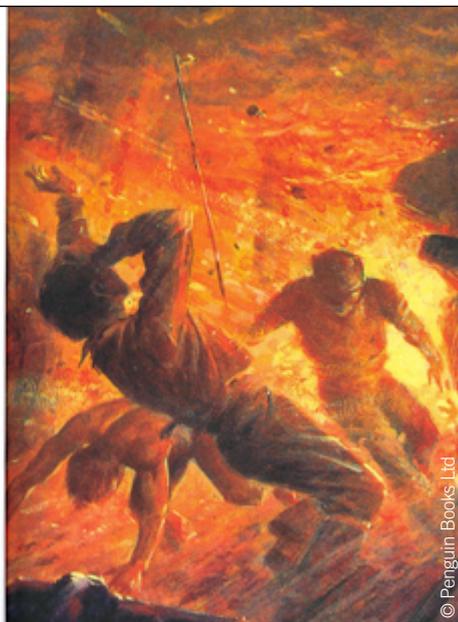
© Penguin Books Ltd

zombies. Personally, my favorite scenario, despite or maybe because of its brutality is: “Len gathers a group of fellow survivors together. He would defend them with his life, ‘We are like a family’, says Len proudly. Len never talked to his real family much before the world ended, which made it easier to bludgeon his slaving mother to a pulp yesterday with a tent mallet.” To put it shortly: A quick and hilarious read if you like British humor, with amusing illustrations! ●

Lara has constructed her own home-made flame-thrower.

The flame-thrower has turned the walking corpses into burning walking corpses. Now everything they touch catches fire.

“This did not happen with the cricket bat,” thinks Lara.



© Penguin Books Ltd

### THE LADYBIRD BOOK OF THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE

JASON A. HAZELEY & JOEL P. MORRIS

**Publisher:** Penguin Books Ltd

**Number of pages:** 56

**Year of publication:** 2016

**ISBN:** 9780718184452

#PUBLIC  
APOCALYPSE

# SOYLENT GREEN

A PRESENT THAT COULD HAVE BEEN?

Imagine the city of New York having 40 million inhabitants, most of them are out of work. People are sleeping on stairs, in hallways and in improvised shelters everywhere. The last remaining trees in the city need to be conserved in a small greenhouse, protected from the unhealthy air and hot climate. For all but a small wealthy elite, there is only artificial processed food to eat: Soylent Red and Soylent Yellow. Until a new variant – Soylent Green. Marketed as superfood from plankton – comes on the market, which everyone wants to have. It is police officer Thorn, who is confronted with the truth about the Soylent Company during a murder investigation.

What sounds like a dystopian future is closer to the present than one might think. Or rather to a fictional present: it is a cinematic dystopian future – set in the year 2022 – from the past, specifically from when the movie *Soylent Green* was produced in 1973.

This timely coincidence made it an interesting choice for discussions with school students during the [Schulkinowochen Baden-Württemberg](#) and Hesse (cinema weeks for schools) as well as for a screening with discussion as part of the CAPAS open air cinema.

Students discussed the movie *Soylent Green* during the Schulkinowochen Baden-Württemberg.

We are especially glad that for two events with students, one in Frankfurt with the [DFE film museum](#) and one in Heidelberg

together with [Karlstorkino](#), we could talk with classes from vocational schools and not the typical academic audiences.

The main topic of the discussion was the fictional imagination for the year 2022, which was still 50 years in the future back then. The world in the film is characterized by the drastic consequences of climate change, overpopulation, social inequality and food shortages. What makes this particularly interesting to discuss is that the film was released just one year after the influential 1972 report [The Limits to Growth](#) by the Club of Rome and is one of the first ecodystopias. The report can be seen as an important early modern warning against the economic growth paradigm and impending ecological catastrophe, but it was also met at its time with criticism of exaggeration and doomsaying.

To better understand the perspectives of the movie it is important to look at its time. Only a few years earlier, the topic of overpo-



An important early documentation of the looming ecological catastrophe: the [Documerica Project](#), which collected images of environmental problems in the 1970s. Shown here: Burning Discarded Automobile Batteries, 07/1972  
Source: The U.S. National Archives.

population rose on top of the public agenda. Paul Ehrlich's book "[The population Bomb](#)" made dire predictions and triggered a wave of repression around the world. Awareness for urgent environmental problems was raised by [Rachel Carson's Silent Spring](#) starting public and political discussions about the protection of the environment in den United States. After yet another deadly fire of the infamous burning river Cuyahoga in Cleveland, Ohio, [the Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\) was established](#). On a side note, this newly established agency set up a project that provides us with fascinating visual impressions from this time. To document the situation, the EPA initiated their [Documerica Project](#) (1971-1977) and hired freelance photographers to capture images relating to environmental problems, EPA activities, and everyday life in the 1970s.

Looking back at the 50 years since the first publication of the Limits to Growth, some of the criticism seems warranted and assumed predictions did not come true, while other aspects worryingly played out as assumed. For example, industrial output still increasing (at least globally), the global food production collapse did not happen (yet – and for example the implications of the Russian invasion in Ukraine are showing the vulnerability of global grain supply right at the moment), specific run-

out dates of resources were misjudged and overall pollution was reduced on many occasions (although again very unevenly addressed in global comparison). Intriguingly, climate change did not play a role in the initial report at all. And as we see with current political and environmental developments, the approaching problems are growing bigger and bigger with little effective countermeasures being in sight.

And the assumed challenge of population growth – whit all its associated problems of racism and global classism – which also did not play out as modelled in the Limits to Growth yet will also be severely impacted when one considers the uneven global distribution of climate change impact and the potential role that [climate change induced forced migration](#) might play in the future.

But it is important to note that the 1972 report did not make simplistic claims about the future, but rather presented a variety of scenarios based on different assumptions as is the standard today in foresight and future studies. The discussion on model quality, interpretation of results and right and wrong assumptions continued since then, but also the Club or Rome added updates and commentaries last on the [50-year anniversary of the publication](#). ●

## IMPRINT

### Publisher

CAPAS  
Käte Hamburger Centre  
for Apocalyptic and Post-  
Apocalyptic Studies

### Editors

Eva Bergdolt  
Michael Dunn  
Ute von Figura  
Philipp Schrögel  
Alina Straub

### Layout

etgrafik, Heidelberg

The CAPAS-Newsletter  
is available online at:  
[www.capas.uni-heidelberg.de/newsletter.html](http://www.capas.uni-heidelberg.de/newsletter.html)

SPONSORED BY THE



Federal Ministry  
of Education  
and Research