

Symposium How to Cope with Apocalyptic Narratives?

jointly organized by
the Physics Education Division (DD),
the History of Physics Division (GP), and
the Environmental Physics Division (UP)

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Scientific results require communication, especially when they call for social action and have political consequences. In the past decades, there have been many challenges and crises concerning the treatment of our natural environment. To communicate these scientific results, different narratives have been used to convey our message to both policymakers and the general public. In this symposium, we want to explore exemplarily the kind of stories and narratives that have been told over the past decades each time scientists observed, analyzed, and modeled environmental pollution and destruction. From the different perspectives of environmental, historical, educational, and journalistic positions, we will discuss narratives ranging from empowerment to apocalyptic scenarios, their impact on our communication and action, and what we can learn from these examples about the correlation between narratives and our readiness to act.

Overview of Invited Talks and Sessions

(Lecture hall ELP 6: HS 4)

Invited Talks

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| SYAN 1.1 | Mon | 14:00–14:40 | ELP 6: HS 4 | The Apocalyptic Moment Is Over - And It Won't Come Back Anytime Soon — ●FRANK UEKOETTER |
| SYAN 1.2 | Mon | 14:40–15:20 | ELP 6: HS 4 | Shaping Cold War Futures through the Nuclear Winter Study: Narratives, Imaginaries and Legitimacy — ●EGLE RINDZEVICIUTE |
| SYAN 1.3 | Mon | 15:20–16:00 | ELP 6: HS 4 | The Role of Storytelling in Climate Communication — ●DENISE MÜLLER-DUM |

Sessions

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|--------------|-----|-------------|-------------|---|
| SYAN 1.1–1.3 | Mon | 14:00–16:00 | ELP 6: HS 4 | How to Cope with Apocalyptic Narratives? |
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SYAN 1: How to Cope with Apocalyptic Narratives?

Time: Monday 14:00–16:00

Location: ELP 6: HS 4

Invited Talk SYAN 1.1 Mon 14:00 ELP 6: HS 4
The Apocalyptic Moment Is Over - And It Won't Come Back Anytime Soon — ●FRANK UEKOETTER — Lehrstuhl für Technik- und Umweltgeschichte, Ruhr-Universität Bochum, 44780 Bochum, Germany

The presentation offers an overview of apocalyptic tropes in Western environmental rhetoric since the 1950s. Taking a transnational big-picture approach, it reviews the proliferation of horror scenarios, the driving forces (no, it was not the environmentalists), the political potential, and the gradual decline in the political potency of horror scenarios since the 1980s. In recent decades, apocalyptic rhetoric became something of a default language of environmental discourse. But maybe that was only for lack of something better?

Invited Talk SYAN 1.2 Mon 14:40 ELP 6: HS 4
Shaping Cold War Futures through the Nuclear Winter Study: Narratives, Imaginaries and Legitimacy — ●EGLE RINDZEVICIUTE — Kingston University, London, United Kingdom

This talk explores the narratives and imaginaries that were produced by the East and West scientists engaged in the computer simulation of

the environmental effects of nuclear war (1982-1990s). It reflects on the spatialities, temporalities and agencies that were attributed to human and non-human actors. Whereas this modelling exercise was heuristic, it was deployed as part of political argumentation calling for nuclear disarmament and arms control. This raises important questions of the public perception of computer modelling, scientific prediction and performativity of scientific knowledge.

Invited Talk SYAN 1.3 Mon 15:20 ELP 6: HS 4
The Role of Storytelling in Climate Communication — ●DENISE MÜLLER-DUM — Agentur für Wissenschaftskommunikation Dr. Jens Kube (awk/jk), Obernstraße 76, 28195 Bremen

Climate change has already begun to impact our daily lives, and yet it is perceived as abstract and too complex. Reducing its complexity to tangible bits and pieces is vital to achieving a cognitive and emotional understanding of what's happening to our planet. In this context, storytelling can serve as an instrument to enable understanding, allow different perspectives, evoke empathy and inspire action * for children and adults. I will discuss its merits and challenges and show examples from my own work as an author as well as from others.