

What will our near climate future look like? «The Ministry for the Future», a bestselling science fiction novel by Kim Stanley Robinson is set in a near future, that, in many ways, has already caught up with us. It tells the story of various attempts to mitigate the severe effects of climate change, carried out by a fictional UN institution founded 2025 in Zurich. Science and fact based, the book still dares to be hopeful.

Theater Neumarkt and Collegium Helveticum take this fictional foundation as an inspiration and opportunity to discuss burning questions of climate change in the context of scenarios that can be expected for the year 2034. In the spirit of the novel, they bring together real science and experts in a fictional future setting in different spaces across town.

A four-part live series between science and art, theatre, and discussion.

### In English language

#### Episode 1: Geoengineering

February 14, 7 p.m., ETH Hönggerberg

#### Episode 2: Extinction

March 28, 7 p.m., Tramstation Central

#### Episode 3: Nomadism

April 11, 7 p.m., Rathausbrücke

#### Episode 4: Foundation

April 25, 7 p.m., Semper Sternwarte

With Sascha Ö. Soydan, Ensemble, and Experts **Concept** Yael Borofsky, Georgia Drew, Charlotte Müller, Eneas N. Prawdzic, Julia Reichert, Sascha Ö. Soydan, Linus Truninger, and Mario Wimmer **Production Design** Birke Beyer, Bettina Bessenyei, Juhee Han, Emily Hugger, Luca Ihns, Josephine Leicht, Ewa Wasilewska, Verena Zenker, and students of the HfG Karlsruhe (lead by Prof. Constanze Fischbeck) **Dramaturgy** Julia Reichert and Eneas N. Prawdzic (Proberaum Zukunft) **Production Assistance** Linus Truninger

Collegium Helveticum Staatliche Hochschule für Gestaltung Karlsruhe Karlsruhe University of Arts and Design zukunft

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february 14, march 28, april 11, and april 25

### What happened so far...

In 2025, it would have been nearly unthinkable. Just under ten years after its founding, the Ministry for the Future, based in Zurich, has managed to unite a global political mandate, high-level expertise, resources, and public support. Now, nothing is meant to remain as it was: politically, economically, socially. Early successes are in sight, but the turning point is still a long way off.

The «Terrible Twenties» initially led to the worst possible assumptions: the pandemic and social media combined into a highly toxic mix of misinformation and scientific skepticism, alongside political polarization and the collapse of the serious media landscape. This triggered a resurgence of neo-fascist forces across all continents. Geopolitical conflicts escalated everywhere. Capital no longer disguised its contempt for democracy, while political power shifts rolled back even the most inadequate climate change measures. Meanwhile, one extreme weather event followed another, with devastating consequences: ice storms in the north, storm surges on the coasts, floods and heatwaves on the continents. And while (not only) Los Angeles burned, German fascists declared war on windmills...

But with the massive environmental disasters came resistance and a shift in thinking. First, India turned, and then other countries followed. In the midst of it all: the head of the Ministry for the Future, who energetically and strategically forged international climate alliances. By the end of the 2020s, the term «Green Turn» began to circulate, signaling the final shift toward sustainable economic practices. Yet the challenge remains enormous. It's the year 2034. Temperatures continue to rise and net zero is still a distant goal.

It is 5 past 12, but now the international community is willing to act.

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Your name has been randomly selected for Service Citoyen:ne Au Climat with the Ministry for the Future at one of four possible locations, on four possible dates: 14.2.34; 28.3.34 or 11.4.34 or 28.4.25. You are required to respond to this notice through the volunteer portal at



Selected for Service Citoyen:ne you will be on active duty for the length of the hearing you are selected for. Most hearings take between 2 and 3 hours. If you are unable to reply using the Volunteer Portal please text for additional information.

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# Ministry for the Future

A collaboration with the Collegium Helveticum – inspired by Kim Stanley Robinson



Four episodes, four different locations in the city, one story of a future that might be ours. Between science and art this project follows the inspiration of the novel. Remarkable scientists, both renown and of a new generation, let science fiction serve as an inspiration to think ahead.

## Episode 1

### Geoengineering

With Prof. Thomas Stocker, Prof. Dr. Claudia Mohr, and Dr. Sandro Vattioni



When February 14, 7 p.m. Where ETH Hönggerberg, meeting point at bus station (direction Triemli, Milchbuck) Duration Approx. 2h

With temperatures rising, geoengineering has been both condemned and hailed as a possible solution. By releasing aerosols into the atmosphere temperatures dropped. However, the deployment of these technologies has also ignited tensions between neighboring states, as phenomena like acid rain, floods, and droughts are increasingly attributed to human intervention in the atmosphere.

In this episode, the Ministry for the Future undertakes the critical task of organizing an international conference on geoengineering. To lay the groundwork, Yram convenes a hearing at ETH Hönggerberg with prominent scientists and members of the Service Citoyen:ne: Prof. Thomas Stocker, climate physicist and key member of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC); Prof. Claudia Mohr, head of the Atmospheric Chemistry Laboratory at the Paul Scherrer Institute and a leading expert in aerosol chemistry; and Dr. Sandro Vattioni, a scientist at ETH specialized in the climatic impacts of stratospheric solar climate intervention. With them, the «Ministry for the Future» evaluates the opportunities, weighs the risks, and outlines steps toward a globally agreed-upon framework for action.

## Episode 2

### Extinction

With Dr. Dennis Hansen (UZH Natural History Museum), Marionna Schlatter (Mushroom Inspector, and Vice-President of the Green Party Switzerland), and other guests



When March 28, 7 pm Where Central, in front of the Polybahn station next to the fountain Duration Approx. 2h

We join underground networks, both social and biological. The Ministry achieved important successes, but political tensions between the carbon lobby and eco-activists still escalate around the central question: Which ends justify which means? Minister Yram ends up in the middle of it all. But the true protagonist is the 2nd largest carbon recycler and great ally against the climate crisis: Mycorrhizal fungal networks.

What does it mean to lose a species? The minister calls for a basic orientation. Of all the worrisome developments related to climate change, biodiversity loss is by far the most irreversible. Therefore, protection should be non-negotiable. But not every species has the same lobby. Charismatic megafauna and overground life have caught the public attention in the last century and conservation efforts were mobilized. But what about the hidden agents? How do we protect what we don't see, and still hardly know?

Some call them the coral reefs of the soil, others speak of underground rainforests: Soil and the mycorrhizal fungal networks within contain unimaginable biodiversity, in fascinating systemic collaboration with entire ecosystems. Plants feed the fungal networks carbon in exchange for other nutrients—making the mycorrhizal networks central carbon recyclers. But fractures in the fungi are appearing. Farming practices, habitat destruction, extreme temperature: All threaten mass underground extinctions.

Do fungi have a lobby, and if not: do they need one? What about Algae? Bacteria? What can politics do for fungi? Must we rethink farming and develop a new agroecology? Should forests be engineered—or even put on life support? What if fungi are granted the same conservation status as animals?

A hearing on behalf of invisible and unknown diversity.

## Episode 3

### Nomadism

With Dr. Federica Remondi, Dr. Yan Freihardt, Dr. David Kostenwein, and Sascha Ö. Soydan



When April 11, 7 p.m. Where Rathausbrücke Zürich Duration Approx. 2h

The Ministry addresses problems around the globe. But in this episode, the crisis unfolds right on its doorstep. In 2032 and 2033, Switzerland and much of the Alpine region were devastated by unprecedented 1,000-year floods. Hundreds of thousands were forced to evacuate their homes—including in Zurich. With such extreme events now appearing to be part of a new normal, the governments of the Alpine region have turned to the Ministry for the Future for guidance and consultation. How likely is another flood in 2034? Should flood risk maps determine where people are allowed to live? Could the future of residence in flood-prone areas involve seasonal migration, adopting a nomadic way of life? And if so, where should people relocate—to other parts of Switzerland, or to neighboring countries?

Among the speakers at the hearing are Dr. Federica Remondi, responsible for Swiss Re's global natural catastrophe risk assessment, in this role, she coordinates and mentors research activities and model developments in regards to hydro-meteorological extreme events, advancing Swiss Re's global flood models, Dr. David Kostenwein, coordinator of the Humanitarian Planning Hub at the Spatial Development and Urban Policy Research Group at ETH, and Dr. Yan Freihardt, a political scientist specializing in the effects of climate change on communities in Bangladesh. Additional experts will follow.

## Episode 4

### Foundation

With guests (announced soon on our website)



When April 25, 2025, 7 p.m. Where Collegium Helveticum/Semper Observatory Duration Approx. 2h

On January 20, 2025, just hours after Donald Trump's inauguration, he officially withdrew from the Paris Climate Agreement, the same international treaty that, in the fictional reality of the novel, leads to the foundation of a UN Agency on the very same year. Reality did not just catch up with science fiction, it has colonized it. The future we once knew has disappeared. Or has it?

With the last episode we return to the present, to a moment right before the potential foundation of a Ministry for the Future. This present is not what the book envisioned. But one doesn't need a time traveler to know: The second best time to act is now.

At the Collegium Helveticum, we bring together the experiences of the three previous episodes, activists, policy makers, entrepreneurs—and you. We will look back, ahead, and into the distance: What does it mean to take Robinson's vision seriously? Is an international institution even the right tool for the task? How can we take up the spade and break the ground for a Ministry for the Future?

✳ If you arrive late, please call the number 076 823 84 52