

International conference
**“Technological Optimism in 1970s and 1980s Popular Culture: Innovation,
Creativity, Prosperity, and Freedom”**
Mainz, 15-17 April 2026

Leibniz Institute of European History (IEG), Mainz
Concept and organisation: John C. Wood, Thorsten Wübbena

Day 1, 15.04.2026

13:30 *Arrival, Registration*

14:00 Johannes Paulmann: Welcoming words

14:10 John C. Wood, Thorsten Wübbena: Technological Optimism in 1970s and 1980s Popular Culture – an Introduction

Session I: Optimistic visions (chair: Constanze Buyken)

14:35 Introduction (chair)

14:45 Gloria Maritza Gómez Revuelta: “Orbital Ambitions. Techno-Optimism meets Public Skepticism in the 1970s U.S. Solar Power Satellite Program”

15:05 Discussion

15:20 Martin Schmitt: “Defying the pessimism: How visions of progress hibernated in digital technology after the boom”

15:40 Discussion

15:55 Sandra Meireis: “The Unprecedented Promises of High Tech Architecture”

16:15 Discussion

16:30 *Coffee break*

16:50 Steven Logan: “Technological Optimism in the life and work of Alvin Toffler”

17:10 Discussion

17:25 Constanze Buyken: Comment and session discussion

18:05 End of day 1



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Day 2, 16.04.2026

Session II: Computers and machines (chair: Cindarella Petz)

10:00 Introduction (chair)

10:10 Michael Piotrowski: "Neither Utopia nor Dystopia – The Everyday Reality of West German Home Computing in the 1980s"

10:30 Discussion

10:45 Lionel Obadia: "The thrill of technological wonder: Marvelous machines or dangerous robots?"

11:05 Discussion

11:20 *Coffee break*

11:40 Cindarella Petz: Comment and session discussion

12:00–14:00 *Lunch break*

14:00 Introduction (chair: Henning Jürgens)

14:10 Johann Meyer: "'Computer Pastors in the Technophobic Church': The West German 'Pastor & PC Association' as an Example of Clerical Enthusiasm for Technology"

14:30 Discussion

14:45 Henning Jürgens: Concluding discussion

15:00 *Coffee break*

Keynote lecture

16:15 Welcome and Introduction

16:30 Henry Keazor: „*The „Wonder of it All“-Syndrome? Science-Fiction between Techno-Optimism and Disenchantment in the 1970s and the 1980s*“

17:30 Reception

19:00 End of day 2



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3 Day, 17.04.2026

Session IV: Socialist optimism(s) (chair: Jared Warren)

09:00 Introduction (chair)

09:10 Ivan Sablin: "Explaining Cybercommunism: The Scientific-Technical Revolution in Soviet Popular Science Magazines"

09:30 Discussion

09:45 Vedran Duančić: "Techno-Optimism in Late Socialist Yugoslavia"

10:05 Discussion

10:20 *Coffee break*

10:40 Olha Norba: „Ambivalent Futures: Technological Optimism and its Discontents in Czechoslovak Science Fiction“

11:00 Discussion

11:15 Johann Pibert / Grigorii Golubev: „*The Adventures of Elektronik*: Soviet Techno-Optimism of the Late 1970s“

11:35 Discussion

11:50 Jarred Warren: Comment and session discussion

12:10 John C. Wood, Thorsten Wübbena: Closing remarks

12:30 End of the conference



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