

## Zero Narratives and threshold narratives

When communicating on climate goals, the underlying models of change are rather complex and not always intuitive. My poster addresses this problem in the transdisciplinary frame of narratology and history of ideas, by highlighting Twentieth-Century traditions of storytelling and alternative conceptualisations of epochal change. Typical zero narratives of the past are event-centred. This holds true for the military and political “zero hour” as well as for fictional variations such as in Agatha Christie’s *Towards Zero* (1944), where the story converges towards the vanishing point of the crime. The post WW2-years used a zero narrative to describe a total reset and loss of cultural baselines, either in fiction films such as Rossellini’s *Germania anno zero*, or anthropological essays such as Morin’s *L’an zero de l’Allemagne*. I argue that such event-centred narratives are hardly adequate to describe climate change and politics; this inadequacy shows in the difficulty of pinpointing the “Anthropocene” to a specific date and the subsequent divergences on this issue. However, Twentieth Century history of ideas also offers an alternative mindset, which is that of the threshold narrative. The philosopher Hans Blumenberg criticizes the tendency to identify “zero points” in history. Against the zero narratives, he defends the idea of an asymptotic limit, an invisible threshold between epochs. In *Aspekte der Epochenschwelle* (1976), he suggests that changes in history do not occur on specific dates or turning points. One can only notice that a threshold has been crossed, not where this threshold lies precisely. No single events are sufficient to indicate profound changes such that between one epoch and another. Blumenberg’s concept can not only lead to a new understanding of story analysis in narratology, but also provides a more adequate model for communicating climate goals such as that of a development “towards zero carbon and zero waste”.

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