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Inconspicuous Ecocide: Photographs of Environmental Damage Wrought by the Russian Invasion of Ukraine

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Abstract

This article is devoted to the problem of photographic representation of the environmental harm caused by the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

In many cases, this damage is intentional and due to the military strategy employed by the Russian military. The most illustrative case of this kind is the destruction of the Kakhovka hydroelectric dam, whose consequences are comparable with those of the Chernobyl catastrophe, and which are often referred to as 'ecocide'. In this article, I clarify the concept of 'ecocide', which is vague, contested and not yet considered a crime by the international criminal court. I interpret this concept in a biopolitical perspective, as a form of domination over the biological in the broad sense of the word (over biosphere).

I also examine photographs of environmental damage caused by the Russian invasion, in particular, the photographs showing the destruction of the Kakhovka dam and its consequences. The aim of my analysis is to find out what kind of visual records might visualise the ecocide and if the existing photographs from Kakhovka meet our expectations. This discussion refers to earlier debates about 'genocide photographs' and environmental photography. I argue that photographic records from Kakhovka, which are inconspicuous in visual terms despite the clearly ecocidal nature of the disaster, are nevertheless valuable and teach us an important lesson: we should not expect exhaustive photographs of ecocide, which can rather be represented, with a certain degree of approximation, through an evolving body of always imperfect and lacunar images.

Keywords

Russo-Ukrainian war, environmental damage, ecocide, environmental photography, photographs of ecocide.

> The activity of the international non-governmental non-profit organisation *Greenpeace International* poses a threat to the foundations of the constitutional order and security of the Russian Federation (Russian Prosecutor General's Office, press release, May 19, 2023).

> Under the pretext of preserving the environment, the World Wildlife Fund is conducting activities aimed at preventing the implementation of the country's policy on the industrial development of the Arctic, [and] natural resources in the subarctic territories. This organisation legitimises restrictions that can serve as a basis for transforming the Northern Sea Route into the US exclusive economic zone (Russian Prosecutor General's Office, press release, June 21, 2023).

> In fact, the activities of the *Wild Salmon Center* in the Russian Federation are used as a cover for the implementation of projects aimed at shackling the economic development of Russia … Thus, while formally advocating nature protection, this organisation interferes in the internal affairs of the Russian Federation and may harm Russia's security in the economic sphere (Russian Prosecutor General's Office, press release, July 18, 2023).

My reflections on the photographs of environmental harm wrought by the Russian invasion of Ukraine begins with three quotations, which illustrate the attitude of the Russian state toward environmentalism. *Greenpeace International*, the *World Wildlife Fund* and the *Wild Salmon Center* have been declared undesirable organisations in Russia. It means they are made illegal and must stop all their activities in the country. Participation in an undesirable organisation's activities is punishable by imprisonment of up to five years.

I am a Russian citizen. When the war began, I was in Russia. This war was a big shock for Russian intellectuals. We were aware of the situation in Ukraine, and everybody understood that an invasion of Ukraine was a suicidal idea (not to mention moral aspects), and that the Ukrainian army would resist.

Stupefaction and panic were our first reaction to the situation. The first days after the outbreak of the war, many Russian citizens booked flights and moved abroad. It was also a moment of agitation, when an active anti-war minority participated in protests that lasted several weeks. Despite the passage of time, I still find it difficult to talk about what is happening from a theoretical point of view. The continuing series of shocking events prevents us from looking at this war from a distance. I am also not prepared to put forward a theory that would explain the reasons behind this war.

Overview

In this paper, I want to focus on one concrete problem, namely, environmental damage caused the invasion. First, I would like to find out what kind of military strategy is used by the Russian troops in Ukraine, what impact it has on the environment, and how this damage should be categorised, in other words, what philosophical or legal concept would correctly reflect the situation.

Criticism of environmental damage has been made at various junctures through the lens of Marxist, postcolonial or feminist theories. I will analyse the environmental damage from a biopolitical perspective that seems to me appropriate in the context of the Russo-Ukrainian war. The concept of biopower was first used by Michel Foucault in his course *Society Must be Defended* (1976). Foucault defines it as a power's hold over life, a power to control life, when 'the biological came under State control'.[1] As I would like to argue, the environmental harm wrought by the Russian military is often intentional (in particular, in the case of the destruction of the Nova Kakhovka dam) and can be interpreted through the concept of ecocide. I will use the biopolitical approach as a theoretical framework for my interpretation and clarification of the concept of ecocide itself, which is vague and contested.

My second question in this article is what images would represent this ecocide properly. I will show that environmental photography as a genre, which is usually used to depict the harm caused by industrial exploitation, does not entirely correspond to this objective. Based on the existing visual materials and their analysis, I would like to argue that visualising ecocide can be challenging, and demonstrate that the notion of 'ecocide photography' is problematic in itself.

It is important to understand what kind of war the battle in Ukraine is. Often, the evolution of the war since the beginning of the 20th century is described as a shift from a large-scale 'modern' or 'total' war to proxy wars, local conflicts and asymmetric wars.[2] None of these is the case in the strife in Ukraine. Although in Russia the war is officially referred to, with the aim to diminish its scale in the eyes of the population, as 'a special military operation', it is not at all a small local conflict. It is a large-scale war – with trenches, tanks, fighter jets and artillery. The Ukrainian war is the largest armed conflict in Europe after World War II, which rather corresponds to the definition of total war by the theorists of the beginning of the 20th century.

The reason for this war, as declared by Putin, is to liberate the pro-Russian population of eastern Ukraine from the Ukrainian regime and enforced Ukrainisation. According to Putin, Ukraine is an artificially created state that did not exist before the collapse of the USSR.[3] However, shortly after the beginning of the invasion, it turned out that the Russian-speaking population of eastern Ukraine did not want to be liberated and did not want to become Russian citizens. Despite the fact that their native language was Russian, most residents of the occupied regions considered

1 M. Foucault, *Society Must be Defended* (New York: Picador, 2003), 240.
2 D. Briesen, *Armed Conflict and Environment: From World War II to Contemporary Asymmetric Warfare* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2018).
3 V. Putin, *On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians*, www//htpp/kremlin.ru.

themselves Ukrainians. Currently, many Ukrainian fighters talk to each other in Russian, like those who fight against them in the Russian army. This war has a lot to do with a civil war, with ideology as a dividing line between the fighters.

Instead of being a quick and victorious campaign, the war changed into a durable large-scale war with huge losses on both sides. Russian authorities don't disclose its casualties. According to recent statistical estimates published by Mediazona,[4] about 120,000 Russian soldiers had been killed by September 13, 2024, without taking into account the number of wounded. The war has caused huge civilian casualties. The warfare strategy used by the Russian forces is the following. First, artillery shells residential blocks in order to make the civilian population retreat from the city. After that, when the commanders are convinced that most of the population has left, they destroy the city completely, the buildings together with the enemy fighters. This strategy allows the attacking army to avoid heavy losses during the storm of the city. Both politically and militarily, the Russo-Ukrainian war brings back a last-century paradigm and constitutes a step back to the 20th century, which was, as Eric Hobbsbawm put it, 'the age of extremes'.[5] However, in some respects, the Ukrainian war differs from a last-century war. For example, Russian authorities use private armies (like the Wagner group), regional armies and military companies organised and funded by oligarchs and state-owned corporations.

Environmental devastation caused by the Russian military's strategy is impressive. Ruslan Strelets, minister of Ukrainian Environment Protection and Natural Resources minister, estimates the environmental damage caused to Ukraine at 51 billion euros. This takes into account the pollution of land, air, water, burnt forests and destroyed natural resources.[6]

Most often, environmental damage is a consequence of the extraction of natural resources. During the fighting, environmental harm is of a different kind, being due to warfare and its consequences. Moreover, the environmental harm stemming from capitalist exploitation of natural resources seems minor in comparison to the harm caused by the the warfare itself. Environmentalism is a new trend, based on the model of a global society, and on the idea of a certain transnational community living in harmony with nature. The conflict cancels the environmental paradigm which took shape in a post-World War II Western society.

I would like to argue that environmental warfare waged by the Russian military can be theorised in the framework of a Foucauldian biopolitical approach, using the concepts of *ecocide* and *necropolitics*. Although the two latter concepts are not Foucauldian, they derive from the Foucauldian theory of biopower. These concepts are not in competition with each other, since they are situated on different levels.

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4 *Russia's Casualties in the War with Ukraine by August 2024. Statistics of Those Killed in 'Special Military Operation'.* In Russian, Потери России в войне с Украиной на август 2024 года. Статистика погибших в СВО. (Zona.media), https://zona.media/.

5 E. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: A History of the World, 1914-1991* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1994).

6 V. Kropman, 'The 375th Day of the War: Assessing Environmental Damage for Ukraine' 05.03.2023, 5 March 2023, https://www.dw.com/ru/ocenka-ekologiceskogo-userba-dla-ukrainy-i-inye-sobytia-375go-dna-vojny/a-64891883.

Necropolitics us a term that covers a number of situations where control over life is or can be exercised through the use of death. As argued by the author of the concept of necropolitics, being alive does not necessarily mean having unrestricted privilege to life.[7] One's right to life, if there is one, can be suspended, restricted or relativised. The life of a slave, who can be killed or subjected to torture by his master, is an example of this relativity. Nuclear power as described by Foucault is another example of necropolitical domination. Nuclear power is a paradigmatic necropower so far as it allows for killing large groups of people considered 'undesirable'. The use of this term to comprehend environmental warfare implies a non-anthropocentric shift in its application. Indeed, necropolitics as a strategy covers a broader spectrum of situations, including control over extra-human forms of life, like flora, fauna and other species. As demonstrated by recent political philosophy, the boundary between human beings and animals, as well as other forms of life, is relative,[8] so that necropower controls all these forms of life together, namely the biosphere. Nuclear blackmail by the Russian authorities and personally by Vladimir Putin is a demonstration of the necropolitical character of Putin's dictatorship.[9]

Another term that might be used to characterise the environmental harm in Ukraine, and in particularly the Kakhovka dam destruction, is *ecocide*. Ecocide implies an implementation of necropolitics to its highest degree. The term ecocide is new and contested, and the existing definitions of it are vague.[10]

What is ecocide? Obviously, the term ecocide is a calque from the term genocide, so that ecocide would be a kind of genocide in relation to the environment. In 1943, the Polish-Jewish lawyer Raphael Lemkin 'invented a new concept for the destruction of human groups: genocide, a combination of *geno*s, from the Greek word for race or tribe, with *cide*, the Latin for killing'.[11] The term genocide was coined to characterise a new type of crime, when victims are chosen on the basis of their belonging to a group, most often an ethnic group. The extermination of Jews in Europe by the Nazis served as a model for describing and comprehending this crime. In today's international law, genocide is at the apex of crimes; it is the 'crime of crimes'.

Even though Lemkin was working for the US government at the time, he was not able to convince the US delegation to the International Military Tribunal (IMT) in Nuremberg to adopt his 'alien-sounding' neologism and use it in legal practice. As

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7 A. Mbembe. *Necropolitics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), 18.

8 J. Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign*. Volume 1 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009).

9 Firstly, the nuclear power plant in Zaporizhzhya has been captured by Russian troops and is now under Russian control. The risk of nuclear accidents does exist. As a rule, the Russian military puts the blame for missile strikes on Ukrainian territories on the Ukrainian army, saying that Ukrainian army shells its own cities by accident. So, if something happens to the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant, Russian authorities will put the blame on the Ukrainians. Secondly, Russian officials constantly speak about the use of tactical nuclear weapons. In such a case, the strike would not hit Ukrainian troops, but rather the Ukrainian population along with the territory, poisoning all with radioactivity.

10 E. Kreike, for example, proposes to use the term 'environcide', making the following distinction between ecocide and environcide: 'Environcide is both derived from and different from genocide and ecocide. Genocide and other crimes against humanity are categories of legal action, rather than merely descriptive or analytical concepts. Ecocide is considered a heinous act against nature with an ambiguous legal status in international law. Environcide highlights how mass violence simultaneously affects environment and society: environmental warfare is a crime against humanity and a crime against Nature' (E. Kreike, *Scorched Earth: Environmental Warfare as a Crime against Humanity and Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021), 4.

11 D.A. Moses, *Introduction: The Problems of Genocide*. In *The Problems of Genocide: Permanent Security and the Language of Transgression*, *Human Rights in History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 1–46.

argued by A. Moses, the legal and cultural recognition of the concept of genocide was due to the fact that it had been successfully visualised. In other words, this concept was bolstered by the images, photographs and footage of the liberated Nazi death camps.[12]

It's important to mention that this concept is not perfect. So, the domination of this concept, or even fascination by genocide in today's intellectual discourse and mass culture, leads to its progressive devaluation.[13]

Pertaining to the term *ecocide*, it was first used in 1970 by Arthur Galston, a plant biologist and chair of the Department of Botany at Yale University during the Conference 'War Crimes and the American Conscience'. Galston studied the instrumentalisation of environmental harm during the Vietnam War.[14] During this war, the U.S. military spread Agent Orange and defoliated approximately five million acres of forests in an attempt to expose communist guerrilla fighters loyal to the National Liberation Front. As David Zierler put it in his book *The Invention of Ecocide*, 'known as Operation Ranch Hand, from 1961 to 1971 the herbicidal warfare program targeted not specific weeds but entire ecosystems … The strategy of defoliation and crop destruction had been in effect since 1961 as an integral component of American counter insurgency operations throughout South Vietnam and its borderlands with Laos and Cambodia."[15]

As of today, there is no article criminalising ecocide at the international level. At the same time, according to recent surveys, most of the population in developed countries are in favor of criminalising large-scale environmental and climate damage.[16] A group of legal experts and activists from across the globe is currently carrying out activities aimed at a legal definition of ecocide and its recognition as an international crime by the International Criminal Court (alongside war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide and the crime of aggression). The draft law drawn up by this group in 2021 defines ecocide as 'unlawful or wanton acts committed with knowledge that there is a substantial likelihood of severe and widespread or long-term damage to the environment being caused by those acts'.[17]

Like genocide, ecocide is supposed to be the 'crime of crimes' against nature. Like genocide that is a new, modern type of crime and can't be explained by the perpetrator's backwardness, ecocide is a modern crime that appears only in the contemporary political paradigm. Considered from this perspective, an act of 'killing nature'

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12 Moses: 'By then, awareness of Nazi criminality had been horrifically visualised in images of the liberated concentration camps.' See: S. Sliwinski, *Human Rights in Camera* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), and D. Stone, *The Liberation of the Camps: The End of the Holocaust and Its Aftermath* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015).

13 The term 'genocide' is criticised for different reasons: '[T]he melodramatic binary of victims ("goodies") and perpetrators ("baddies") required by the genocide optic'; 'the fetish of genocide as the "crime of crimes" effectively licences rather than proscribes many forms of mass violence against civilians'; 'civilian destruction needs to be genocidal to "shock the conscience of mankind"', D.A. Moses, in 'Introduction: The Problems of Genocide', *The Problems of Genocide: Permanent Security and the Language of Transgression* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 1–46.

14 D. Zierler, *The Invention of Ecocide: Agent Orange, Vietnam, and the Scientists Who Changed the Way We Think about the Environment* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011).

15 Ibid., 42.

16 S. Braun, Time to Criminalize Environmental Damage, says Survey – DW – 09/07/2024, https://www.dw.com/en/time-to-criminalize-environmental-damage-says-survey/a-70143258.

17 'Legal Experts Worldwide Draw Up "Historic" Definition of Ecocide', https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/jun/22/legal-experts-worldwide-draw-up-historic-definition-of-ecocide.

(or rather extermination targeting an ecosystem) belongs to the same category as deportation and genocide. It's difficult to imagine an act of ecocide happening in peacetime. It's an element of warfare, when environmental harm is instrumentalised, weaponised, and used as military and political tool.

All these features can be observed in the Ukrainian war. First, environmental warfare allows the Russian army to control territories, manipulate people and prevent Ukrainian offensives. Making a territory uninhabitable provokes a retreat of the population from it. So, the army can control population indirectly by imposing a certain type of living condition.

Second, the term 'enemy territory' is to be understood literally. The warfare can be waged not only against troops but also against enemy territory – land, water, fauna, and so on. Ecocide is an extermination of nature, of territories whose legal protection is canceled. The term "bare life" applied by G. Agamben to describe the situation of Jews in Nazi Germany (who were stripped of rights and legal protection)[18] might be applied to flora and fauna on the territories declared 'enemy'. Some areas are to die with their ecosystems.

Image diversity in the war

Before I turn to the discussion of photographs showing environmental damage in the Russo-Ukrainian war, it is important to say that the number of photographs and footage showing warfare and collateral damage is currently very important. The researcher is not faced with a lack of information, but rather with an excess of information and its extreme diversity.

This war gave birth to some new, non-institutionalised forms of digital witnessing. The fighters have their mobile phone cameras, and their helmets are equipped with cameras as well. Many war videos end up in Telegram chats and channels,[19] which constitute the major source of information about this war.[20] Both Russian and Ukrainian military authorities try to limit the uncontrolled circulation of images made by soldiers, which has resulted in a recent ban of mobile phones among Russian troops.

The Ukraine war is the first one in which drones are so important that military experts talk about a revolution in warfare. These are drones that made this war visible, showing the battlefield in detail from above. In aerial photos and footage, a non-human perspective in capturing this war dominates. The viewer doesn't see faces and it is often hard to understand who is who (Russian or Ukrainian). Nevertheless, these videos without sound are impressive, making the viewer's position similar to that of an audience member in a theatre. The number of satellite images showing

18 G. Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 1998).
19 'The Telegram' is an instant messenger popular in Russia and Ukraine which is also used as a media platform.
20 M. Bareikytė, M. Makhortykh, A. Martin, T. Nazaruk and Y. Skop, 'How Should Platforms be Archived? On Sustainable Use Practices of a Telegram Archive to Study Russia's War against Ukraine', in *Media, Culture and Society*, https://doi.org/10.1177/01634437241245915.

battlefields has also increased dramatically. Most of such photographs are shot and sold by private companies at the price of several hundred dollars for a photo.

The emergence of this new war imagery reshapes the existing relationships between war and photography, which are conceptualised in a vast body of scholarly literature. Scholars who explored the role of new digital platforms (in particular Telegram) as a source of information about the Russo-Ukrainian war put forward the concepts of *digitally witnessed war* and *inconspicuous witnessing*.[21] Firstly, this involvement of non-professionals in the process of making images undermines the monopoly in media coverage held by traditional media institutions. Professional journalism, which first had to react to bloggers' activity in the 2000s,[22] is now facing new media and genres of non-professional reporting. As pointed out by Janina Struck, the amount of 'private pictures' provoked a certain decline in photojournalism and has resulted in a lack of iconic war images. Documentary photography is a well-established genre which has its own aesthetic and ethical conventions. To meet the genre requirements, a documentary photograph must have drama and pathos, and be technically good.[23] As a rule, the war is represented through ordinary people's suffering, their death and mourning.[24] Although professional photojournalists cover this military conflict,[25] the most war photographs in Ukraine are made by non-professionals. In comparison with 'traditional' war photography, this new generation of images 'involves fragmentation instead of narrative, banality instead of drama, traces instead of things, objects instead of people, and ruins as the product rather than the by-product of war'.[26]

Secondly, with the proliferation of new media technologies, non-professional and technical images, internet platforms can turn into ideological battlegrounds where conflicting parties and their supporters promote their vision of the conflict. This abundance of contradictory information makes the situation of a researcher difficult and requires a new qualitative research agenda and methods.[27] At the same time, so called citizen photojournalism has 'expanded the global capacities for visually documenting abuses and violations'.[28]

When I started working on this theme, I realised that, in spite of the abundance of the Ukrainian war images, both professional and non-professional, there were no special photographic projects aimed at documenting environmental harm wrought

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21 M. Bareikytė and M. Makhortykh, 'Digitally Witnessable War from Pereklychka to Propaganda: Unfolding Telegram Communication during Russia's War in Ukraine', *Media, War and Conflict*, https://doi.org/10.1177/17506352241255890.

22 D. Bennett, *Digital Media and Reporting Conflict: Blogging and the BBC's Coverage of War and Terrorism* (London: Routledge, 2013.) https://doi-1org-1gxsabjbb0683.erf.sbb.spk-berlin.de/10.4324/9780203576472.

23 J. Struk, *Private Pictures: Soldiers' Inside View of War* (Abingdon, Oxon, New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2020).

24 On 'visual tropes' of war photography, see M. Zarzycka, *Gendered Tropes in War Photography* (NewYork: Routledge, 2016).

25 The best photographs by professional photojournalists are published in *Relentless Courage: Ukraine and the World at War* (Bend, Oregon: Blue Star Press, 2022).

26 R. Hariman, 'Watching War Evolve: Photojournalism and New Forms of Violence', 'The Violence of the Image', in L. Kennedy and C. Patrick (eds), *Photography and International Conflict* (Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2020), 156.

27 J. Hauter, 'Forensic Conflict Studies: Making Sense of War in the Social Media Age', Media, War and Conflict, 16, 2, 2023, 153–172, DOI: 10.1177/17506352211037325.

28 L. Kennedy and C. Patrick. *The Violence of the Image: Photography and International Conflict* (London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2020), 3.

by the Russian invasion. Photographs depicting ecological damage in Ukraine can be found in different sources. Most of these photographs are anonymous or made by non-professional photographers, and some of them are technical images taken from drones and satellites.

I will distribute these photographs into categories following Gaston Bachelard's classification. According to Bachelard, a piece of literature might be characterised according to the prevalent element in it: earth, air, fire or water.[29]

As I have said, the style of warfare in Ukraine is similar to that in the first and second world wars, with thousands of miles of frontline and trenches. The image of a 'suffering earth' appears quite often in photographs. The result of constant shelling is huge shell craters on the ground.[30] The area around the trenches looks apocalyptic – scorched earth, trees chopped into splinters, and rubbish (Figure 1).

Many photographs show fire and smoke (Figure 2). Pollution and carbon footprint due to fires are enormous. The strategy of both belligerents is to destroy the enemy's infrastructure, including oil depots. As a rule, burning oil depots are impossible to extinguish a until everything burns out. This pollutes the air; oil may leak out and get into the soil, and subsequently into groundwater. Chemicals, in particular ammonia, are leaked as a result of the shelling of chemical plants. Fires are also occurring in national parks. Ukrainian firefighters do not have access to these areas because of shelling.[31] Contamination with unexploded bombs and mines leads to chemical contamination, because bombs and other ammunition contain lead, mercury, and TNT (Figure 3).

Ukrainian territory is heavily contaminated with landmines and cluster munitions. Today's Ukraine is one of the most mine-contaminated countries in the world. Ukrainian Economy Minister Yuliya Sviridenko has said that, given the scale of contamination, it could take 70 years to demine the entire territory of the country.[32] This kind of contamination poses a danger to the civilian population. Wounds to limbs are the most characteristic of this war, and many wounded limbs are amputated. Landmine wounds are particularly terrible and are among the most difficult war wounds to treat.

Imaging environmental damage: the debates

I would like to place special emphasis on an incident that occurred on 6 June, 2023, namely the intentional destruction of the Nova Kakhovka dam.

Even though there are no direct proofs, the consensus is that Nova Kakhovka dam was blown up by Russian troops. Several days before the explosion, this possibility was discussed in the media. According to experts, the only way to destroy the dam

29 G. Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994).
30 V. and K. Liberov, *Donbas Frontline, a Battlefield after Artillery Fight, July 2022,* https://libkos.com/ukraine-war-2022.
31 V. and K. Liberov, *Mykolaiv, August 2022, forest burning because of the shelling; Nikopol, nuclear power plant view, 15.08.2022; Donbas frontline, burning field of wheat, July 2022; Kyiv, 26.06.2022 (smoke),* https://libkos.com/ukraine-war-2022.
32 V. Kropman, *The day of the 375th war: assessing environmental damage for Ukraine, 05.03.2023*, 5 March 2023 (In Russian), https://www.dw.com/ru/ocenka-ekologiceskogo-userba-dla-ukrainy-i-inye-sobytia-375go-dna-vojny/a-64891883.

was by putting explosives inside the construction.[33] As the Russian troops seized and controlled the dam and the Kakhovska hydroelectric power plant since the beginning of the invasion, only they could have carried out this explosion. Most likely, the purpose of the attack was to halt the Ukrainian offensive.[34]

Historical examples confirm this hypothesis. Destruction of dyke systems as a warfare strategy is not rare: one can mention numerous examples of the destruction of dykes by American troops during the war in Vietnam.[35] However, the destruction of the dam is most often performed by a defending army. For example, during the Anti-Spanish rebellion in Holland in the 16th century, 'the rebel leaders trusted that the inundations would utterly destroy the countryside and deny the besieging army any prospect of living off the land, thereby starving the king's soldiers into ending the siege'.[36] More recently, in 1938 'the Chinese dynamited the Huayuankou dike of the Huang He River in an attempt to halt the marching Japanese forces. This military tactic succeeded in drowning several thousand Japanese soldiers and halting their advance into China along this front. In addition, the resulting flooding ecologically ravaged three provinces and inundated several million hectares of farmland.'[37]

The explosion in Kakhovka destroyed 11 out of 28 sections of the dam. The approximate width of the breach constitutes 177 meters. As of 18 June 2023, the toll after the explosion of the dam stood at 35 dead and 31 missing. However, the number of victims in this case is not comparable to the environmental damage from the explosion.[38] The Kakhovka reservoir was one of the largest ones not only in Ukraine but also in Europe. A huge mass of water from the reservoir began to flow downstream, flooding all settlements on its way. Millions of hectares of farmland were inundated. The stream of dirty water poisoned the Black Sea in Odessa.[39]

Experts are already comparing the consequences of the accident to Chernobyl and calling it the greatest man-made disaster in recent decades. From the point of view of international law, this destruction is a war crime. However, the question of how to categorise the crime is open.

Environmental damage is an unavoidable consequence of war. Any war leads to the profound mutation of the territory and the emergence of complex 'war-landscapes'.[40] The war does not simply have long-term consequences for the territory and

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33 G. Nerzhin, *Threat of Kakhovskaya HPP Destruction: Why is it Necessary and is Such a Scenario Realistic?* (In Russian), https://belsat.eu/ru/news/21-10-2022-ugroza-razrusheniya-kahovskoj-ges-zachem-eto-nuzhno-i-realen-li-takoj-stsenarij.

34 Ibid.

35 D. D. Thuan, N. Van Ngoc. *The System of Dykes and Water Resources of North Vietnam Under the Impact of the American Air and Naval Attacks (1965–1972)*, in D. Briesen (ed), *From World War II to Contemporary Asymmetric Warfare* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2018).

36 E. Kreike, *Scorched Earth: Environmental Warfare as a Crime against Humanity and Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021), 34.

37 F.J. Broswimmer, *Ecocide: A Short History of the Mass Extinction of Species* (Pluto Press, 2002), 75. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt18dzv1d.

38 L. Borysenko, 'Environmental Consequences of Kakhovskaya HPP Destruction: Animal Deaths, Dust Storms and Water Shortages (in Russian), 7 June, 2023, Novaya Gazeta Europa, https://novayagazeta.eu/articles/2023/06/07/vodorazdel.

39 V. Gubareva, *The Destruction of the Kakhovskaya HPP. What are the Consequences for the Environment?* (in Russian), Ukraine War Environmental Consequences Work Group, https://uwecworkgroup.info/ru/explosion-of-the-kakhovka-hydropower-plant-what-are-the-environmental-consequences/.

40 'Under the conditions of total war, complex war-landscapes emerge, which – compared to times of peace – are based on completely different relationships of mankind to the natural and manmade environment', D. Briesen, 'The War-Landscape of Stalingrad. Destroyed and Destructive Environments in World War II', in D. Briesen (ed), *Armed Conflict and Environment. From World War II to Contemporary Asymmetric Warfare* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2018), 19.

its population. As demonstrated by David Biggs, the footprint of war on environment is irreversible, changing the destiny of the area forever.[41]

However, environmental damage can be not only the collateral consequence of military activities. In many cases, destruction of nature is realised with the aim to eliminate the transportation and industrial infrastructure sustaining the enemy army. This strategy is not new, and was applied, for example, during the civil war in the United States.[42] Some theorists, like Emmanuel Kreike, argue that the practice of environmental warfare can be traced back to the 16th century, giving the examples of the war in Holland and the Spanish conquest of America.[43] This strategy is commonly referred to as 'scorched earth practices', 'environmental warfare', or 'environmental terrorism'. I prefer to describe the destruction of the Kakhovka dam through two more specific terms, namely ecocide and necropolitics.

It is time now to ask what photographic depiction of environmental harm would be a depiction of ecocide. What do we expect from these images, and to what extent they differ from images of 'regular' environmental harm? Does the representation of ecocide require a special visual language? What is the viewer's emotional reaction to pictures of a large-scale intentional destruction of natural environment?

It is evident that these questions suppose an explicit reference to debates carried out about two different bodies of visual materials: photographs of environmental damage and photographs of genocide (which include in particular Holocaust images, photographs from the Rwanda genocide and Kosovo ethnic cleansings in 1994).

The debates about visual representations of genocide, carried out predominantly around Holocaust photographs, focused first on the possibility itself of such representation. Scholars pointed out the limited capacity of visual images to represent the unprecedented – properly, unimaginable – character of the tragedy and the moral dilemmas behind the effort to visualise it.[44] At the same time, the idea that there can be *the* image or film that captures the genocide was put into question. The desire to have an exhaustive image of genocide was gradually replaced by the understanding that, as pointed out by Piotr Cieplac in relation to Rwanda genocide, 'only a constantly evolving body of visual material (reflecting multiple perspectives and representational approaches) can ever hope to do the enormity of this crime against humanity representational justice – and even that is doubtful'.[45]

Since the 2000s, debates about 'genocide photographs' have become subtler and more nuanced, and included new photographic materials.[46] Voluminous studies have

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41 D. Biggs, *Footprints of war: Militarised Landscapes in Vietnam* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2018).

42 'Devour the Land: War and American Landscape Photography Since 1970', September 17, 2021–January 16, 2022, Special Exhibitions Gallery, Harvard Art Museums.

43 E. Kreike, *Scorched Earth: Environmental Warfare as a Crime against Humanity and Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021).

44 G. Wajcman, 'De la Croyance Photographique', in *Les Temps Modernes* (ed H.G. v. Claude Lanzmann), 613, mars-mai 2001, 47–83; E. Pagnoux, 'Reporter Photographe à Auschwitz', *ibid*., 84–108; G. Didi-Huberman, *Images in Spite of All* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

45 P. Cieplac, *Death, Image, Memory: The Genocide in Rwanda and Its Aftermath in Photography and Documentary Film* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 197-198.

46 D. Bathrick, B. Prager and M. D. Richardson, *Visualizing the Holocaust: Documents, Aesthetics, Memory*. (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2008).

been devoted to the history and afterlives of some individual photographs.[47] Some authors attempted to deconstruct the notion of 'perpetrator's gaze' to read dignity and signs of resistance on the Nazi-made snapshots showing victims.[48] The others focused on already published photographs with the aim to recontextualise these materials and restore them to the history of Holocaust.[49] The debate about the role of photographs of political violence has also shifted from the initial idea of a photographer's complicity and perversion towards today's consensus that visualising the victim's suffering, if not evoking empathy in the viewer, then at least helps draw public attention to this problem. In Sharon Sliwinski's interpretation,[50] the successful visualisation of the abstract concept of 'genocide' was crucial to its recognition by international organisations after the second world war. As bearers of emotions, photographs played an important role in the inclusion of genocide in international criminal law and raising universal awareness of this new type of crime. In this interpretation, visualisation, which is closely associated with emotional aspects, precedes legal, that is, the rational framing of a problem.

The history of environmental photography, or more specifically, photography showing environmental harm, dates back to the 1860–1870s. As pointed out by Gisela Parak, 'the functional orientation of [environmental] photographs is distinguished from ideas of the picturesque and the sublime generally associated with the image of the landscape conveyed in the painting and photography of the 19th century'.[51] Unlike genocide photographs, which belong to a body of archival images, photographic 'ecocriticism', 'eco-activism' or 'eco-anarchism'[52] is an increasingly popular and growing genre, which also has its own ideology.[53]

Since its early days, environmental photography has been inextricably blended with scientific discourse. On the one hand, as Damian Hughes demonstrates, photographic practices played an important role in the construction of ecological knowledge in the laboratory and the field.[54] On the other hand, environmental photography includes a large body of 'scientific' images, like satellite photographs of the earth from outside of the earth's sphere. These images contributed to planetary consciousness and stimulated reflections on the vulnerability of our planet.[55]

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47 R. Ruskin, *A Child at Gunpoint: A Case Study in the Life of a Photo* (Aarthus UP, 2004) and D. Shneer, *Grief: The Biography of a Holocaust Photograph* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

48 U. Baer, *Spectral Evidence: The Photography of Trauma* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2002).

49 D. Shneer, *Grief: The Biography of a Holocaust Photograph* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

50 S. Sliwinski, *Human Rights in Camera* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

51 G. Parak, *Photographs of Environmental Phenomena: Scientific Images in the Wake of Environmental Awareness, USA 1860s–1970s* (Berlin: Transcript Verlag, 2015), 12.

52 C. Scott, 'The Eco-anarchist Potential of Environmental Photography', in *The Routledge Companion to Photography Theory* (NY and London: Routledge, 2020).

53 C. Balashak, *The Image of Environmental Harm in American Social Documentary Photography* (NY: Routledge, 2021). On the history of environmentalism, see R. Attfield, *Environmental Thought: A Short History* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2021). Today's environmental theory includes (and would have been impossible without them) scientific elements, mostly borrowed from biology, and a certain philosophy which incorporates elements of anarchism and organicism.

54 D. Hughes, *Picturing Ecology: Photography and the Birth of a New Science* (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2022). According to Hughes, ecology as a discipline was shaped by photography and more broadly by the emerging technological visual culture in the early twentieth century.

55 B. Arends, *Photography, Ecology and Historical Change in the Anthropocene: Activating Archives* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2024), 13.

A pessimistic genre, environmentalist photography usually depicts different forms of devastation. In the case of the mining industry, these are 'large-scale earth removal, visible scarring, unsightly slag heaps, and gaping pits'.[56] Chemical pollution is shown through clouds of toxic foam on water or portraits of people with disabilities caused by chemicals. The use of repeat photography, which captures the same landscapes at two different points of time, making environmental changes visible, constitutes another representational strategy.[57]

The importance of environmental photography is often explained by the fact that not all forms of degradation of nature are visible. Climate change remains largely out of sight, being rather an abstract concept put forward by scientists based on their prognostic models. Global warming and its consequences are disconnected from people's lives, who literally don't see them. The mission of environmental photography would be to visualise this concept and raise awareness of ecological problems.[58] Indeed, in ecological research, reports and claims, climate change is visualised through graphs, maps, or computer simulations.[59] Environmental photography fills the gap between scientific discourse and people's reality, being a kind of translation from the language of science to the language of emotions.[60] Ecological problems are shown as visible, that is, *real* ones, the final goal being to persuade individuals that danger is not imaginary. 'Environmental anxiety' should subsequently engage individuals as conscious citizens and consumers.[61]

At the same time, environmental photography as a genre faces its own limitations and challenges. According to Kate Manzo, the iconography of environmental harm includes three categories in total, namely, 'planet', 'environment' and 'living beings'. If the 'planet' is represented through globes and maps, photographs are used to depict 'environment' (melting glaciers, polar regions, flooded areas, and so on) and 'living beings' (polar bears, penguins, people in floodwater).[62] This iconography shows that, important as it is, environmental photography is highly stereotyped and has its own recurring patterns in popular imagery. The image of a vulnerable child or photographs of melting glaciers and polar bears 'that once might have functioned as persuasive signs of the visible impact of climate change inevitably become a cliché'.[63]

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56 C. Glotfelty, *Peter Goin and the Photography of Environmental Change: Visual Literacy and Altered Landscapes* (London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group), 2022.

57 B. Arends, *Photography, Ecology and Historical Change in the Anthropocene: Activating Archives* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2024), 31.

58 C. Scott, *Photography and Environmental Activism: Visualising the Struggle Against Industrial Pollution* (London: Routledge, 2022) and C. Balashak, *The Image of Environmental Harm in American Social Documentary Photography* (London: Routledge, 2021).

59 J. Doyle, *Mediating Climate Change* (London: Routledge, 2016), 68.

60 See for example Conohar Scott's definition: '[T]he power of environmental photography lies in the image's capacity to engage the audience emotively as a means of promulgating praxis, while the non-visual "evidence" of a substantive environmental threat is provided by other modal forms.' C. Scott, 'The Eco-anarchist Potential of Environmental Photography', in *The Routledge Companion to Photography Theory* (NY: Routledge, 2020), 262.

61 K. Manzo, 'Imaging Vulnerability: The Iconography of Climate Change', *Area* 42, 1, 2010, 96.

62 Ibid., 91.

63 D. Palmer, 'Photography, Technology and Ecological Criticism: Beyond the Sublime Image of Disaster', in L. Lester, and B. Hutchins (eds), *Environmental Conflict and the Media* (New York, NY: Bern Frankfurt Berlin Vienna, 2013), 77. According to Palmer, photographs, which convey aesthetic value of nature and biodiversity, are to be included in decision-making processes under international environmental law, particularly for treaties that demand judgments of nature's aesthetic value.

Such photographs can also produce a distancing effect, as they relegate climate change impacts to a remote place and represent them as affecting animals rather than humans.

Moreover, images promote not 'environmentalism in general' but bear environmental messages which differ in political terms. As argued by Finis Dunaway, American environmentalism 'has been powerfully transacted through visual images that imagine the political world in an individualist frame, that mobilise feeling of fear and guilt to instil a sense of personal responsibility for the environment'.[64] These abstract narratives promote the rhetoric of universal vulnerability and responsibility, dissimulating inequalities and power relations that structure environmental problems.

The role of environmental photography in decision-making is also contested. As demonstrated by the legal scholar Alice Palmer, who closely studied procedural rules concerning the use of environmental photographs, aesthetic aspects of photographs are not taken into consideration. Palmer demonstrates that, conversely to the argument about visualisation as a step toward legal recognition, existing legal practices are based on the power of words that are considered trustworthy and conveying meaning, unlike pictures, which are not self-sufficient and require interpretation through words. The use of pictures in courts is limited to their value of document and they are regarded as records of fact.[65]

If photography projects focusing on ecological damage are increasingly popular and numerous, photographic documentations of ecocide (rather than unintentional damage) are rare, if not non-existent, due to the rarity of ecocide itself. The earliest and most known project of this kind would be that of Philip Jones Griffiths, who photographed the effects of Agent Orange on the Vietnamese land and population decades after the war had ended.[66] Griffiths' book *Agent Orange: 'Collateral Damage' in Vietnam* is conceived as an epilogue to his earlier project *Vietnam Inc*. If the war photographs published in *Vietnam Inc*. are qualified as those of genocide, those in *Agent Orange* are declared to show ecocide.[67] The first (and the shortest) part of the book shows defoliated land, dead trees and fish from poisoned ponds. The second part includes a few photos of the country's reforestation efforts and the people of Vietnam working to revitalise the devastated lands. The longest part of the book (pp. 38-174) is devoted to the representation of children mutilated by Agent Orange who were born after the war. The book, showing literally unbearable images, makes use of the aesthetic of visual shock. These choking images of human suffering constitute the core of the book's narrative.[68]

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64 F. Dunaway, *Seeing Green: The Use and Abuse of American Environmental Images* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), 4.

65 A. Palmer, *Natural Perception: Environmental Images and Aesthetics in International Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023).

66 P.J. Griffiths, *Agent Orange: 'Collateral Damage' in Vietnam* (London: Trolley Books, 2003).

67 L. Kennedy, '"Follow the Americans": Philip Jones Griffiths's Vietnam *Trilogy*. In L. Kennedy and C. Patrick (eds), *The Violence of the Image. Photography and International Conflict* (London: Routledge, 2020).

68 As ecocide constitutes a more recent and unsettled concept in comparison with 'genocide', no equivalent debates about visualisation of ecocide have been taking place.

Perspectives on Kakhovka dam

It's time now to analyse the visual records of the Kakhovka ecological catastrophe, their visual characteristics and the narratives they bear. Do these photographs depict this catastrophe and its consequences as an act of large-scale intentional destruction of nature, in other words, could they be categorised as 'photographs of ecocide'?

The representations of the Nova Kakhovka disaster that currently exist might be distributed into two categories: satellite images and images showing flooded areas from a closer, human-scaled perspective. These two groups are associated with narratives, which tell this event from two different viewpoints.

The second group of pictures ('photographs of the environment') typically show rescue workers, adult and children in boats (Figures 4 and 5) as well as flooded areas and houses (Figures 6-8). Depicting life in a flooded area without drama and pathos, these photographs do not strike our imagination, nor do they shock the audience. This group of photographs is exemplified by the World Press Photo winning series *Kakhovka Dam: Flood in a War Zone* by the German photographer Johanna Maria Fritz. As announced on the world press website, 'the jury was impressed by how these images highlight the environmental impact of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The project urges viewers to consider the weaponisation of the landscape and man-made natural disasters. The photographer does an exceptional job of evoking empathy in her documentation of a breaking news event. This story calls attention to extreme and inhumane acts of war that occurred among many other events over the last 12 months in Ukraine.'[69] The jury's rhetoric is inspired by an idealistic understanding of the photographer's mission, considering empathy as a natural response to images of suffering. However, in my view, contrary to the jury's statement and our expectations, these visually modest photographs are unlikely to evoke empathy, since they don't show death or acute suffering and represent the disaster as a serious but not unprecedented event. The series does not convey the scale of this event, nor does it aim to represent an *ecocide*. These photos show people rather than landscapes or environmental devastation.

Another series documenting the aftermath of the dam explosion was shot by Alberto Lores.[70] These images are incorporated into a large body of Lores' Ukraine war photographs and, in my view, are less spectacular than many other snapshots from the series. In comparison with death or the loss of a family member, the flood appears to be a minor event. As in the previous case, the photojournalist does not pretend to depict Kakhovka ecocide. His series is devoted to *flood and its consequences*, falling into one of the most popular categories of environmental photography. In visual terms, this series is similar to that of Johanna Maria Fritz, with a predominance of greenish and brown colours. The military reasons for the dam's destruction remain

69 J.M. Fritz, 'Kakhovka Dam: Flood in a War Zone', https://www.worldpressphoto.org/collection/photo-contest/2024/Johanna-Maria-Fritz/1, World Press Photo.

70 A. Lores, 'A Disaster in Photos: Nova Kakhovka Dam Breach in Ukraine', https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/news-stories/stories/disaster-photos-nova-kakhovka-dam-breach-ukraine_en –European Commission (europa.eu).

out of sight. The scale of catastrophe is not visualised either, which is rather impossible provided the close perspective both series were taken from.

In my opinion, these photographs cannot help to establish a link between the abstract legal concept of ecocide and the reality of what is happening in Nova Kakhovka. If the mission of environmental photography is to establish such a mediation, making a translation from the language of science into a common language, then this first group of photographs rather fails this mission. Although their value as legal and historical documents is evident, the photographs are too concrete, even calm and ordinary. They do not provide the necessary generalisation, and do not lead to conclusions about the nature of what really happened. I would say that they rather mitigate potential horror by describing the situation in visual terms to which the viewer is accustomed (a recurrent visual trope of a flooded region). Instead of bringing the ecocide closer, they rather relegate it away. These are not the kind of photographs that can pretend to have iconic status and change public opinion.

The satellite images constitute the second group of visual records. Unlike the previous group of photographs, which describe life in the flooded region, these images advance a narrative about the enormity of the cataclysm. The viewer is invited to appreciate the scale of the event, namely, its planetary level. Shown from above, deserted landscapes, superhuman power of the stream and tiny houses in water evoke the aesthetics of the 'sublime' (Figures 9-12).[71]

Unlike the first group of photographs showing concrete objects and people for whom one could theoretically feel empathy, the abstract map-like satellite images appeal to ideas rather than feelings. The viewer evaluates the scale of what has happened and understands the catastrophic consequences of it for nature. Surprisingly, these photos are more spectacular and have a better chance of resonance. They are nevertheless not as impressive as the photos of scorched forests and children mutilated by Agent Orange in Griffiths' book. Simultaneously with the sense of the scale of the event, the viewer feels detachment, looking at the phenomenon from afar, from above, as if distancing himself from it. These images do not frustrate the viewer and do not cause 'ecological anxiety'. They are aesthetically pleasing, and affect the viewer on a rational level.

This brief analysis of existing photographs suggests that both groups of images disappoint the viewer and do not visualise ecocide to the fullest extent. One will not find here spectacular images that would 'reveal the essence' of what ecocide is and 'visually unpack this concept'. None of these photographs can claim the status of 'iconic'. We do not find among them an 'image of ecocide' comparable in shock power to some of Griffiths' photographs. The concept of ecocide, which is a calque of the term 'genocide' – that is a horrific catastrophe associated with shocking images – leads the viewer to expect photographs that are equally powerful in their emotional impact. Photographs of genocide, particularly the Rwandan genocide, worked as a red flag for the international community, and their emotional impact was very powerful. Because

71 I. Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, Translated by W. S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1987).

ecocide is directed against nature, it does not provide us with images comparable in power to Gilles Peresse's photographs. Although the destruction of the Kakhovka HPP is catastrophic for nature, the photos of its consequences are less shocking than photos of forests and fields after shelling (Figure 1).

The question one should ask is if there are photos of ecocide at all? That is, images that would give us a comprehensive or even exhaustive picture of what is happening? In this sense, the discussion about photography in political conflicts and in particular photographs of genocide turns out to be useful to us. Based on previous discussions and the analysis of images from Nova Kakhovka, I can make the following conclusion.

First, it would be mistaken to expect to have an exhaustive image of ecocide. The images in general are imperfect, both technically and aesthetically. The existing images are lacunar and fragmentary, and none of them is 'the' image of ecocide. An image, no matter how perfect it is, will only be some approximation of a concept, which, moreover, is not fully clarified in the case of 'ecocide'. There is no exhaustive image of ecocide – there is instead a moving body of images that is replenished over time. This body includes both spectacular and discreet images, images shot by professionals and amateurs, as well as technical images, high-quality and more often low-resolution images. What the researcher has to deal with is a mass of images, each of which, in combination with others, reveals certain aspects of the ongoing catastrophe. Only a mass of images representing different aspects of the catastrophe, mounted together and appropriately contextualised, can be associated with the concept of ecocide.

In addition, one must realise (and this is what the photographs of the Kakhovska HPP explosions teach us) that the viewer should not expect photographs striking our imagination. We should not expect vivid dramatic images, which we want and even 'demand'. The habit of the modern viewer that any phenomenon is accompanied by images, that any phenomenon can and should be visualised, leads to the fact that the absence of images, their insufficient number or their 'inconclusiveness' is often perceived as synonymous with the absence of the event itself. The culture of media circulation, which is a culture of emotional stimulation and shock, requires vivid images, drama and spectacular gestures. Instead of demanding spectacular images, the viewer should make an effort. We need to suspend the circulation of images, to 'slow them down' and work them out in detail. In the case of environmental images, the difference between looking and seeing matters. Most of the images of environmental harm exist in another context now, being categorised as 'war photography' or photography of 'humanitarian catastrophe'. These two categories are generic and constitute the first theoretical approximation of military conflicts in visual records. The researcher's work consists in putting these images into a more nuanced contexts, including recontextualising some of them as 'images of ecocide'.

Second, it can be argued that in the case of the Kakhovska HPP, ecocide remains difficult to visualise, and therefore largely invisible. The damage we see in real time is only a precursor to the main event, that is the coming ecological degradation of a huge region. Like climate change, these consequences are predicted by ecologists but are not visible now. The aftermath of the explosion will only be visible in a few years, when the landscape and climate will change in the region. The catastrophe that has

already happened is visible only in some points, through symptoms, like floods and droughts. The concept of ecocide should include not only the act itself of extermination perpetrated on nature, but also its consequences stretched over time. It is an act of delayed violence against the ecological system, an act of violence that is directed not so much to the present as to the future, and which will continue to be. As such, the two bodies of images I mentioned above can and should be supplemented with new visual records.

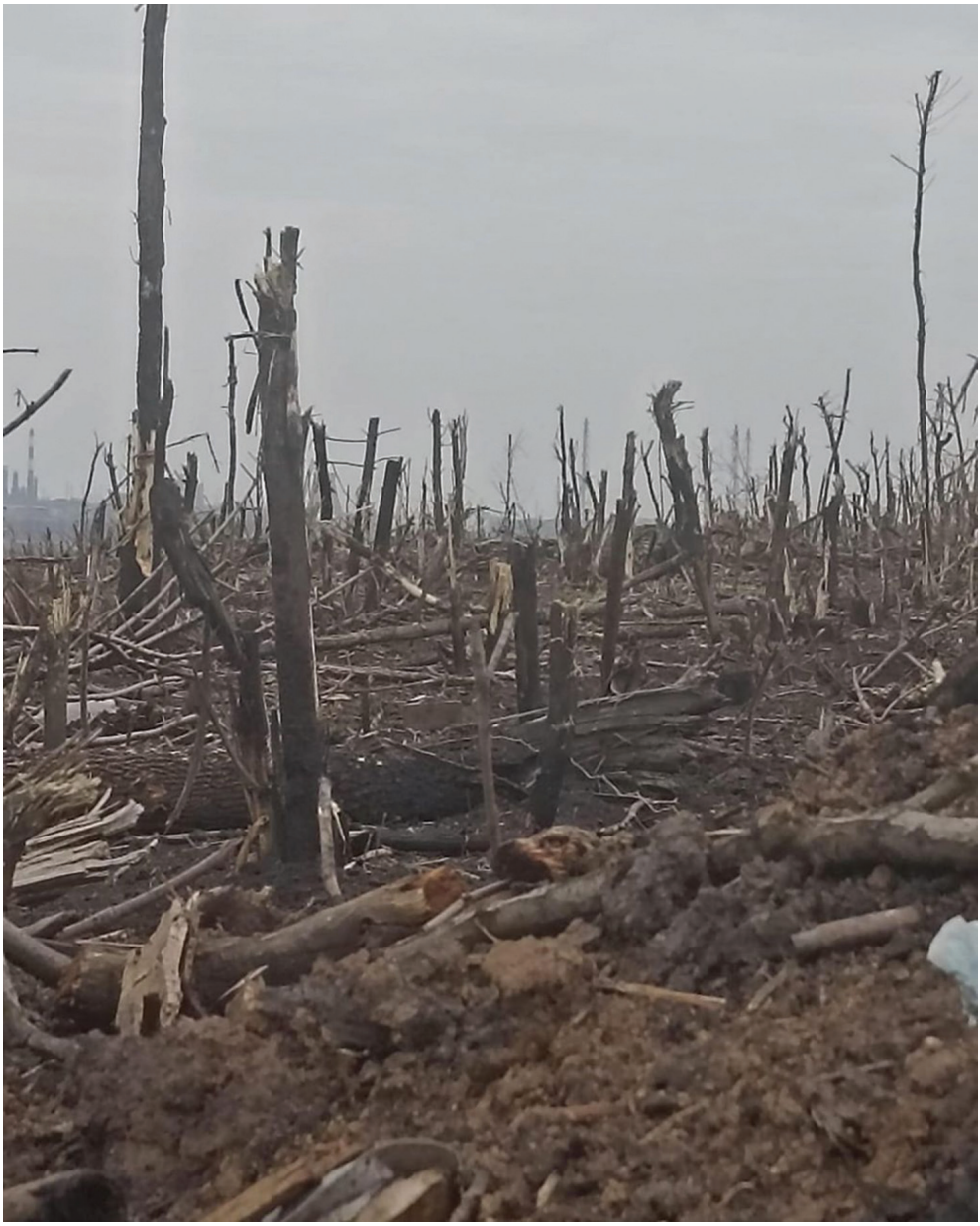

Figure 1. Forest after shelling near Bakhmut, Ukraine, 2022 (CC licence).

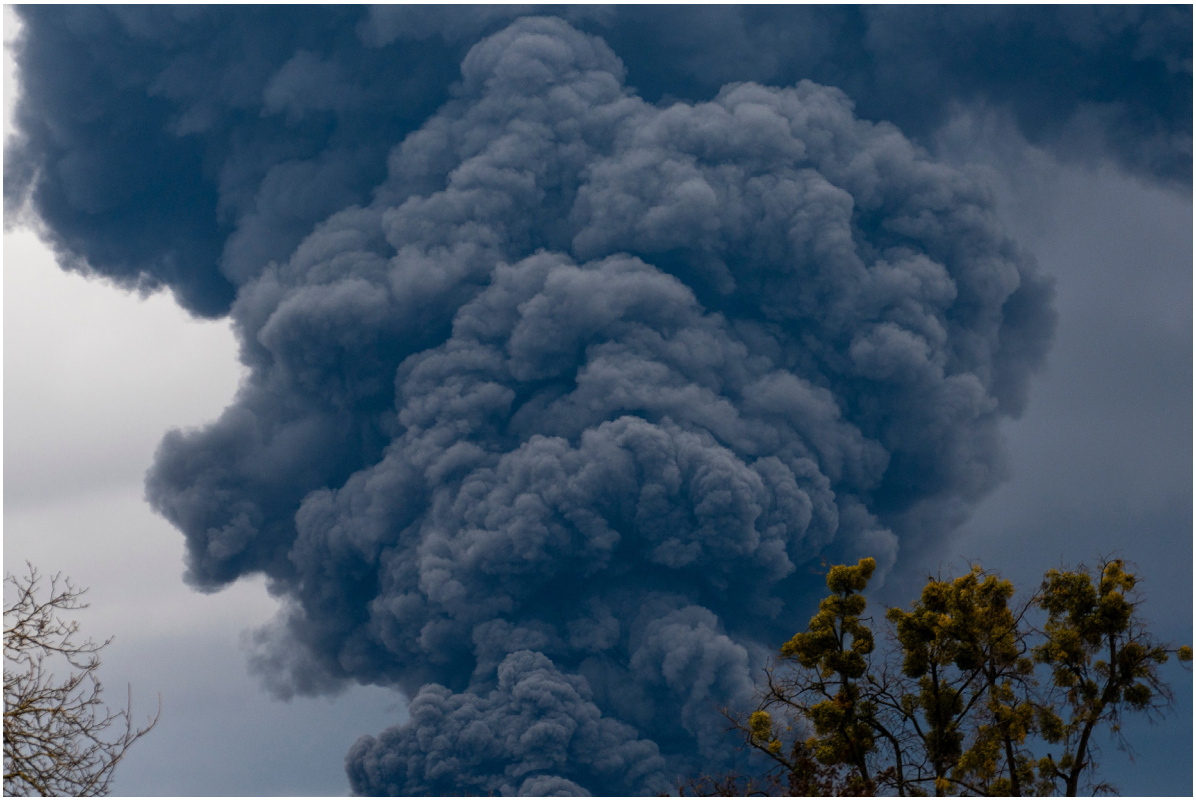

Figure 2. Smoke caused by shelling, Ukraine, 2022 (Shuttertock images).

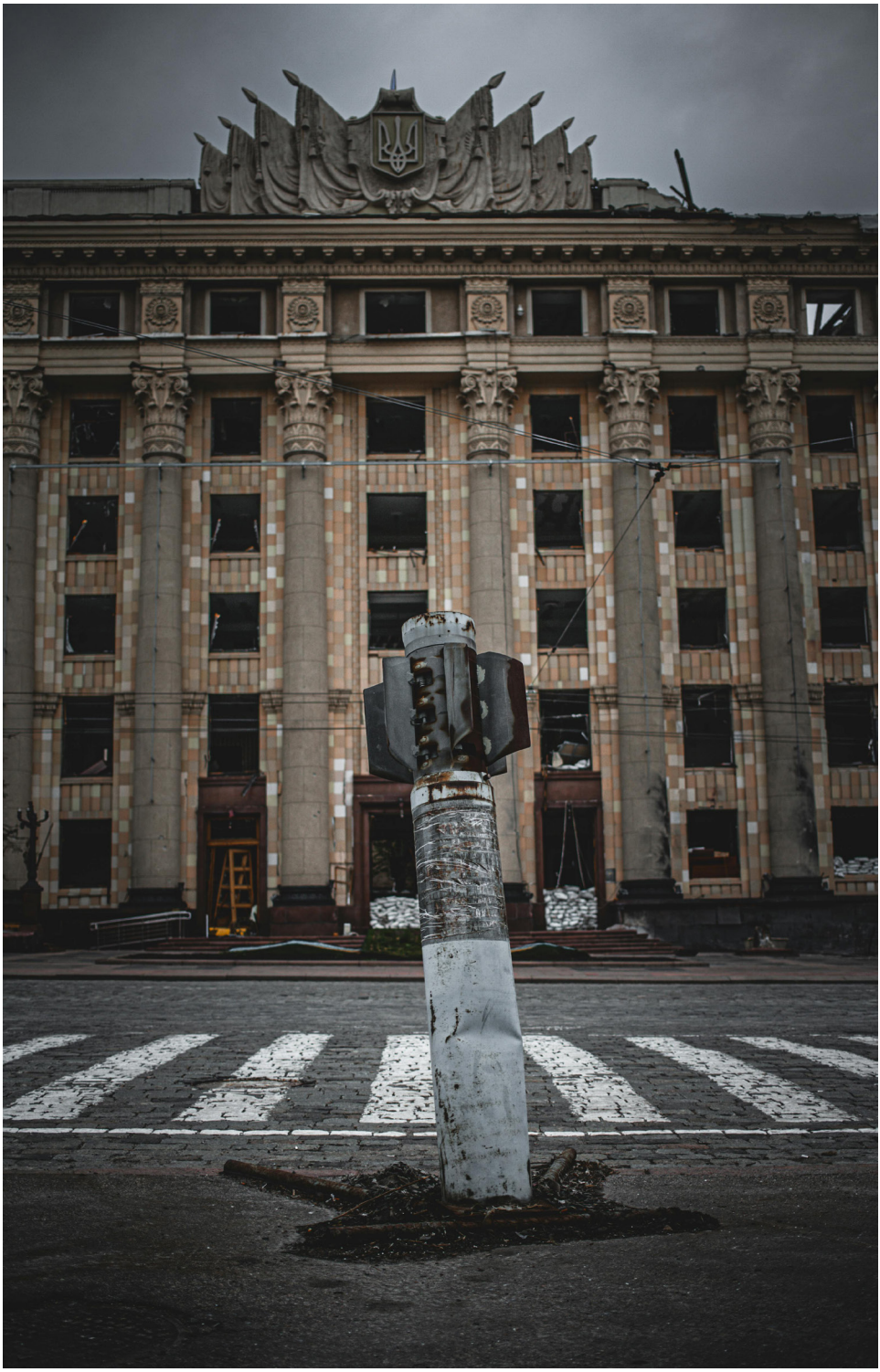

Figure 3. Unexploded Russian rocket. The city of Kharkov, Svobody Square. July 2022. Photo by Ales Ustinau (Pexels).

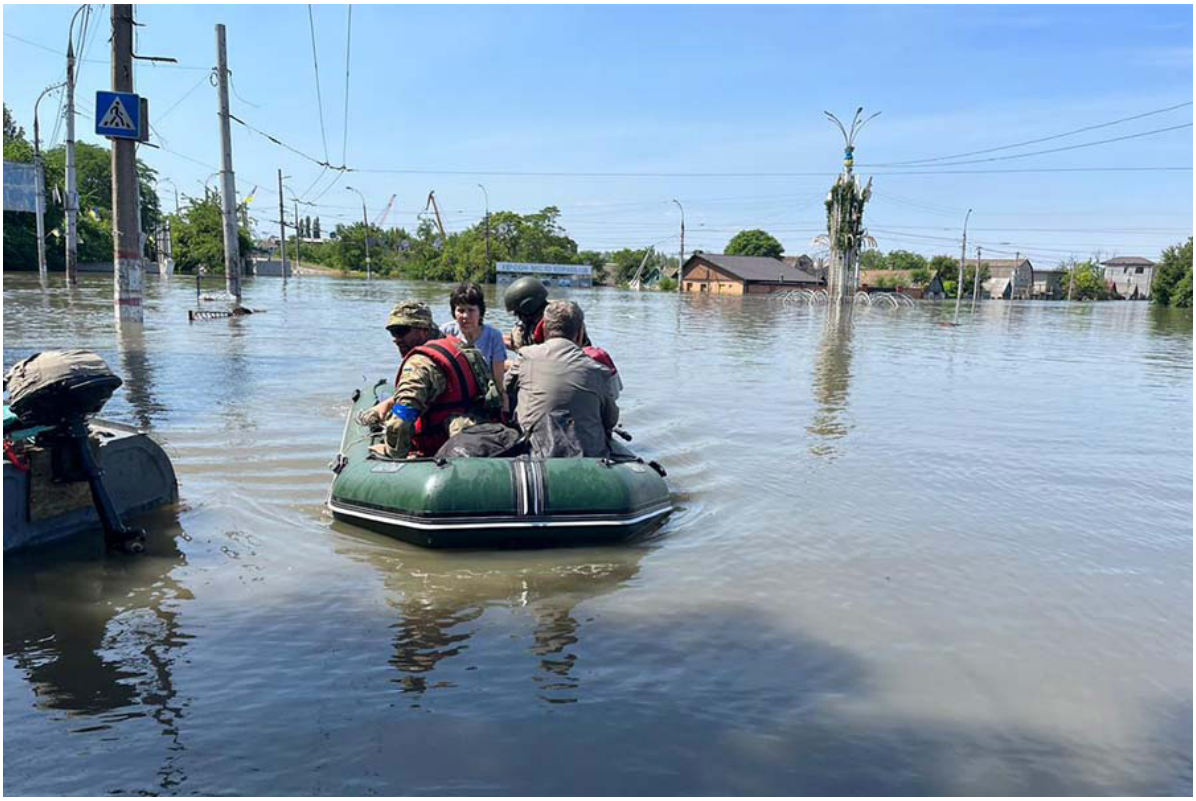

Figure 4. Flood in the city of Kherson after the Kakhovka dam destruction, June 2023 (CC license).

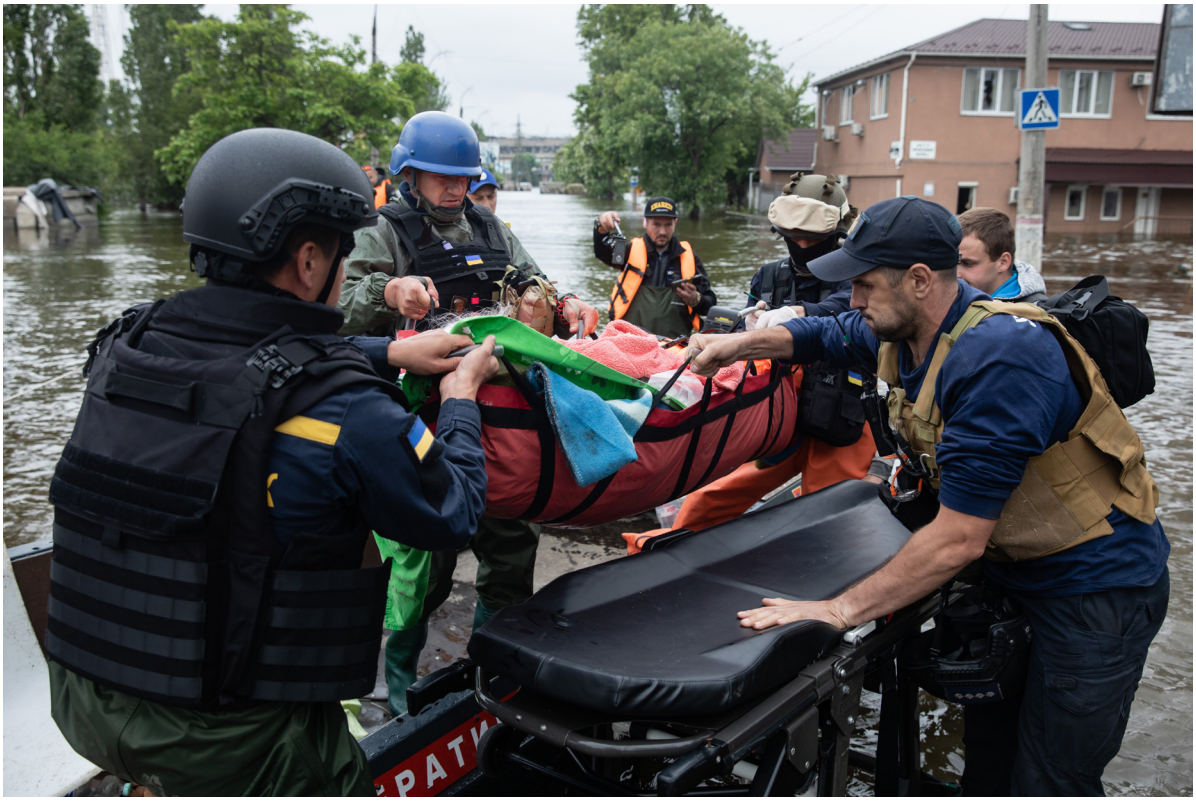

Figure 5. Ukrainian soldiers rescue civilians in Kherson, June 2023 (Shuttertock images).

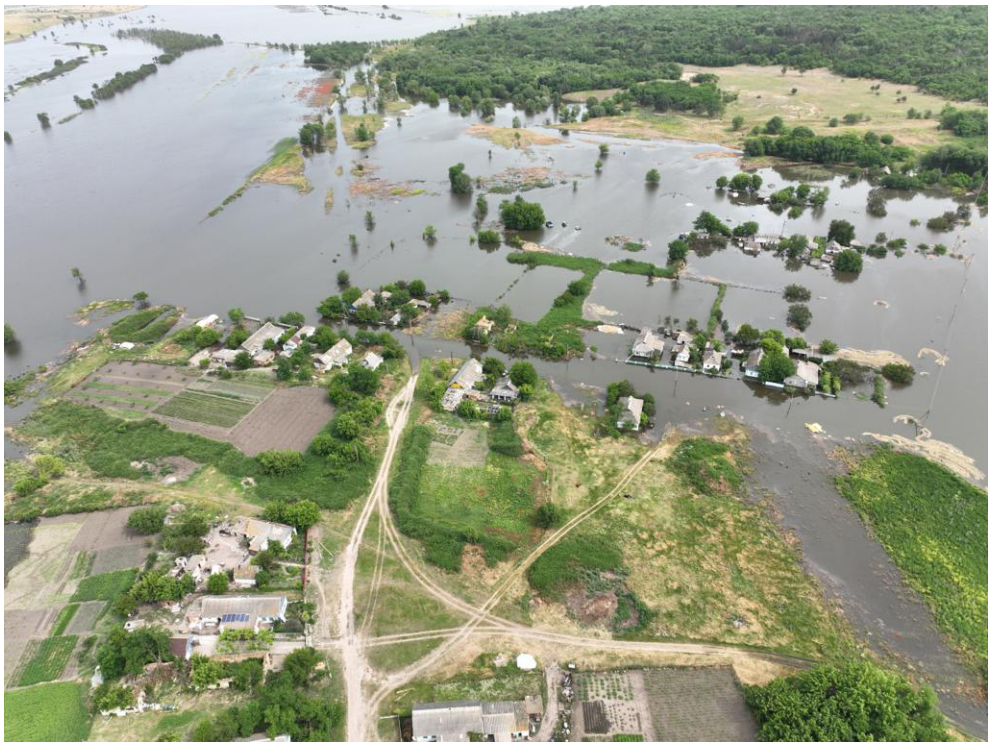

Figure 6. Flood in Kherson region, June 2023 (CC license).
Figure 7. Flood in Kherson region, June 2023 (CC license).

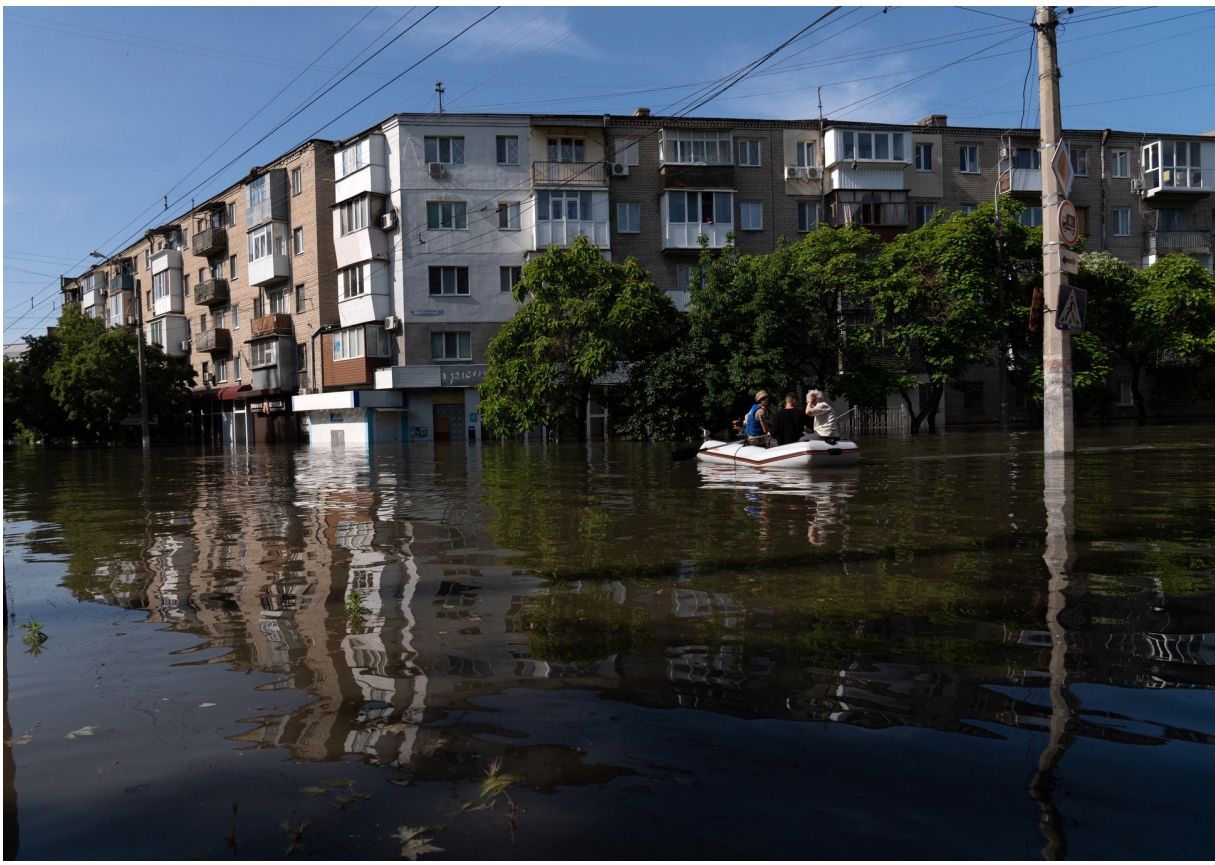

Figure 8. Flood in Kherson, June 2023 (CC license).

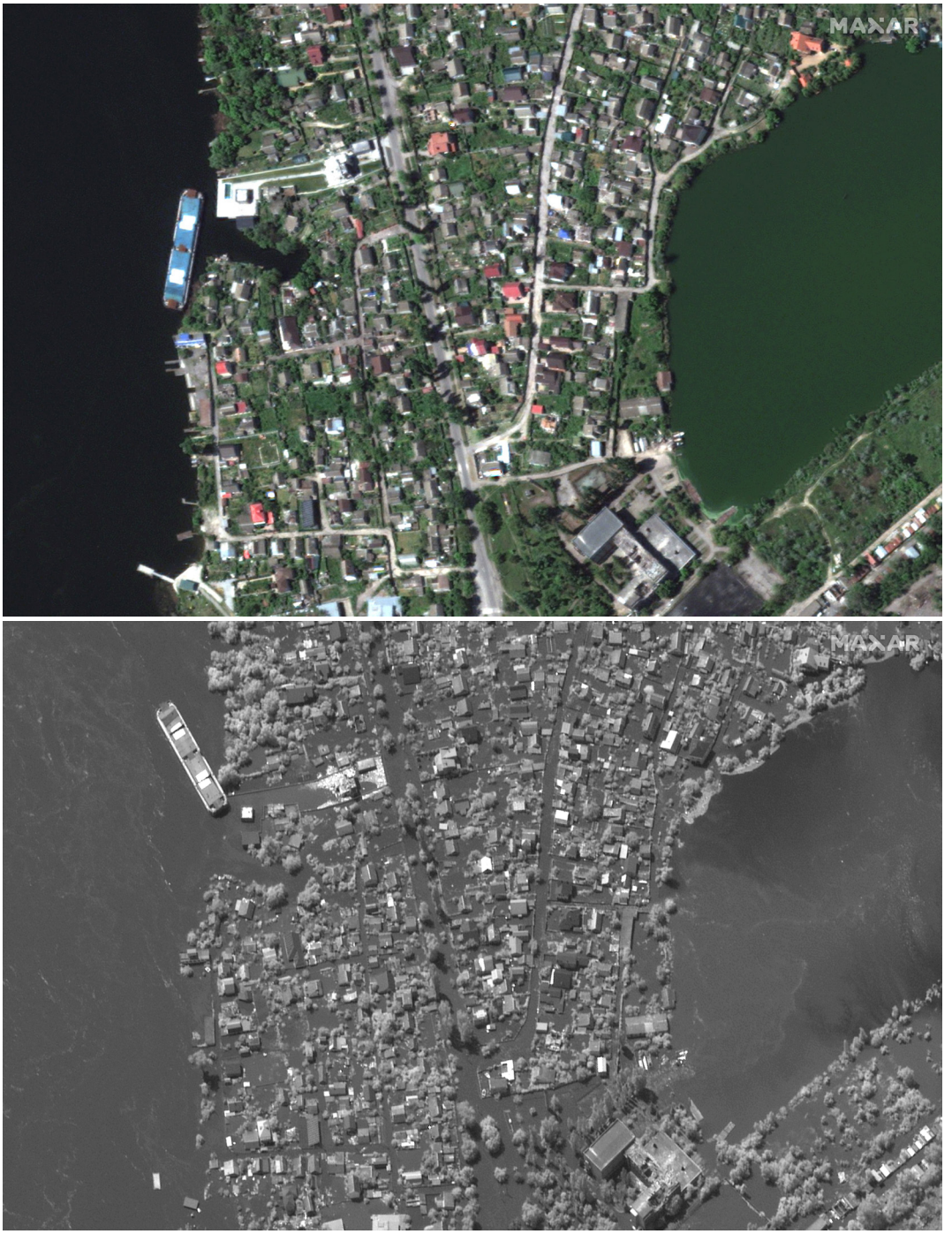

Figure 9. Satellite image of Kakhovka prior to the flood, before June 6, 2023 (CC license).
Figure 10. Satellite image of flooded Kakhovka, June 2023 (CC license).

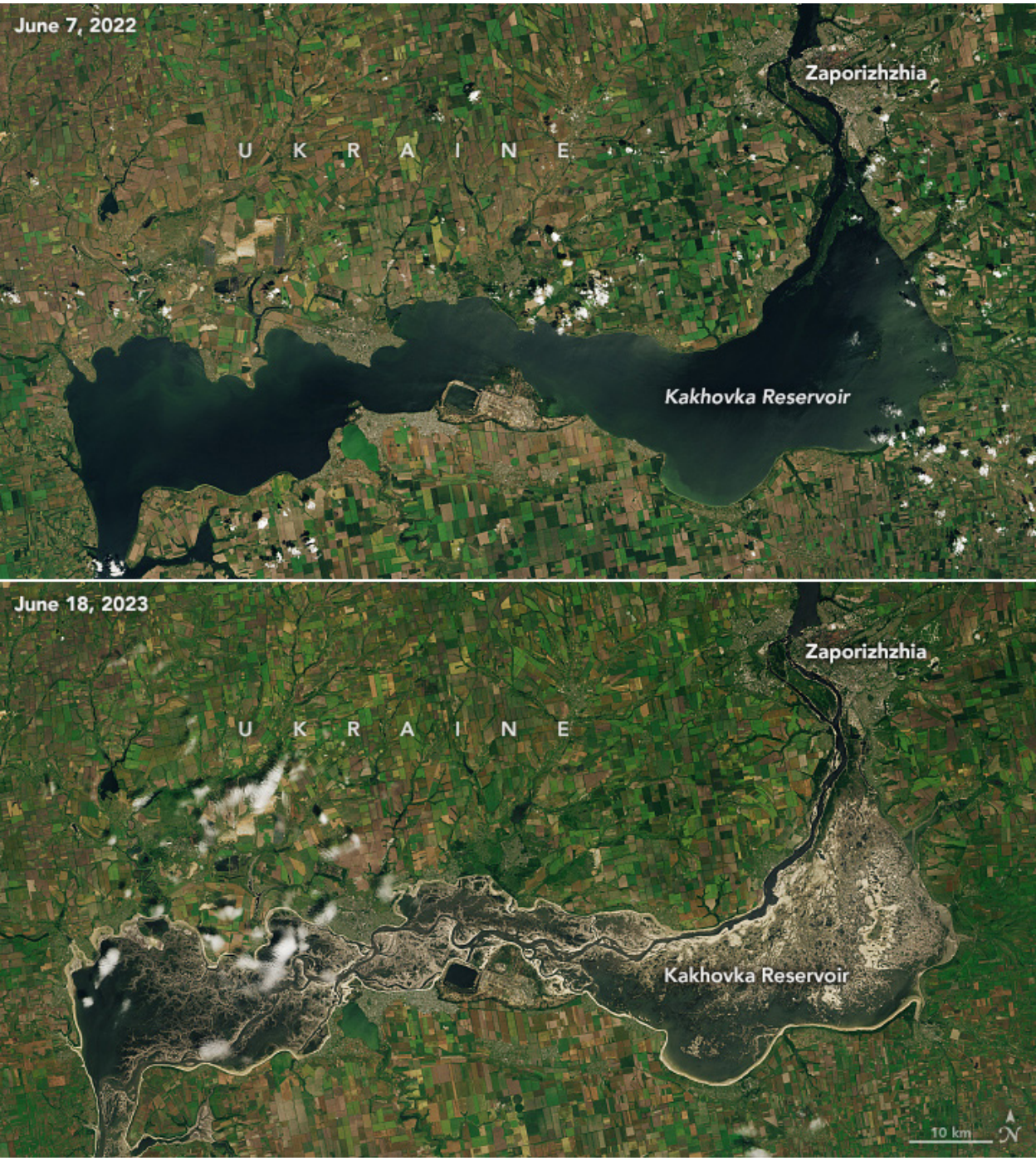

Figure 11. Satellite photographs of the Kakhovka reservoir before and after the dam destruction on the 6th of June 2023 (CC license).

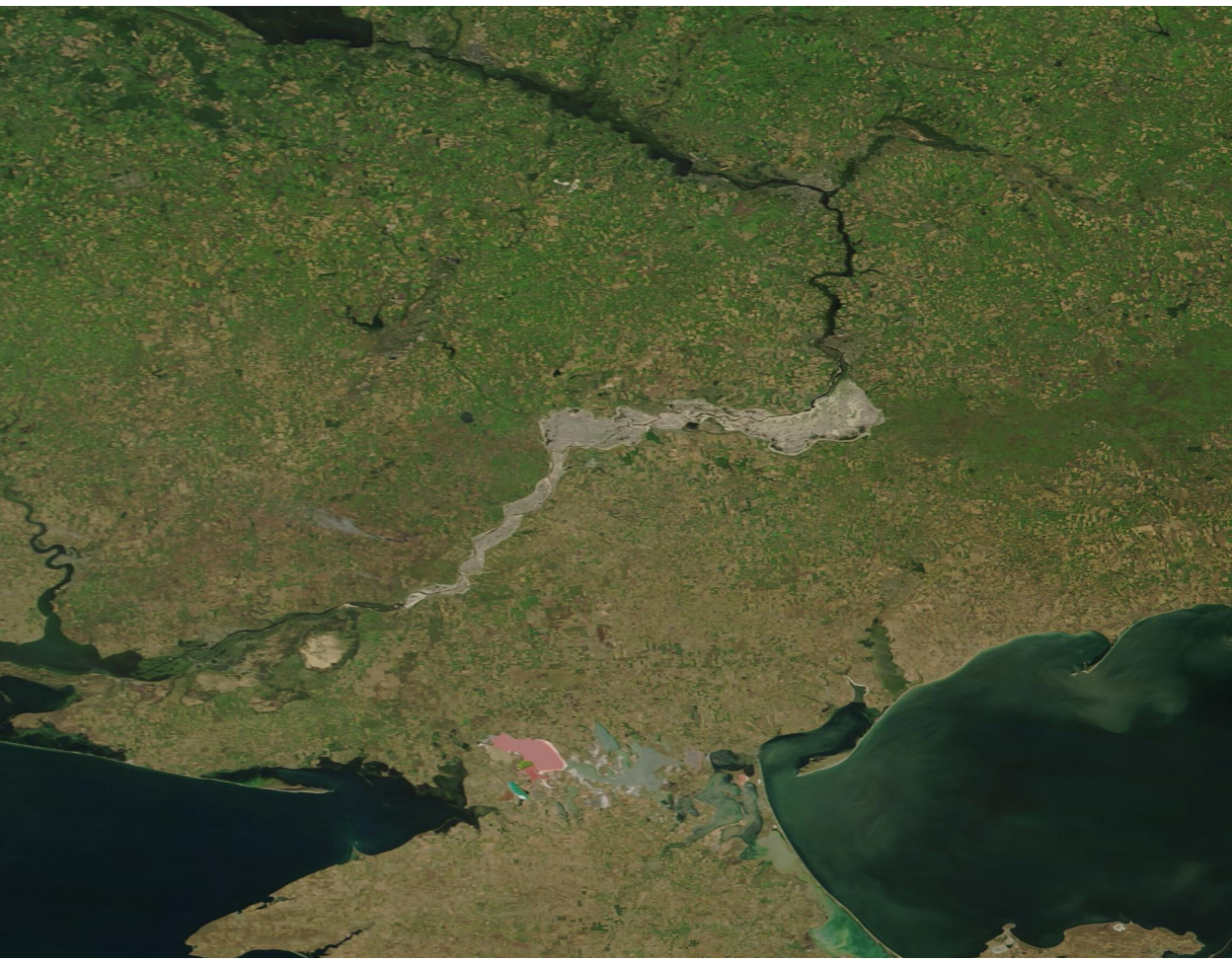

Figure 12. Satellite photograph of the dried-up Kakhovka reservoir, June 2023 (CC license).