

10. A GLACIAL PACE? MOUNTAIN CINEMA AND THE IMAGINATION OF CLIMATE CHANGE

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Mountains are at once a deeply natural phenomenon—an elevated portion of the Earth’s crust—and the product of human intervention. As Eva-Maria Müller and Christian Quendler have noted, they “are sites of tourism and industrialization, deposits of waste, and repositories of cultural memory; their forms are shaped and reshaped through processes of cultural and geological erosion” (2021, 266). The complex ecosystems of mountain regions are also susceptible to anthropogenic climate change, and so it is no surprise that they have often been featured in environmental documentaries. This is especially true for glaciers, which, as Al Gore puts it in *An Inconvenient Truth* (Davis Guggenheim, 2006), are the “canaries in the coalmine” when it comes to global warming because they are disproportionately vulnerable to changes in temperature. There is a whole range of films that highlight the climatic impact on glaciers, but in this chapter, I want to focus on three documentaries—Franny Armstrong’s *The Age of Stupid* (2009), Hannes Lang’s *Peak* (2011), and Jeff Orlowski’s *Chasing Ice* (2012)—which I will argue are paradigmatic in their uses of glaciers to forward a political and ecological argument about anthropogenic climate change.

Released within a few years of each other in the UK, Germany, and the US, all three films aim to give viewers a visceral understanding of the dramatic changes underway in these vulnerable ecosystems, but their strategies and styles differ, especially in terms of pacing. *The Age of Stupid* is made up of a fictional apocalyptic frame narrative and six documentary strands, one of

which focuses on an old mountain guide in the French Alps who recounts his experience of a changing environment. *Peak* is also set in the Alps, but it is a quiet and contemplative film that explores climate change's effects on the local skiing industry and what is left of the region's mountain farmers. *Chasing Ice*, by contrast, cues excitement as it follows *National Geographic* photographer James Balog on his quest to capture the disappearance of the Arctic glaciers in spectacular images and racing time-lapse photography. Where Orłowski speeds things up to raise alarm, Lang does the opposite, slowing the pace literally to a standstill and arresting the viewers' gaze on his protagonists and their relationship to the mountains through labor and leisure. Armstrong falls somewhere in the middle in terms of pacing, but uses the Alpine portion of her film to cue empathy and sympathy for an old mountaineer who mourns a disappearing landscape.

In what follows, I will explore how each of these documentaries invites viewers to engage with the depicted mountain environments to help them understand the dramatic changes that are already underway and need to be addressed. I will also consider the films' reception to shed light on the relationship between pacing, emotional engagement, and the potential impact on environmental attitudes and behavior. As Jane Stadler has pointed out, "the most powerful films have an afterlife, an influence that remains with us when we are affected by the sensory impact of films, captivated by story, character, and conflict, and left wondering about the issues they raise" (2008, 2). A better understanding of how such effects are achieved is relevant not only for the analysis of global mountain cinema, but also for climate change communication.

SLOWING DOWN FOR SOLASTALGIA IN *THE AGE OF STUPID*

Climate change documentaries often rely on a combination of emotional appeals and scientific facts to issue urgent warnings. *The Age of Stupid* is no exception in that it aims to warn its intended audiences in the industrialized nations that they must change their oil-guzzling lifestyles before it is too late and future generations will have to suffer the dire consequences. What makes the film special, however, is its use of a hybrid form of storytelling that mixes the factual with the fictional. It starts out by presenting viewers with an apocalyptic frame narrative, set in 2055, in which the biosphere of the Earth has been destroyed. One of the last human survivors is an old archivist (Pete Postlethwaite), who curates an enormous collection of artifacts. Sitting behind a transparent touchscreen, he zips through documentary material from "the period leading up to 2010," ostensibly to answer for himself two questions: "Why didn't we save ourselves when we could?" and "What state of mind were we in, to face extinction and simply shrug it off?" From

the archivist's mental journey through this "age of stupid," six documentary storylines emerge, all of them filmed between 2005 and 2008, which trace the interconnections between the social inequalities and environmental repercussions of our global oil culture. I want to single out one of them here, focusing on the eighty-two-year-old French mountain guide Fernand Pareau, because it shows how Armstrong uses pacing and scaling to highlight the fragility of glaciers.¹

From the start, *The Age of Stupid* is rife with contrasts in pacing as it tells its story about a civilization that is propelled forward by cheap oil only to hit the wall at full speed. The opening sequence races through millions of years of evolution, ending in the year 2055, the year of global ecocide. Once the archivist starts speaking, his tone is somber, the pace of editing slow. It quickens again when he zooms into the first "archival" footage, introducing Jeh Wadia, who, back in the Age of Stupid, owned an Indian low-cost airline. Not only is the sequence composed of quick cuts from one brief shot and scene to the next, it also features a loud, upbeat music score along with images that show airplanes taking off, traffic moving, future flight attendants training to extinguish fires, and screaming while evacuating planes. As James Cutting has noted, "more cuts mean potentially more saccades [eye movements] that drive attention; more motion also captures attention" (2016), and everything is in motion in this sequence. When Wadia speaks, both he and the hand-held camera are constantly on the move, either because he is in a car or because he is walking, the camera following him. In addition to the music, the audio track is filled with office and street noise, sounds filmmakers usually try to avoid during an interview. Here, however, they provide acoustic commentary as Wadia speaks about his capitalist success in the global South and his plans for further expansion, while showing no awareness of the ecological impact of his business. The archivist then quickly whizzes through several news clips showing "visible impacts of climate change leading up to 2010" around the world, along with reporters who are commenting on them frantically. When he finally calls up the footage that introduces the French mountaineer Pareau, it feels like someone is hitting the breaks while simultaneously turning the volume down.

Quiet piano music accompanies a beautiful long shot of an Alpine landscape during sunset, a slow pan revealing the white expanse of snowy mountains. Over this iconic shot, Pareau begins to speak in French, slowly and thoughtfully and thus in stark contrast to Wadia's hectic dialogue, while subtitles provide the English translation. "When I first saw these mountains," he says as the film cuts to a close-up of his withered face, "The beauty . . . It was truly love at first sight." He smiles as he recalls the time when he started training as a mountain guide in 1956 and the glacier was still healthy. This moment of remembrance cues empathetic responses through emotional contagion (Plantinga 1999, 240)

and sets viewers up for the next sequence. As Pareau gets dressed for a tour, the archivist fast-forwards the footage to when the guide meets up with the British windmill engineer Piers Guy and his family, the protagonists of another documentary strand of the film. Together, they visit a glacier near Chamonix that has lost a tremendous amount of ice, requiring them to climb down a series of long ladders to its surface, which used to be accessible just by stepping onto it at the same level. When they have finally reached it, a long shot shows viewers just how many ladders there are and how staggering the difference is: The glacier has lost over 150 meters in thickness since 1945. If the earlier panoramic shot was iconic in the Alpine tradition of mountain cinema, the visual proof of ice loss has become equally influential in the genre of climate change film. As in *An Inconvenient Truth*, the glacier is conceptualized as a canary in the coalmine, and thus as an ecosystem so vulnerable that it allows us to *see* with our own eyes that climate change has significant real-world impacts already. As Piers Guy puts it after his visit to Chamonix, “that the glaciers are melting is not really the point. The point is that that’s a signal that the earth is destabilizing.”

The film’s portrayal of Pareau as a wise old man who lives slowly and in sync with his environment, and who is pained by the gradual disappearance of his beloved glaciers, invites the viewer’s empathy and sympathy. “With global warming everything is different,” he observes. Trees now grow much higher, and birds no longer migrate for winter. Landscapes and ecologies are changing along with the climate, all of it caused by human carbon emissions. At the end of the film, we see Pareau join bicycle protests against the building of a second tube of the Mont Blanc tunnel, even as he feels that he is doing so in vain. “I think people in the future will be angry at us for not thinking to protect the environment,” he says in his last appearance, “we only thought to profit from it.” Rather than nostalgia, Pareau here exhibits what philosopher Glenn Albrecht has called *solastalgia*—a feeling of loss and mourning that accompanies the recognition “that the place where one resides and that one loves is under immediate assault” (2005, 45)—along with anticipatory guilt as he feels judged by future generations even though his own lifestyle is very simple.² Like the archivist’s regret, the portrayal of Pareau’s quiet reverence for the mountains and his slow way of life thus function as reminders that the achievements of our oil culture are treacherous: They allow those who can afford it to speed up their lives and reach every corner of the planet, but, as the apocalyptic framing of the film suggests, this capitalist time-space compression (Harvey 1990) is unsustainable on a finite planet.

Viewers of *The Age of Stupid* seem to have appreciated its message(s). A reception study conducted in the UK by Rachel Howell shows that “respondents emerged from the film with increased motivation to take action, and an increased belief that they could do something to prevent climate change getting

worse” (2011, 15). The film was thus successful in influencing viewers’ levels of concern about climate change along with their motivation to act, even as these effects were fleeting (Howell 2014). The design of Howell’s study does not allow any causal attribution of effects to specific aspects or moments of the film. One thing she recommends in her conclusion, however, is that “future communications may need to focus more on presenting positive stories of how ‘ordinary people’ (not ‘environmentalists’) have taken action” since “one of the two characters in the film who was trying to mitigate climate change ... was a windfarm developer” and thus someone engaged in a controversial issue in the UK (2011, 18). The latter is a reference to Piers Guy, but the second character who tries to mitigate climate change is Pareau, which begs the question of whether he, as a mountain guide, qualifies as an “ordinary person” or what exactly counts as mitigation. A look at Hannes Lang’s *Peak*, which is almost exclusively interested in people who, like Pareau, live and work in the Alps, allows us to consider these questions while also paying attention to Lang’s representation of “mountain time.” While *The Age of Stupid* might be seen as subscribing to a common visual rhetoric that contrasts busy city life with slow country life, although this is complicated both by its featuring of the traffic thundering into the Mont Blanc tunnel and the other three documentary strands in the film, *Peak* reminds us that modern mountains are being swiftly destroyed by the tourism industry.

A GLACIAL PACE: SLOW CINEMA ON THE MOUNTAIN IN *PEAK*

If the parts of *The Age of Stupid* that are set in the French Alps are slow, *Peak* brings viewers’ perception of the Alpine region literally to a standstill. At various points in the film, unnamed people stand awkwardly, interrupting either their skiing trip or their daily work in the mountains to stare silently at the camera for long, uncomfortable periods. At its heart, *Peak* documents how the human desire to glide on snow has shaped mountain sites as well as the lives of those who earn their living fulfilling that desire. Moreover, it contrasts its critical view of the Austrian and French winter tourism industries with its portrayal of a dying Italian mountain village and the traditional farming practices that sustain its few remaining inhabitants. However, since it was filmed at a time when the Alpine skiing industry was already struggling with massive snow and ice loss, it has also, almost by accident, become a film about climate change. Nicole Seymour has called it an “unnatural” and “deadpan” climate change documentary (2018, 4) because it “resists many of the rules of that form, especially the imperative to impart knowledge, through modes such as flat affect, irony, and awkwardness” (41) and lacks a “straightforward ethical stance” (47), making it a typical example of the *Bad Environmentalism* that Seymour explores in her book.

What the film also lacks is movement, thereby frustrating viewers who do not appreciate what has become known as “slow cinema” (Romney 2004, 20): a form of arthouse film that defies mainstream conventions of filmmaking, especially as they relate to pacing. According to James Quandt, the typical features of slow cinema include “adagio rhythms and oblique narrative; a tone of quietude and reticence ... attenuated takes, long tracking or panning shots, often of depopulated landscapes” as well as “prolonged hand-held follow shots of solo people walking” (2009, 76). In the genre of mountain cinema, Jin Jiang’s *One Day* (2020) is a typical example, as is Lang’s own short film *Riafn* (2020). But many of the elements of slow cinema can also be found in *Peak*, for example when a hand-held camera follows the heavy step of a mountain farmer as he slowly makes his way up a narrow path, when machinery moves in the distance to carve a giant water reservoir into the mountain, or when a group of workers cover a retreating glacier with long white plastic sheets to decelerate the melting. “By creating new ways of seeing the Alps,” writes Seth Peabody, “while also helping to build a culture of tourism that led viewers to visit the mountains in person, [mountain cinema] contributed to the rise of infrastructure on the seemingly natural landscapes it celebrates” (2021, 3). If anything, *Peak* attempts to do the opposite, creating a way of seeing the Alps that foregrounds human labor and that lays bare the sheer absurdity of the enormous infrastructure that is now necessary to slow the pace of ice loss and create artificial snow in the barren Alpine landscape.

Importantly, *Peak* does not reveal the identity of its protagonists, be they the workers who labor on the mountains or of those who come to ski on them. As Seymour notes,

Lang offers no title card, no identification for these individuals, not even an ensuing image that would somehow contextualize or narrativize their presence. Who are they and what are they doing here? ... Should we laugh at them? Be moved by their performance? Lang does not make any clear affective appeal. (59–60)

There is one exception, however, and that is Lang’s depiction of mountain farmers in the Piedmont (Mayr 2016). Their simple way of life is contrasted with the high-tech machinations of the skiing industry in ways that are reminiscent of Armstrong’s comparison of the mountain guide’s life with that of Jeh Wadia, the airline entrepreneur. Just like Fernand Pareau, the farmers are people who have grown old in the mountains and who mourn a form of life that will soon be lost as the young generations move away in search of better opportunities. Seymour argues that even in its depiction of the farmers, *Peak* shows a “resistance to the melancholic obsession with the past” (66) that she locates in other environmental documentaries such as *Chasing Ice*.

And indeed, the old woman who speaks at the end of Lang's film asserts that "it makes no sense to think about times gone by."³ She continues to observe, however, that "humanity has invented so many things, has come so far. But it has also destroyed a lot, the most beautiful things. Save yourself if you can." Like Pareau, then, she is painfully aware of what is being lost, and although she says these words in a medium shot rather than a close-up, her solastalgic awareness and somber tone cue feelings of loss and regret.

However, unlike *The Age of Stupid*, there is no marked difference in pacing between *Peak*'s portrayal of the farmers' traditional way of life and the world of capitalist creation and destruction. Steffen Moestrup's commentary is indicative, as the main issue he has with the film

is its eagerness to be slow. Most of the scenes in *Peak* are made using either a static camera which holds the image for a very long time or using slow tracking shots. Some scenes really deserve this aesthetic. For example, the great mountain views where the camera slowly starts to move and reveals people working in the mountain like small ants in a large nest. But many of the scenes cannot cope with the slowness. Eventually you start to ignore the depiction of many everyday things. An old man cooking. A woman taking out the trash. The wind blowing in the trees. ... The slowness becomes an attitude and feels somewhat self-appreciative in a way not always appropriate for the film. (2012)

The dominant feeling *Peak* has cued in this viewer is thus a mixture of annoyance and boredom, the latter being another typical feature of slow cinema. In her 2018 book, *Poetics of Slow Cinema*, Emre Çağlayan singles out nostalgia, absurd humor, and boredom as the three intrinsic dimensions of the genre, all three of which are present in *Peak*. Lang has explained in an interview that his intention was to offer audiences a film that invites them to discover things for themselves rather than serving pre-packed meanings and positions (Mayr 2016). He is aware that viewers who watch it with the expectation of receiving explanations will likely leave the theater frustrated, but hopes that those who are willing to embark on a journey of slow discovery—even if things are not readily comprehensible—will enjoy the film. Moestrup's response shows, however, that even viewers who are willing to go on that imaginary journey can get frustrated by the film's extreme slowness, and his complaints echo the results of a reception study that the media scholar Brigitte Hipfl and I conducted in Austria and Germany.⁴

As in Howell's study, our sample was not representative, and the results are thus not generalizable. It was nevertheless remarkable for us to see how difficult it was—especially for younger viewers—to cope with the pacing and style of the film. "Boredom" was a word that came up again and again in responses,

usually in the form of a complaint. Participants criticized that the film was “way too long” (w/23), that “everything [was] extremely dry” (m/22), that the “long shots without sound or movement were boring” (w/21), and that “nothing moves in that movie” (m/25). What nevertheless affected especially older participants (50+) were “the old people still working hard” (w/63), “the extreme intervention into nature” (m/52), and the “white slopes in the middle of a barren, un-wintery landscape” (w/60). Indeed, the hard labor of the old farmers and the massive interventions into the natural landscape of the Alps seem to have engaged these participants more than the thought that the observed changes might be due to climate change. Arguably, *Peak* does focus “on presenting positive stories of how ‘ordinary people’ (not ‘environmentalists’) have taken action” to address climate change (Howell 2011, 18), but since the depicted efforts are adaptation rather than prevention or mitigation, they may not have given viewers much incentive to consider changing their own actions. For most viewers, however, it was the pacing that stood in the way of any kind of engagement, and not a single one of our student participants said they would recommend the film to friends.

Given Lang’s statements, it would hardly make sense to blame his film for its failures in climate change communication when such communication presupposes the kind of explanations he deliberately eschews. While slow cinema has often been associated with non-Western responses to social and environmental issues (Hediger 2013), *Peak* demonstrates that this temporal strategy can also be found in European documentaries. Moreover, Lang has made clear that his main goal when making the film was to confront viewers with a landscape in which humans can only survive by actively shaping it (Mayr 2016). In that sense, the skiing industry is a continuation of the traditional work of mountain farmers rather than its opposite. But it is the scale of these operations that Lang wants to direct viewers’ attention to by forcing them to contemplate them in long, static shots. What they take away from this experience is up to them. With that in mind, I will now turn to the third and last film, Jeff Orlowski’s *Chasing Ice*, which moves at a very different pace and makes no secret of its intention to educate viewers.

SPEEDING UP ARCTIC TIME: *CHASING ICE* AS QUEST FOR EVIDENCE

Chasing Ice chronicles *National Geographic* photographer James Balog’s quest to speed up the gradual disappearance of the Arctic glaciers in such a way that the process becomes visible to the human eye and therefore more easily comprehensible to the human mind. His Extreme Ice Survey (EIS) drives sophisticated photographic technology to the limits of what it can do while at the same time depending on that technology for its success. Balog’s award-winning photography features prominently in the film, capturing the visual

beauty of the Polar region and thereby providing viewers with something to admire and, eventually, to mourn or feel solastalgic about. For Seymour, Orłowski's film is a classic example of "didactic environmental documentary" (2018, 47) because, like *An Inconvenient Truth*, it draws "heavily on expert knowledge" and aims to convince viewers with its authority and visual evidence. I have written in detail about the film's narrative strategies (Weik von Mossner 2017) but want to return to it here to contrast its depiction of glaciers with those of the two other films I have discussed.

Balog's plan is established at the beginning of the film: Rather than using isolated snapshots in time, or even the before-and-after pictures in earlier documentaries and other forms of climate change communication (Doyle 2009), he wants to provide the world with sophisticated time-lapse photography that will compress the gradual change occurring over a period of several years into just a few seconds. His stated belief is that such speeding up of glacial time will allow viewers to understand the magnitude of the anthropogenic impact on the Arctic region and motivate them to take action toward mitigating climate change. Ironically, what stands in the way of getting that evidence is the Arctic environment itself, which, as one of Balog's team members points out in the film, "is not the nicest environment" for the dozens of automatic time-lapse cameras they install all over the Arctic region.

The plotline of *Chasing Ice* is a familiar one, well anchored in the genre of melodrama. Balog emerges as a hero who risks both his financial security and his health to document a disappearing environment and perhaps save it from annihilation. This "obsession," as his wife calls it in the film, drives him to the limits of what he can do. He also suffers greatly when it turns out that the time-lapse cameras cannot function in these climatic conditions and that the work of many months has been in vain. Importantly, the film makes clear that Balog does not suffer for personal gain but for the greater good. This well-trying narrative strategy eventually culminates in several spectacular successes, as the Balog team is not only able to get the cameras to work, but also is serendipitously present when a chunk of ice the size of Manhattan breaks off the Jakobshavn Glacier in Greenland and the event is captured on film.

The resulting footage, just like the time-lapse photography of the retreating glaciers that Balog presents in the final minutes of the film, is nothing less than breathtaking as it shows the mighty glaciers changing shape, crumbling, and retreating within seconds. Whereas *Peak* invites viewers to take their time contemplating the absurdity and desperation involved in covering a glacier with white plastic foil to preserve it as long as possible for skiing, *Chasing Ice* wants them to watch in awe as they witness the expedited process of melting, thus turning climate change into a sublime spectacle. Where *The Age of Stupid* shows an assortment of ladders to give audiences a sense of just how much the glacier has melted over the past eighty years, *Chasing Ice* uses other visual

aids to provide scale. In the time-lapse episodes showing the melting glaciers, it inserts lines to mark earlier locations of the glacier's calving front (the area where ice chunks break off) and sometimes moves the camera when the calving front has retreated so dramatically that it is no longer in the frame. In the case of the Jakobshavn Glacier, it superimposes a three-dimensional map of Manhattan over the footage of the calving event to help viewers understand its enormous dimensions, which otherwise would not be visually comprehensible because of the lack of comparison. Several close-ups of audience members watching the footage during one of Balog's slide shows portrayed in the film reveal precisely those feelings of shock and awe, inviting viewers to feel alongside them. To emphasize the images, the film also provides a melancholic music score cueing feelings of loss and mourning. Balog thus achieves what he had set out to do, and, given the success of the film and the popularity of his related lecture show, one could speculate that his work has also helped raise awareness of the ice loss in the Arctic.

Speeding up glacial time seems to be a successful strategy in climate change communication if the goal is to capture attention and engage viewers emotionally. That is at least what our reception study showed, which included *Chasing Ice* as a second film. Our hypothesis was that people would mostly name the spectacular time-lapse footage of the retreating glaciers in response to our question of which moments in the film had touched them the most, and it was indeed a response we received frequently. Some people reported fascination and sadness, others a deep sense of shock, often in combination with an acknowledgment that they had previously not been aware of the urgency of the situation.

What the film's depiction of glaciers seems to have achieved, then, at least in the short run and with the groups we interviewed, is the raising of awareness and the evocation of emotions.⁵ In some cases, this also led to an expressed desire to help bring about social change through personal engagement. Others, on the contrary, expressed a sense of helplessness and the belief that there was nothing they could do to stop or change the ice loss in the Arctic or climate change more generally. Some even stated that they would probably forget the film before long because they were too busy getting on with their normal lives. It should also be noted here that our results were quite mixed regarding viewers' responses to Balog's role in the film. While some empathized with his struggle to get the visual evidence he felt he needed, others were annoyed by Orłowski's choice to dedicate so much time to Balog's knee surgery, which they felt had nothing to do with the topic of the film. But if we leave the melodramatic structure of the film aside, we can conclude that presenting glaciers as canaries in the coalmine is a helpful way of raising awareness of climate change, and that pace appears to matter in such presentations.

CONCLUSION

Given the commercial success of *Chasing Ice*, it is not surprising that there is by now a slew of films that have tried variations of its narrative strategies. Orłowski himself has made a second film, *Chasing Coral* (2017), that basically uses the same narrative structure but takes it underwater. Other filmmakers have continued the tradition on mountain peaks and in Arctic regions. Looking only at the past few years, Josh Murphy's *Purple Mountains* (2020), Craig Leeson's *The Last Glaciers* (2022), and Fredric Golding's *Meltdown* (2021) are all documentaries that rely on similar mixes of spectacular imagery, a quest narrative, and urgent calls for change. While the first two films feature white male protagonists who consider themselves mountain experts because of their professions, *Meltdown* centers on a female photographer, Lynn Davis, and a male scientist, Anthony Leiserowitz, but its central storyline is nevertheless a version of the one presented in *Chasing Ice*. Featuring professional snowboarder Jeremy Jones, *Purple Mountains* covers its hero's "physical and philosophical journey to find common ground with fellow outdoor people across diverse political backgrounds" as he takes them on mountain tours. *The Last Glaciers* was produced for distribution in IMAX theatres and places even more emphasis on its spectacular footage of mountain landscapes. However, as Carla Hay puts it pointedly in her review of the film in *Culture Mix*, the film "comes across as a ... vanity project for filmmaker Craig Leeson to have footage of him paragliding over famous glacial mountains instead of being an important call to action about climate change" (2022). Going on a quest for dazzling footage of dying glaciers has become popular in climate change film, but that alone is hardly enough to make an impact on society, not least because we must assume that a certain familiarization has set in by now.

There are also examples of recent films treading in the less spectacular footsteps of the other two films when it comes to representing glaciers as evidence of climate change. Rather than showing protagonists on a quest to secure breathtaking footage of ecological destruction, they portray local populations coping with environmental changes due to climate change. They include films such as Costa Boutsikaris and Anna Palmer's *Inhabitants* (2021), which depicts sustainable land management practices of Native American Tribes. They also include projects such as Caroline Hedin's *Rockies Repeat* (2022), which features a group of Indigenous and settler women artists hiking the Canadian Rocky Mountains and recreating artworks produced a century earlier to show how the landscapes have changed since then.

In the end, there is no best way to depict mountains to raise awareness of climate change. While mainstream productions such as *Chasing Ice* might reach more viewers, there is an audience for almost any kind of film, including

slow ones, and covering any country, region, or community. What they all share, regardless of their pacing, style, and budget, is a problem that is typical for documentary film. As the psychologist and film scholar Ed S. Tan has noted, “because of self-selection mechanisms, we would not expect major shifts of worldview in the natural audience as a result of watching a movie. Natural viewers tend to be attracted by the kind of film that fits their beliefs” (2011, 73). This is especially true for documentaries, which rarely reach audiences that were not already interested in the issues they present. We should not forget, however, that themes and genres overlap, and that we sometimes watch a film because we are interested in one issue only to learn about another. And given the vulnerability of mountain regions to shifts in temperature and precipitation, we could argue with Mark Bould (2022) that every mountain film is also a film about climate change, either because it documents past climatic conditions or because it features contemporary landscapes that are the result of shifting weather patterns. It is not least in this way, then, that global mountain cinema will continue to be an important genre for climate change communication.

NOTES

1. For a detailed analysis of the other strands of the film, see Weik von Mossner (2013).
2. In Albrecht’s definition, solastalgia is one of the *psychoterratic dis-eases*—an umbrella term that bundles ailments such as “ecoanxiety, nature deficit order, eco-paralysis, solastalgia, eco-nostalgia and global dread” (2010).
3. I’m quoting from the English subtitles here as the woman speaks in Italian.
4. The study was conducted in the winter of 2014–2015. Our subjects consisted of several groups of students at the University of Klagenfurt in Austria and the visitors of a public screening of the film as part of the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society’s Green Visions film series in the Gasteig Cultural Center in Munich, Germany. Subjects received questionnaires directly after the viewing of the film, and the Klagenfurt students also talked about their viewing experience in moderated group discussions.
5. Some of what we heard from our participants is echoed in the testimonials the filmmakers themselves have collected (“Chasing Ice Testimonials”).

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