

Climate Crisis

The climate crisis is *the* social challenge of our time and a central issue in global politics. Activist groups such as Fridays for Future, Greenpeace, Extinction Rebellion, and Last Generation are fighting for an immediate change in political policy so that the climate targets agreed upon in the Paris Agreement can be met and it might still be possible to avoid the feared “tipping points” when processes of change in the global system develop an unstoppable dynamic of their own, for instance when the Gulf Stream current breaks down, and as a consequence, the continued existence of life on the planet is put into question. The fear of the climate catastrophe has replaced older doomsday scenarios such as the nuclear devastation of the earth.

It is not only since the wave of environmentally critical films in the mid-1990s, for which Scott Macdonald later coined the term “Eco Cinema” (Macdonald 2004), that films, television programs, computer games, and audiovisual media in general have been important actors in this debate. They take up social discourses on climate change and the climate crisis, present them in narrative or argumentative forms, address the power relationship between business and politics, and ensure the dissemination of criticism of how the ecosystem and the humanitarian catastrophes resulting from climate change are handled. Media educate, call for political action, and seek to achieve social effects. In addition, they find effective ways to present data about changes in the earth, atmosphere, and climate that has been collected for more than a hundred years. They map past developments and projections about the future of the Earth system; they visualize the state of the Earth as determined by scientific measurements; and they translate data into effective images.

In this respect, audiovisual media are particularly suitable for addressing the climate crisis: they can show changes in landscape and nature visually, vividly portray the consequences of global warming, and create future scenarios (the science fiction author and climate activist Dan Bloom coined the term “climate fiction” for this genre). The evidence of the images, like the power of the stories, helps to give meaning to the changing environment, to highlight and make tangible the urgency of the climate crisis, or to reflect on how humanity can adapt to new climate conditions. The different forms of representation, media discourses, and respective accentuations are related to the chosen filmic form: Documentary footage of forest fires or floods tells different stories than nature depictions in epic dramas or the apocalyptic scenarios in disaster films like *THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW* or in computer games that let the players experience survival on a devastated earth. Experimental or essayistic films refer to climate change differently than impact documentaries like *AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH* with their affect rhetoric and direct appeals.

But it would be wrong to see audiovisual media exclusively as fighters for the just cause: “Greenwashing” strategies or attempts at “climate denial” and lobbying in the service of energy companies, the oil-producing industry, airlines, or meat producers are also pursued with the help of image films and advertising clips: for example, by propagating idyllic scenarios of a perfect nature or disparaging climate activists as “climate terrorists.”

Technical media make it possible to measure, calculate, and simulate climate change. Animations of observational data, for example on sea level rise, average temperature, or CO₂ concentration in the atmosphere, vividly illustrate that the ecosystem is heading for tipping points at which global warming becomes irreversible and leads to additional dynamic acceleration. Such illustrations of scientific predictions can underline the enormous urgency of the climate crisis.

At the same time, the productivity of the media in monitoring and depicting climate change must itself be questioned. For example, visions and simulations of the future are often fascinating because of their spectacular images or the volumes of data they process. But every film production leaves an ecological footprint, every streamed television series consumes fossil energy, and every computer model emits heat into the environment. Thus, the roles that media play in the complex fabric of the climate crisis are diverse and highly ambivalent.

Montage AV invites submissions of essays that address issues related to the representation and thematization of the climate crisis in audiovisual media and the climate impacts of media production and use. Possible topics could be:

- Addressing climate change in different media, forms, and genres.
- Historically changing representations and discourses on the climate crisis
- Dystopian or utopian future scenarios
- Translation of climate data into images and diagrams
- Specific common topics in the debate: fossil energy consumption, industrial agriculture, increasing meat consumption (and their alternatives)
- Addressing political debates on climate impact (claims for compensation by countries of the Global South, financing of climate-adaptive measures, for example in agriculture, migration flows resulting from climate change, etc.)
- Audiovisual disputes, “image wars” between climate activist groups and energy companies, or thematization of climate protests and civil protest movements on TV
- Impact strategies of climate change documentaries.
- Technical media and climate change
- Sustainability in film, television, and games production

We welcome submissions of texts in German or English with a maximum length of 35,000 characters (approx. 6000 words). If possible, use *Montage AV*'s style sheet (https://www.montage-av.de/Stylesheet_AutorInnen_2021_05_12.pdf) or an Author-Date citation system.

If you have any questions or would like further information, please contact the guest editor of this issue, Judith Keilbach (j.keilbach@uu.nl), or Britta Hartmann (britta.hartmann@uni-bonn.de). Please send submissions to these addresses or to montage@snaflu.de by April 30, 2023.