

FILM REVIEWS

Weather Report. 2008. Directed by Brenda Longfellow. Produced by Sienna Films Productions VI Inc. in coproduction with the National Film Board of Canada.
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Reviewed by Renee Patten, DePaul University, Chicago, IL 60614

The film *Weather Report* presented by Bullfrog Films drills into the viewer's head the current state of the global environment and the effects that global climate change is having on the rural indigenous people of the world. The movie opens by examining the lives of the "people of the ice." These isolated people of the north are experiencing firsthand the tundra melting caused by climate change. The people of the villages tell amazing stories of the tundra from their childhoods compared with today. Their recollections really encourage you to question your own contributions to destroying landscapes you may never see in your lifetime. These people have nowhere else to go; their lands and homes are literally melting away at their feet. There is no more land to discover and nowhere else to obtain much-needed resources.

The next issue the movie strikes up is the grasslands and farmlands turning into a dustbowl, mainly in Mongolia and China. Industrial irrigation there is turning farmlands into deserts. Droughts, massive overgrazing, and unsustainable farming practices are creating a dust bowl that continues to overtake massive square miles of land. The native people testify that, even with well water available, there is only around a 50% chance the well pumps will function adequately to generate enough water for the community.

The film also takes us to Bombay (aka Mumbai), where extreme weather events are clearly being caused by the changing atmosphere. Also, the city's water has no place to go because of blocked drainage systems, which the government is currently blaming on the poor. Overall the government mostly ignores this, though, as it constructs new buildings, builds an airport landing-strip mall, and develops industry in the floodplain. Recently, even a new stock exchange was built on a floodplain. The film tells of predictions that in 40 years most of Bombay will be under water.

The majority of the film discusses each different climate at length and examines the lifestyles of the native people and how climate change is affecting them. It seems like this

pattern is going to continue without any solutions or hope for the future. Luckily at the end of the film some of this information is included. The first solution the movie analyzes is in China. One solution China explores is having its schoolchildren plant billions of trees each year. Unfortunately the rate of tree survival is not high: perhaps less than 50%. The most inspiring part of this story is the passion of the teachers, who say they will continue to plant more trees with the schoolchildren each year. They are solidly motivated to help the environment while simultaneously instilling their students with this moral perspective. This is in direct contrast to the common attitude in China that nothing can be done about the situation. The film portrays the Chinese as rather pessimistic about the future of climate change. Even while the teachers and children of China are trying their best to help solve some problems, others there argue that the slogans about planting trees are simply hollow words and the effort won't have a significant effect.

The native people in the grasslands and farmlands of Mongolia and China face similar challenges as the people of the tundra. As the desert advances, the Mongolians and Chinese have nowhere to go. Currently the desert is 70 km away from Beijing, but the film warns that in a few years the desert will be at the city's gates. As China's gross domestic product grows, most industry continues to be powered by coal. During production of this film China had just surpassed the United States in highest amount of greenhouse gas emissions. The Chinese have an economic growth mentality to create profit now and deal with the consequences later. Sadly this means by sustaining the economy the consequence is devastating environmental damage.

China's global economy can keep expanding, but the film argues that the atmosphere will suffer. In a global economy, economic growth is considered a demonstration of a nation's progress. Although this expansion benefits a nation's economy in the short term, the movie persuades you to consider the long-term affects of unsustainable economic growth, which include environmental destruction, among several other problems.

The film also expresses that the United States, Canada, and European Union have overused their land space for economic growth, which has led to emissions that threaten the world. The next good portion of the movie continues to discuss issues and options related to how global climate change is affecting us and those around us.

At the end of the film, an insightful question is raised about how we can change our current path toward destruction.

Some believe the economic market will fix its own mistakes, while others call for a clean-tech revolution. This film sees electric technology as the future of industry, and discusses a hypothetical system that would deliver prosperity to everyone, along with a clean and healthy future. Another suggestion the film presents is to provide energy locally instead of on a massive scale. The sustainable society of the future will have options; for example, an entire city could be powered by biomass, wind, and solar energy.

At the end of the film, the story line moves away from environmental problems to problems along the Somalia border that involve the government and security. This seemed to be a slight tangent from the film's main topics. The film ends with motivational advice: stop collaborating with evil things. By presenting information on global climate change, this movie tries to encourage the audience to go out and individually educate other people about it, because the more people know about this situation, the more can be done to help.

A Documentary Proves Conservation Is Possible Anywhere

Milking the Rhino. Directed by David E. Simpson. 2008. Bullfrog Films, Oley, PA. doi:10.1017/S14660466099007X

Reviewed by Kristie Ann Conklin, Public Policy Undergraduate Student, DePaul University; (email) Kristie.conklin@mac.com

David Simpson's fast-paced documentary *Milking the Rhino* opens with competing images of Africa: some as Americans imagine, vast rural spaces with little technology, and others of cities filled with white tourists and escalators. These opposing images allude to the postcolonial conflicts that Africa faces while creating conservation programs. By examining the two African countries of Kenya and Namibia, the film provides instances where conservation appears possible and others where it seems a little less hopeful.

In many typical documentaries about Africa, one sees pictures of plentiful, undisrupted, and magnificent wildlife; however, as this film is unique in discussing, if the camera person would just turn around, he or she would see a world where people are not only privileged to have wildlife live around them, but forced to pay a price for living with it.

Wildlife produces benefits for communities, such as the ability to draw tourism and generate profits. Some, like the

Maasai tribe in Kenya, have established their own hotels, whereas others lease land to those who build their own. Both approaches provide a source of income and stability for the community members. As one community member explains, like milking a cow, they are milking their resources. Conservation also ensures a sustainable and bright future for the residents.

Although wealth and prosperity seem to be the outcome of such endeavors, anger about some people just "drinking the buttermilk" has become a side effect. In two countries where wealth is determined by the number of cattle one owns, the cost of living near wildlife can be all too great. Lions, elephants, and rhinos not only threaten the existence of human life, but also the residents' ability to maintain a living herd. Others are weary of trusting the whites who build on these lands. To residents, this situation is all too reminiscent of a time when whites began a conservation effort that denied Africans of the right to hunt and forced them to relocate. Most importantly, conservation is extremely difficult to support when droughts or other natural disasters afflict these lands. When people and their cattle are dying on land without water and plants, how can one stop them from venturing into lands filled with high grasses just because a sign tells them "Natural Park, Stay Out"? The film perfectly highlights these competing interests through interviews with residents, conservation meetings, and discussions among residents.

However, the information is only an overview, and the term *conservation* is used loosely throughout these events, leaving the viewer to wonder how exactly the term is being defined. In some cases, profits tied to the environment are seen as forms of conservation. The tribe in Namibia believes conservation occurs when a plant is used as a possible cure for cancer or made into an oil for a perfume. Although this benefits the community, if mass produced as planned, conservation might not be an outcome. In fact, exploitation could occur. One would assume the film is eluding that through conversation these types of plants have been discovered, yet the film does not discuss how the tribes plan to monitor such sales.

Even though this lack of definition is distracting, the documentary alleviates some confusion by labeling every section discussed and intertwining stories of how conservation is beneficial and achievable. Overall, the film is worth the watch for those new to the conservation techniques in Africa, proving conservation is possible everywhere in the world.