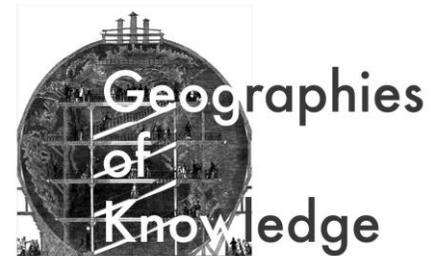


(Mis)representing Climate Mobilities: Lessons from documentary filmmaking

Entangled Im/Mobilities Conference - March 18th 2021

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Outline

1. Mobilities Theory and Representations
2. The documentaries (overview + methods)
3. Analysis: im/mobile filmmaking practice
4. Lessons for climate mobilities research

Climate mobilities: three dimensions

“mobility involves a fragile *entanglement of physical movement, representations, and practices*. Furthermore, these entanglements have broadly traceable histories and geographies. At any one time, then, there are pervading *constellations of mobility*: particular patterns of movement, representations of movement, and ways of practising movement that make sense together”

-- Cresswell, Tim. 2010. 'Towards a Politics of Mobility'.
Environment and Planning D: Society and Space 28 (1): 17-31.

1. Actual climate mobilities
2. Lived experiences and practices
3. Representations

The documentaries

WHY? Relatively understudied + increasingly popular medium + analogous to research

HOW? Film analysis + filmmaker interviews + critical readings of related materials.

WHAT? 22 films released between 2000 and 2019

- Low-lying islands and coastal areas (with few exceptions)
- Focus on sea-level rise and related issues (coastal erosion, ice melt, soil salinisation, “King Tides”...)
- A lot of made-for-TV documentaries; few theatrical releases.

Climate Refugees (2010)



There Once Was an Island (2010)



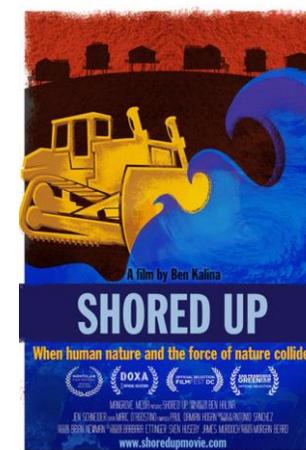
The Island President (2011)



The Hungry Tide (2011)



Shored Up (2013)



Thule Tuvalu (2014)



Filmmaker intentions & logistical considerations

1. Filmmakers did not set out to make films about (climate) migration.
2. They were more interested in “unusual stories” and “human experiences” that could make climate impacts visible.
3. The documentary projects took form through (mediated) encounters with people or projects that provide visibility/tangibility.

Filmmaking as an im/mobile process

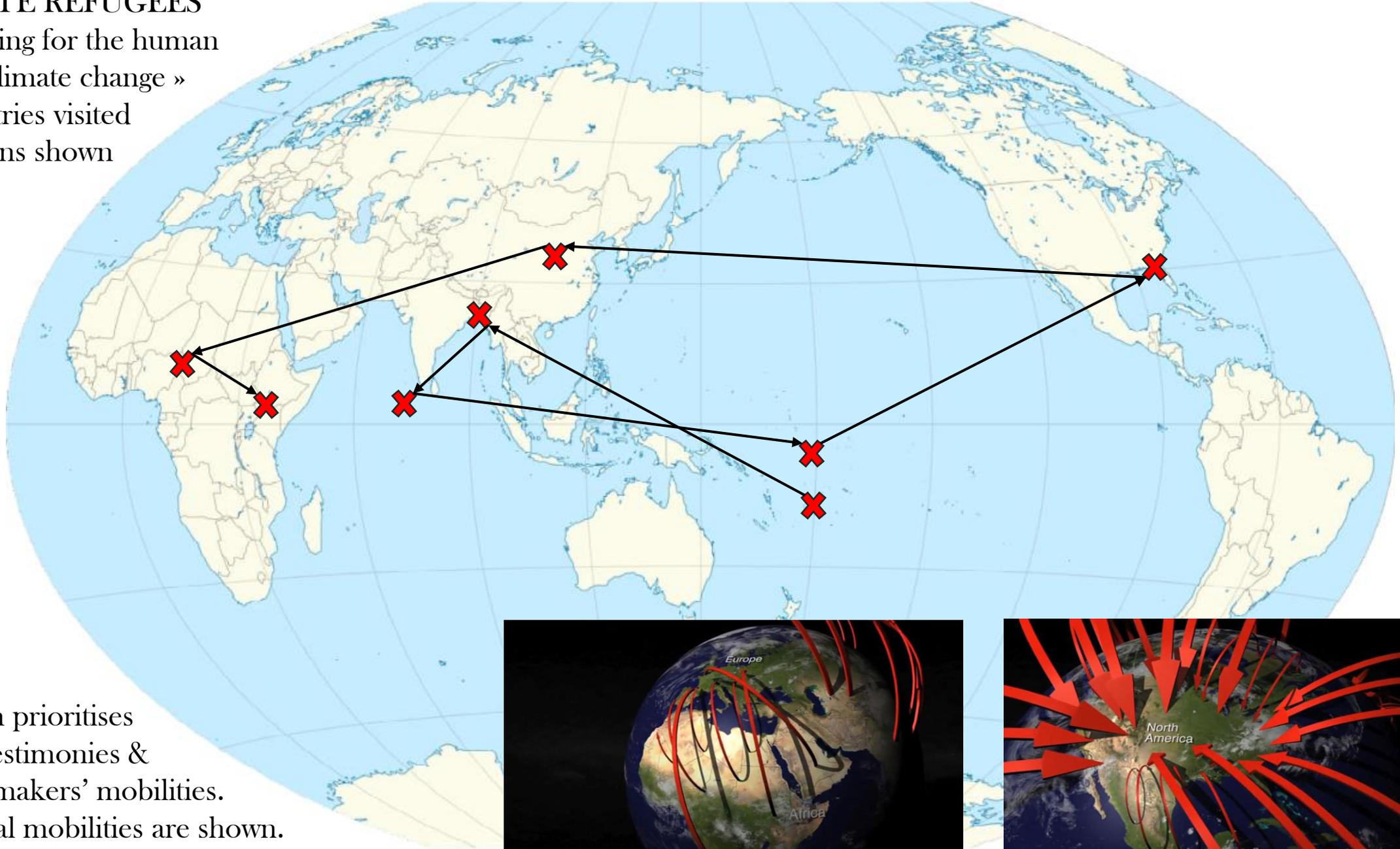
Im/mobile modes of filmmaking	Viewpoints
<u>“Searching</u> for the human face of climate change”	From above
<u>Following</u> protagonists	From behind
<u>Dwelling</u> in place	“Along the waterline”

CLIMATE REFUGEES

« Searching for the human face of climate change »

48 countries visited

8 locations shown



The film prioritises expert testimonies & the filmmakers' mobilities. No actual mobilities are shown.



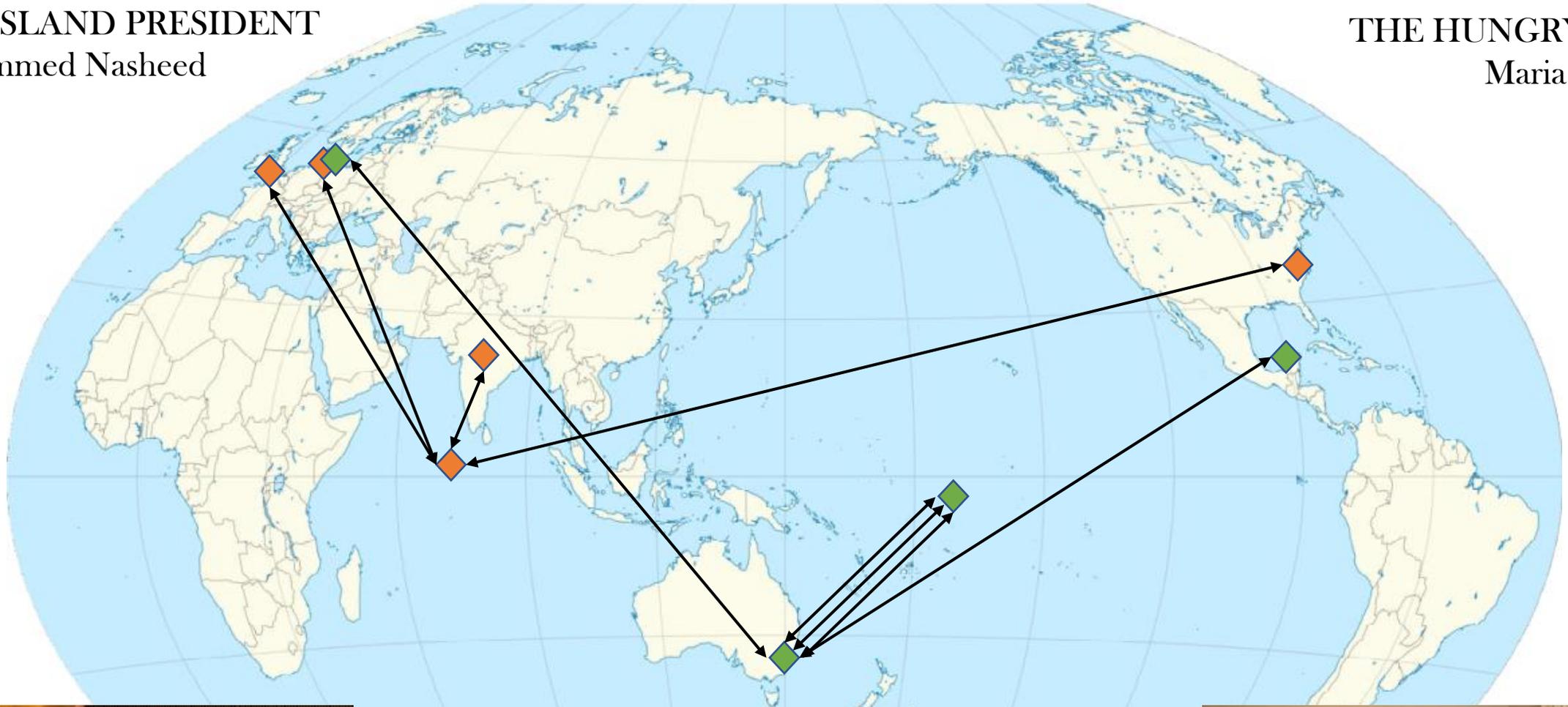
THE ISLAND PRESIDENT

Mohammed Nasheed



THE HUNGRY TIDE

Maria Tiimon



In comparison, the films demonstrate

- The differential nature of mobilities
- The political, power-laden aspects of mobilities



📍 THULETUVALU

📍 SHORED UP



Diversity (but also commonality) in perceptions, experiences, and decisions

Intersection of mobile people, natures, and capital

📍 THERE ONCE WAS AN ISLAND



“I just remember being on the plane and looking down once we got to the Maldives, and, you know, I don't know if you've ever been to one of these very vulnerable spots in the world, but I will never forget looking down and seeing these gorgeous turquoise islands in the middle of nowhere in the ocean [...] my breath was taken away, but also simultaneously, you instantly get that sense of how vulnerable it is. I knew that if we could capture that in some way that we would have an unusual environmental story.”



The Island President (2011)

Maldives



The Hungry Tide (2011)

Kiribati



Climate Refugees (2010)

Tuvalu

Film distribution and interpretation

1. Distribution & influence

Different modes of representation find echo in different places

--> *Climate Refugees* in global institutions

--> Influence of *The Hungry Tide* on news media frames (Dreher & Voyer 2015)

2. Differences in interpretation. Are the films that 'dwell'

(a) nuanced accounts of climate mobilities;

(b) "salvage environmentalism" (DeLoughrey 2017);

(c) just entertainment (Korauaba 2013)?

Lessons for climate mobilities research

1. Interrogate your own im/mobilities and viewpoint to reflect on how they might influence your work.
2. Remain aware of whose mobilities are prioritised, and how different mobilities might shape perceptions / results.
3. Know (study?) your intended audience
4. Consider using such documentaries as pedagogical tools.
5. Future research could dig into the mobilities that underpin other forms of representation of climate mobilities: especially in journalism.

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