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Audiovisual and digital narratives of eco-anxiety: consciousness, emotions and youth practices

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ABSTRACT

This article examines eco-anxiety as part of a genealogy of "diseases of the time", in continuity with melancholy, neurasthenia, and stress, each articulating historically situated forms of collective suffering. Rather than treating eco-anxiety as a clinical disorder, the study interprets it as a cultural and affective phenomenon, shaped by both visual regimes and discursive formations. The corpus brings together environmental documentaries (*Before the Flood*, 2016; *Demain*, 2015) and digital micro-narratives on TikTok (#Ecotok, #Everydaylife), analyzed through close audiovisual reading combined with an interdisciplinary framework: history of emotions, visual culture and youth studies, assemblage theory, and a Foucauldian history of discourses. This approach shows continuities and ruptures in the ways societies narrate distress, distribute subjects and objects, and render crisis visible. By showing how micro-narratives transform anxiety into affective digital healthcare, the article demonstrates how vulnerability becomes a cultural resource and a key site for rethinking the nexus of medicine, media, and collective emotions.

Keywords: Eco-anxiey - Youth culture - Audiovisual narratives - TikTok

1. Introduction

The history of medicine and psychiatry shows that forms of psychological distress are deeply intertwined with the cultural and material transformations of each era. Far from being timeless entities, mental disorders often reflect the fears, tensions, and discontinuities traversing the social fabric. Each period, in translating its collective anxieties into clinical language, produced nosological constructs reflecting widespread fears, social changes, and shifts in human–world relationships. For example, Renaissance melancholy, nineteenth-century neurasthenia, and twentieth-century technological anxiety gave voice to collective distress generated by profound societal transformations[1,2]. Today, eco-anxiety emerges as a symptom of an era marked by climate crisis: a condition that concerns not only individual health but also the difficulty of a generation to imagine the future.

Clinical psychology has begun studying eco-anxiety as an emerging disorder, often associated with generalized anxiety, insomnia, or depression[3]. "Eco-anxiety" describes a constellation of emotional and psychological responses to the perception of climate crisis and environmental degradation. Although not currently recognized as a diagnostic entity in major international manuals, it manifests as a form of anticipatory anxiety characterized by chronic worry, a sense of helplessness, and feelings of vulnerability regarding future scenarios perceived as catastrophic[4,5]. Clinically, eco-anxiety includes cognitive symptoms (intrusive and recurrent thoughts about climate change, catastrophizing, difficulty concentrating), affective symptoms (fear, sadness, eco-guilt, anger toward institutions, ecological distress), and somatic symptoms (agitation, muscle tension, insomnia, tachycardia)[6,7]. The intensity of these manifestations ranges along a continuum from mild, functional forms that promote pro-environmental behavior to clinically significant expressions interfering with daily functioning and associated with established anxiety or depressive symptoms. The literature reports both adaptive aspects, such as motivation for ecological action and civic engagement, and dysfunctional aspects, including avoidance, social withdrawal, decisional paralysis, and emotional burnout, particularly among youth and activists[8,9].

From an epistemological perspective, eco-anxiety raises debates about the risk of medicalizing understandable emotional reactions to the global ecological crisis, while highlighting the need for conceptual and clinical tools capable of distinguishing between "normal" ecological concern, maladaptive eco-anxiety, and comorbidity with anxiety or depressive disorders[10,11]. However, reducing it to a medical lens risks narrowing its scope. More than a diagnosis, eco-anxiety is a cultural and historical experience, manifested through narratives, images, and collective practices. In this sense, it is a true "disease of the present time", continuing the genealogy of collective emotions linked to uncertainty.

Narrative plays a fundamental therapeutic role in this framework. Stories – literary, visual, or digital – allow the processing of anxiety, transforming it into shared narrative. This insight finds an important precedent in Walter Benjamin's reflections: in *Experience and Poverty* (*Erfahrung und Armut*, 1933), he observed how the great

collective traumas of the twentieth century disrupted traditional transmission of experience, producing a void that only new narrative forms could attempt to fill[12]. In *The Narrator* (*Der Erzähler*, 1936), Benjamin emphasized that storytelling, far from being mere entertainment, functions as a device for transmitting meaning and community, capable of making sense even of traumatic events[13].

Within this perspective, narrative practices related to eco-anxiety are situated within a broader genealogy: narrating the climate crisis does not merely bear witness to distress but attempts to restore continuity to experience when environmental collapse renders it fragmented and unspeakable. Over the last decades, narrative medicine[14,15] has shown that care does not rely solely on drugs or protocols but also on the possibility of telling illness and constructing meaning through language. Today, youth digital micro-narratives function similarly: they do not eliminate anxiety but make it shareable and transformable into communal action.

The narrative terrain has now shifted into digital spaces, though not without intermediate stages. Environmental documentaries of the 2000s – for instance, *Demain* (2015) by Cyril Dion and Mélanie Laurent, or *Before the Flood* (2016) by Leonardo DiCaprio – offered powerful images and alarming statistics capable of shaking collective consciousness. However, their pedagogical strength often had a side effect: generating mass eco-anxiety, a cognitive shock that rendered catastrophe imminent but hardly translatable into action.

Social media have inherited and radically transformed this legacy. Whereas documentaries displayed planetary collapse from a global perspective, with expert voices and large-scale images, TikTok, Instagram, and online memes fragment this anxiety into quotidian micro-narratives. Not merely charts and melting glaciers, but diary-like confessions of youth crying in their rooms, ironic jokes about record heatwaves, ecological care rituals exhibited as small acts of resistance. In these digital spaces, eco-anxiety is not only displayed: it becomes an occasion for community connection, sharing vulnerability, and distributed micro-care across images and comments. It is precisely in this shift – from the global, "diagnostic" language of documentaries to the intimate, relational language of social media – that this article's central question arises: understanding how digital narratives of the climate crisis not only represent distress but can transform it into affective *digital healthcare*, new forms of symbolic and communal care that are reshaping contemporary languages of health. The study examines the new forms of symbolic and communal care emerging from these narrative ecologies.

2. Historical and theoretical framework: eco-anxiety in the genealogy of collective emotions

Beyond a phenomenological history of symptoms, this genealogy can also be read as a history of discourses in the Foucauldian sense[16]. What appears as melancholy, neurasthenia, stress, or eco-anxiety is not only the clinical codification of individual suffer-

ing, but the effect of shifting epistemic regimes that redistribute subjects and objects, the visible and the sayable, the pathological field and the speaking subject. Through the Foucauldian lens, discontinuities in medical and cultural discourse mark not mere changes of vocabulary but transformations in the very conditions under which suffering becomes thinkable, nameable, and narratable. Each "disease of the time" thus crystallizes a historically specific will to know: in the Renaissance, a cosmological and symbolic regime linking body, soul, and cosmos; in the nineteenth century, the medicalization of modern excitability and fatigue; in the twentieth, the biopolitical rationality of stress; today, the ecological-digital regime where climate, technology, and subjectivity are co-constitutive. This approach makes it possible to grasp eco-anxiety not simply as the latest stage in a linear evolution, but as a discursive reconfiguration that simultaneously redefines the object of pathology (the environment, the planet) and the subject who suffers (the anxious individual, the vulnerable generation, the digital community).

During the Renaissance, melancholy was not merely a medical diagnosis but a hybrid concept, suspended between body, soul, and cosmos. Galenic medicine defined it as an imbalance of black bile (*melaina chole*), responsible for sadness, lethargy, and withdrawal from the world. Within Renaissance culture, however, it also acquired symbolic and aesthetic significance: a sign of particular depth of mind and proximity to knowledge, as suggested by Neoplatonic and astrological reinterpretations. In the influential study by Klibansky, Panofsky, and Saxl[17], melancholy is described as a "style of the soul," wherein individual distress reflected the cosmological unease of an era striving to reconcile the Christian worldview with the rediscovery of ancient philosophy. In other words, it was not merely a psychosomatic disorder but a culturally shared way of representing human fragility in the face of cosmic disorder.

At the same time, as Starobinski[18] and Pigeaud[19] have shown, melancholy cannot be reduced to medical nosology: it functioned as a cultural dispositif, a language of perception and symbolic production, inseparably tied to creativity and intellectual life. From Aristotle's association of melancholy with poetic and philosophical genius to Freud's reading of melancholy as the impossibility of completing the work of mourning – a blockage in the symbolic elaboration of loss and death – the history of melancholy reveals its dual role: disorder and inspiration, pathology and cultural resource. In this perspective, anxiety emerges as distinct from fear: while fear presupposes an object, anxiety is defined precisely by the absence of one, an "excess without object" that resonates with the contemporary experience of ecological crisis.

In the nineteenth century, the cultural role of melancholy was supplanted by neurasthenia. George Beard defined it as a "weakness of the nervous system" attributing it to the relentless pace of modern life[20]: electric light, the telegraph, daily newspapers, and the growth of metropolises. Researchers such as Shorter[21] emphasized that neurasthenia functioned less as a circumscribed disease and more as a language of collec-

tive distress, translating widespread experiences of fatigue, irritability, and alienation within bourgeois society into medical terms. Diagnosing neurasthenia provided an interpretive framework, allowing a previously unarticulated malaise to enter social and clinical discourse. As Türcke[22] has argued, however, neurasthenia should also be interpreted as an "excited condition", emblematic of modernity itself: a pathology of overstimulation, in which industrial acceleration and sensory overload reshaped subjectivity. This semantic shift was not neutral: while hysteria was feminized, neurasthenia was predominantly coded as male, reflecting contemporary anxieties about gender roles and the destabilizing effects of modernization.

The twentieth century saw the emergence of a new lexicon: stress. Introduced by Hans Selye in the 1930s and rapidly spreading beyond medicine, stress was defined as the "nonspecific response of the body to any demand for change"[23]. Michael Jackson characterized the twentieth century as "the age of stress," shaped by world wars, economic crises, and technological and social transformations. In this sense, stress became a marker of modern human vulnerability, caught between progress and destruction. The discourse on stress intertwined with narratives of nuclear anxiety, technological alienation, and the dehumanization produced by automation: here too, medical diagnoses incorporated collective fears, translating them into an ostensibly neutral yet historically grounded language.

Situated within this genealogy, eco-anxiety emerges as the latest of these "diseases of the time". Like melancholy, it resonates with existential and cosmological concerns: the fear extends beyond the self to the fate of the world, to the disrupted harmony of a cosmos seemingly rebelling against humanity. Like neurasthenia, it is rooted in profound historical transformations – this time ecological rather than industrial – marked by the Anthropocene and consciousness that human development exerts destructive effects on the planet. Like twentieth-century stress, eco-anxiety appears as a global category that transcends clinical psychiatry, entering public discourse, media, and popular culture.

However, its main difference lies in the objectivity and magnitude of the threat. Whereas melancholy, neurasthenia, and stress translated cultural or social tensions into clinical form, eco-anxiety arises from a real, scientifically documented crisis that threatens collective survival. Fear of an uninhabitable future is not merely subjective perception but the outcome of empirical data signaling ecological and climatic collapse. This gives eco-anxiety an ambivalent nature: on one hand, a proportionate emotional response; on the other, a potential source of psychological vulnerability.

Across these historical configurations, a common feature emerges: the narrative function of diagnosis. Speaking of melancholy, neurasthenia, stress, or eco-anxiety constructs a symbolic framework enabling the articulation of distress, transforming mute experiences into shared discourse. These diagnoses are not merely clinical classification tools but cultural frames that organize diffuse emotions into comprehensible narratives. In the

case of eco-anxiety, narrative assumes an even more central role: it becomes the space in which societies express ecological grief while simultaneously imagining resilience strategies. In this function of "shared storytelling", eco-anxiety lays the groundwork for new forms of care, not in medicalization, but in the capacity of narratives to collectively process fear and restore a sense of agency in the face of an uncertain future.

Walter Benjamin had already intuited, in the 1930s, that collective traumas and technological transformations radically transform the way societies process emotions. In *Experience and Poverty*, written in the aftermath of World War I, he observed how wartime violence and modernization disrupted traditional experience transmission: no longer layered stories, but fragments of lived experience incapable of constituting shared narrative. In *The Narrator*, he reflected on the erosion of narrative as a communal space, replaced by a flow of rapid, impersonal, decontextualized information. This concept of "poverty of experience" – Benjamin's insight of remarkable relevance today – resonates powerfully in an era where climate crisis and digital hyperconnectivity intertwine, producing forms of anxiety that lack established narrative tools. Younger generations grow up amid images of environmental catastrophes and fragmented information flows, without stable frameworks through which to translate these impressions into shared meaning. In this context, eco-anxiety emerges as an "emotional trace of the present": a diffuse affect that, while experienced psychologically, reflects the experiential void generated by contemporary uncertainty. Narrative, however, remains a fundamental mediating resource. In the 1980s, Arthur Kleinman demonstrated that illness narratives are not ancillary but central dimensions of care experience: narrating pain means not only communicating it but transforming it within a horizon of shared meaning. Following this perspective, Rita Charon[24] developed the paradigm of narrative medicine, showing how the act of listening to patients' stories constitutes an integral part of the therapeutic process. These contributions marked a turning point: illness is no longer understood solely as a biological datum but as an experience made more livable when granted narrative form. Today, new technologies radically reshape how individuals confront and communicate existential uncertainty. Platforms such as TikTok, through videos, reels, and micro-performances, provide spaces in which personal experience can be shared, aestheticized, and narratively reworked[25].

These digital environments constitute what can be termed a *digital hiatus*: an intermediate space in which the individual temporarily suspends direct confrontation with a reality perceived as overwhelming, alleviating emotional pressure and reworking anxiety through creative and participatory practices. In this sense, digital experience is not escapism but a symbolic strategy, allowing one to inhabit an "other" space where everyday uncertainties become manageable and shareable. The notion of hiatus relates to Cometa[26], who, drawing on Gehlen, Marquard, Plessner, and Blumenberg, identifies play, art, and narrative as tools capable of creating a *hiatus*: an imaginative space that

suspends anguish and enables its symbolic elaboration. Similarly, Dewey[27] emphasizes how everyday experience can acquire an aesthetic dimension, transforming interaction with the environment into a means of making the world more habitable. Today, this dynamic manifests digitally, where platforms do not merely archive or display experiences but become psychosocial environments in which affective relationships develop, vulnerabilities are shared, and collective meanings are constructed. Viewed through the lens of the history of emotions, it emerges that a digital hiatus does not interrupt the tradition of narrative strategies for managing anxiety and trauma but reinvents it. Contemporary phenomena such as eco-anxiety can be read as part of a historical genealogy in which collective distress is continually transformed into narrative. From nineteenth-century diaries to twentieth-century documentaries to digital memes and micro-videos, societies have repeatedly found ways to share the experience of trauma and uncertainty. In this sense, digital platforms constitute spaces in which ecological, affective, and political subjectivity can emerge, experimenting with forms of symbolic and affective care rooted in the humanistic tradition but realized through contemporary technologies.

The digital hiatus, therefore, represents not only a space of emotional suspension and relief but also a symbolic threshold in which online and offline dimensions coexist as intertwined aspects of the same experience. Individual vulnerability becomes shared experience, uncertainty transforms into narrative, and collective anxiety can be processed into aesthetic and participatory forms. It is within this fragile yet intensely lived threshold that new forms of subjectivity emerge, in continuity with historical strategies of cultural survival and projected into contemporary digital practices. In this prospective, recent theories of the sensorio-digital environment refine the understanding of how short-form content operates. Contemporary media can be conceived as technologies of sensibility: short videos, memes and other syncretic digital objects integrate image, text, gesture, sound and micro-actions into expressive units that act directly on attention and emotion, engaging both cognitive and sensorimotor processes.Viewed through this lens, TikTok micro-narratives reorganize eco-anxiety at the level of perception itself: captions, bodies, voice-overs, filters, and musical patterns converge into syncretic forms that redistribute attention, intensify affect, and create immediate resonance. This aligns with neuroscientific perspectives emphasizing that perceptual and emotional engagement with audiovisual stimuli is inherently multimodal rather than dependent on isolated channels. Accordingly, the digital hiatus does not merely suspend the pressure of environmental catastrophe; it activates new neuro-cognitive ecologies in which anxiety can be reconfigured into symbolic and participatory practices of care.

3. Eco-anxiety and digital care practices: storytelling, aesthetics and assemblages

The global ecological crisis has disrupted not only the planet's material balances but also the symbolic coordinates through which contemporary subjectivities imagine

the future. Eco-anxiety emerges as more than a clinical category: it is a cultural and generational symptom arising where the collective capacity to envision a habitable tomorrow falters. Some discourses reduce it to mere generational hypersensitivity, evoked by the rhetoric of the snowflake generation[28]. Such readings, while rhetorically powerful, obscure the structural roots of distress and misrepresent eco-anxiety as psychological fragility. Yet the digital practices of young people suggest the opposite: rather than passive vulnerability, they function as scenes of narrative resilience and collective care. In this perspective, the visual culture of the climate crisis can be described as oscillating between two heuristic poles. On one side, environmental documentaries offer global diagnoses and spectacular images of catastrophe. On the other, digital micro-narratives produced on social media translate collapse into daily practices of care, irony, or ritual. The difference is not only linguistic: it reshapes narrative logic. Documentaries tend to privilege coherence and pedagogical storytelling, while digital platforms often rely on fragmented, polyphonic editing, where expert voices yield to collective ones. Yet this opposition remains porous: documentary sequences circulate as clips within social media feeds, and short-form videos frequently remediate journalistic and cinematic tropes while being shaped by algorithms and attention economies that may favour sensational or emotionally intensified forms of eco-anxiety.

As Jerome Bruner[29] observed, narrative operates through action (events) and consciousness (emotions, fears, desires). These dimensions intertwine: climate change produces both tangible events (floods, fires) and altered mental states. Contemporary narrative captures this duality. Documentaries such as *Before the Flood* (2016) and *Demain* (2015) deploy spectacular imagery and quantitative visualizations to raise awareness, but they also risk inducing anxiety, as studies on visual media confirm[30]. Protagonists – often young – embody both fragility and the possibility of survival. By contrast, digital testimonies show subjective states: diaristic confessions, ironic memes, and micro-performances of eco-anxiety. These micro-narratives do not simply echo documentaries but transform narrative logic. Where films aim at linearity and universality, digital formats privilege fragmentation, intimacy, and immediacy. They do not resolve the crisis but render experience shareable. The question becomes: can helplessness before global collapse find narrative form? Young people, raised amid pandemics, instability, and ecological emergencies, turn to digital platforms as arenas for articulating this paradox.

Historically, illness diaries or early visual accounts of mental distress served this function. Today, TikTok videos and memes assume that role: ephemeral yet capable of shaping anxiety into shared form. In this light, Benjamin's analysis of the "crisis of storytelling" is instructive. Already in the 1930s, he observed how shocks of modernity fragmented narration, eroding continuity and experience. Yet social media show that narrative is not extinguished but reinvented: new storytellers – young creators –

condense fragments of trauma into memes, skits, or confessions, giving form to the unspeakable. Digital platforms thus emerge as digital hiatus: affective suspensions where memes, micro-videos, and shared practices generate symbolic relief, especially for younger generations. During the 2020 lockdown, humorous TikTok trends operated as collective arenas, transforming anxiety into ritual gestures. Benjamin's insight clarifies this dynamic: narrative translates what eludes direct experience. Whereas diaries or mid-twentieth-century documentaries structured suffering into linear forms, today's micro-narratives create fragmentary affective archives. Repetition produces community; difference opens new meanings. Social media thereby assume the role once played by writing or cinema: transforming trauma into shared language. This shows the nexus between narrative, care, and digitalization. The concept of digital health care, recently theorized across medical humanities, media studies, and social sciences[31], refers not to telemedicine but to distributed practices of reflection and micro-support enacted through digital media. Affective digital health care, in particular, relies on aesthetic and performative languages: confessions, vulnerable self-representations, rituals, ironic remixes, symbolic participation. Content streams such as #Ecotok or #Everydaylife exemplify Papacharissi's "affective publics"[32]: spaces where vulnerable subjectivities find recognition not via ideology but through shared emotions. Here, eco-anxiety is performed, made tangible, and aggregated into affective ecologies. These are not neutral containers but arenas of relational agency. Digital care is also political: it cannot be reduced to self-help but constitutes collective practice, reworking symbolic frameworks through everyday aesthetics. Vulnerability becomes politicized, a resource for micro-politics of resistance[33].

Viewed through assemblage theory, platforms appear as socio-technical environments where affects, subjects, and technologies co-produce each other[34, 35,36]. Visual practices – diaristic fragments, performative repetitions – do not seek coherence but generate constellations of gestures and affects. Care resides not in unity of message but in the temporary aggregation of experiences and emotions escaping normative codification. Digital intimacy thus emerges as a critical act, subverting dominant aesthetics of health and productivity, and enabling inclusive, situated visual cultures. Eco-anxiety becomes visible and shareable through mediations that foster empathy and meaning-making. These spaces operate as affective-political scenes where vulnerable subjectivities articulate alternative forms of existence.

Continuity across epochs is evident. From diaries and self-portraits to digital eco-anxiety narratives, symbolic genealogies persist: transforming trauma into narrative and anguish into shared experience. Social media, despite algorithmic fragmentation, do not interrupt this tradition but reinvent it, making precariousness a site of cultural production. Digital platforms must therefore be read as scenes of narrative medicine, where care takes the form of participatory, aesthetic, and affective practices. The theoretical contributions of Benjamin, Cometa, and Deleuze converge: narrative as anthro-

pological sense-making (Benjamin), hiatus as aesthetic reprieve (Cometa), assemblage as interweaving of bodies, signs, and affects (Deleuze & Guattari). Integrated, they frame digital eco-anxiety not as ephemeral entertainment but as symbolic and affective care, where vulnerability becomes language and fragility a collective resource. Social media thus function as spaces where eco-anxiety is both symptom and tool: a disorder to endure and a cultural device for imagining new communal ecologies.

4. Methodology

To address this question, a corpus was constructed connecting two seemingly distant but closely related visual regimes. On one side are the macro-narratives of the climate crisis, which include environmental documentaries from the 2000s, such as *Before the Flood* (2016) and *Demain* (2015). These formats, based on spectacular imagery and quantitative visualizations with strong emotional impact, have contributed to consolidating widespread climate consciousness, but they have often also produced anxiety-inducing effects[37]. The young protagonists of these narratives simultaneously embody vulnerability and the possibility of survival, enacting the tension between catastrophe and resilience.

On the other side are the digital micro-narratives collected between 2020 and 2024 on TikTok Reels, particularly through the hashtags #Ecotok and #Everydaylife. These do not follow a linear continuity with the macro-narratives but respond to them. Rather than representing catastrophe on a global scale, they translate eco-anxiety into diaristic testimonies, ironic memes, audiovisual confessions, and everyday rituals of ecological care: aesthetic-affective gestures that lighten the weight of collapse and render it shareable.

Methodologically, this comparison is not limited to a phenomenological contrast between different media. It also follows a history of discourses in the Foucauldian sense: each "regime of representation" (documentary or digital) redistributes subjects and objects, defines what can be seen and said, and produces the very conditions under which eco-anxiety becomes narratable. From this perspective, documentaries and micro-narratives are not only cultural products but dispositifs that configure subject positions (expert witness, vulnerable youth, digital peer) and construct eco-anxiety as both symptom and resource. At the same time, these regimes intersect and are internally stratified: documentary images are fragmented and recirculated online, while digital narratives are filtered by platform logics (algorithms, metrics, visibility) that both enable and constrain practices of care. Reading them together allows us to trace epistemic continuities and discontinuities across visual cultures, highlighting how the pathological field and the speaking subject shift over time. From the theoretical perspectives described previously, the opposition between macro- and micro-level narratives becomes an asymmetric dialogue: documentaries and films produce an anxiety-laden imaginary, while digital micro-narratives constitute a cultural response, transforming eco-anxiety from an individual experience into a communal resource.

This methodological approach allows for the comparison of two distinct narrative logics and provides insight into the transition from eco-anxiety as a global phenomenon to practices of digital and community-based micro-care. This asymmetric dialogue is therefore never pure: both regimes borrow from one another and are traversed by ambivalences – from pedagogical paternalism in documentaries to sensationalism and algorithmic volatility in social media – which the present analysis seeks to keep analytically in view.

5. Eco-anxiety and audiovisual storytelling: macro-narratives in environmental documentaries. Perspectives towards digital micro-narratives

Contemporary environmental documentaries do not merely record the climate crisis: they function as full-fledged audiovisual devices that render eco-anxiety perceptible, modulate it emotionally, and transform it into public experience. In this sense, they are part of the ecocinema tradition, which, according to Sean Cubitt[38] and Adrian Ivakhiv[39], does not simply describe "films about nature" but produces works that construct specific ways of seeing and feeling the environment, shaping spectators' sensory and affective perception. Considering *Before the Flood* (Stevens, 2016) and *Demain* (Dion & Laurent, 2015), distinct yet complementary strategies emerge through which audiovisual media produce eco-anxiety: the former emphasizes global catastrophe through shock effects, while the latter focuses on shared vulnerability and the possibility of resilience.

From a narrative perspective, *Before the Flood* employs a hybrid structure that mixes the expository model (presentation of data, graphs, maps) with participatory and performative elements. Leonardo DiCaprio's presence on screen as both voice and witness immediately establishes an ethical and emotional link: the celebrity functions as a credibility agent (*ethos*) and an empathetic figure guiding viewers through symbolic locations and scenes. The narrative structure interweaves expository and performative elements. DiCaprio, as narrator and protagonist, traverses emblematic sites of crisis, interviews scientists and activists, and serves as a "witness figure" translating complex data into emotional experience.

One sequence in Indonesia depicts deforestation caused by palm oil cultivation: the drone captures vast burned areas from above, with stark color contrasts between the remaining vegetation and the devastated landscape; somber music accompanies the aerial gaze, creating a vertiginous effect. The immediately following close-up of DiCaprio's concerned face repositions the viewer within an empathetic, intimate frame: global catastrophe is filtered through the protagonist's individual anxiety. The film alternates "spectacular" sequences – dramatic images of natural disasters, wide panoramas of degraded landscapes, satellite shots, and time-lapses – with close-ups of victims, scientists, or endangered species. This alternation is edited to produce a seemingly irrefutable cause-effect logic: data-image-responsibility. The tight concatenation of heterogeneous scenes, often joined through cross-cutting and sound over-

lays, accelerates perceptual rhythm and induces urgency: the viewer reacts emotionally (*pathos*) before cognitively processing the content.

Visually, *Before the Flood* favors color contrasts and long shots that convey the planetary scale of damage – images that communicate vastness and loss – while close details (animal close-ups, ice textures, hands at work) foster emotional proximity. The inclusion of quantitative visualizations (graphs, heat maps, emission curves) attempts to translate scientific complexity into visual evidence; yet integrated within highly emotive sequences, these visualizations amplify the anxiety-inducing impact. Sound design plays a crucial role: the alternation of non-diegetic dramatic music, amplified environmental effects (wind, ice creaking), and contributions from notable composers constructs a sonic infrastructure that supports and intensifies emotion, as studies in audio-vision demonstrate[40]. A notable example is the Greenland glacier sequence, where ambient sounds – ice creaks, amplified wind – become almost threatening, transforming sensory perception into physical anxiety. As Chion observes, sound can "saturate" perceptual space, producing a corporeal experience of vulnerability. The alternation between maps, graphs, and spectacular images exemplifies Bill Nichols' logic: the expository mode, with its pedagogical aim, is hybridized with the performative, producing a narrative that both informs and induces a collective emotional state[41]. Here, sound mediates between affect and cognition: by orchestrating tension and directing attention, it separates informational content from trauma, enabling viewers to process complex scientific data while sustaining corporeal and emotional engagement. This modulation transforms sound into a perceptual and ethical interface, allowing affective immediacy and cognitive reflection to coexist, thereby preventing emotional paralysis while maintaining eco-anxiety as a motivating force.

Empirical studies confirm the anxiety-inducing effects of such audiovisual constructions: Loll et al. demonstrate that climate change videos increase eco-anxiety levels more than other media. Theoretically, this mode falls within the family of performative/expository documentaries described by Bruzzi and Nichols: the filmmaker does not merely "show" but orchestrates a mediated performance that predetermines affective response[42].

Demain adopts an audiovisual grammar profoundly different from the spectacular and anxiety-inducing style of *Before the Flood*. The direction by Cyril Dion and Mélanie Laurent relies on a choral and poetic register, in which the documentary "performance" is distributed among the filmed subjects, who become co-protagonists and bearers of alternative visions. This decentralization radically alters the construction of eco-anxiety: no longer global trauma and helplessness, but an affective modulation intertwining vulnerability with potential action.

Visually, the film favors broad, fluid tracking shots following the daily gestures of farmers, activists, and families. Narrative time is expanded, and the camera lingers on relationships among bodies, spaces, and environments. In a sequence focused on

an urban garden in Detroit, the editing alternates wide shots of the post-industrial landscape with close-ups of hands working the soil. The choice to preserve diegetic sounds – tools, wind, voices – produces sensory immersion: viewers are included as witness-participants rather than observing from outside. This strategy aligns with Adrian Ivakhiv's concept of the affective ecology of the image: environmental cinema does not merely represent but mobilizes sensory flows that connect spectators to possible worlds. Where *Before the Flood* generates anxiety through perceptual shocks and dramatic color contrasts, *Demain* constructs a poetics of proximity: saturated colors, luminous framing, and slowed temporality invite contemplation, identification with resilient communities, and the imagination of alternative futures.

Another crucial element is episodic editing. Each chapter focuses on a theme (energy, agriculture, education, governance, economy) conveyed through local experiences. This structure does not impose a dramatic climax but generates a circular, almost meditative rhythm that transforms anxiety into narrative continuity: from potential catastrophe to concrete practices of care. This approach aligns with Nichols' poetic/participatory typology, in which the documentary's strength lies in evoking and sharing rather than demonstrating.

Sound design decisively supports this aesthetic. Unlike the dramatic musical commentary typical of *Before the Flood*, *Demain* uses ambient sounds and light scores that accompany without overwhelming. The result is an auditory atmosphere that sustains proximity and reduces emotional distance: the spectator listens "with" the filmed subjects rather than being swept away by an anxiety-inducing crescendo. As Chion notes, diegetic sound can produce a "direct apprehension" of reality; here, it becomes a vehicle of trust and empathy. In *Demain*, the soundscape operates beyond diegetic representation to engage perception, emotion, and cognition simultaneously. While diegetic sounds – tools, wind, voices – foster trust and empathy, field recordings extend this effect, generating bodily immersion and heightened environmental awareness. As Chion emphasizes, sound can saturate perceptual space, producing direct experience rather than mere accompaniment. Experimental practices illustrate this potential: Ryuichi Sakamoto's *async* and Touch label artists (e.g., Fennesz, Janek Schaefer) use environmental and extreme landscape recordings to provoke reflective attention, spatial awareness, and ecological sensitivity. Accordingly, the sound design in *Demain* mediates eco-perception, bridging affective, ethical, and cognitive dimensions. An emblematic example is a sequence in Iceland, where a local community experiments with geothermal energy systems. The natural landscape – captured through slow panoramas and bright colors – is presented not as a threatened backdrop but as a habitable, fertile environment. Close-ups of residents' faces convey emotion and pride, suggesting that ecological vulnerability can become an opportunity for innovation. This aesthetics of hope does not eliminate eco-anxiety but redirects it: fear becomes a driver of resilience.

Theoretically, *Demain* exemplifies what Sean Cubitt terms dialogic ecocinema: cinema that does not overwhelm the viewer with catastrophe images but invites a dialogical engagement with the images, imagining alternatives. Scott MacDonald[43] describes this as a "training of perception": cultivating a gaze that perceives the climate crisis not solely as threat but as an opportunity to reformulate relationships among individuals, communities, and environment.

Where *Before the Flood* stages eco-anxiety through shock, urgency, and moral responsibility, *Demain* works with aesthetics of slowness, proximity, and hope. Both are devices of eco-anxiety, modulated differently: paralyzing global anxiety in the former, anxiety transformed into participation and action in the latter. This divergence opens space for digital micro-narratives: diaristic confessions, ironic memes, and ecological rituals on social media that inherit the documentary legacy while translating it into everyday practices of communal care.

Analytically, a set of recurring devices can be identified through which both films "induce anxiety" – albeit with different outcomes – and which warrant detailed comparison:

- Voice and narrative authority: The use of voice-over or narrator presence (DiCaprio in *Before the Flood*) constructs a witness/expert figure conveying truth. Performative authority accentuates gravity; the rhetorical device of moral appeal is clear: we know, therefore we must act;
- Editing and rhythm: Rapid sequences, juxtaposition of contrasting images (natural landscapes vs. industrial infrastructure), and accelerated montage in crisis scenes generate sensory stimulation favoring emotional arousal. In contrast, slow, engaging, and meditative editing induces reflective and participatory responses as in *Demain*;
- Image: scale and detail: Panoramic and aerial shots (macro scale) evoke planetary magnitude and helplessness; close details (micro) generate proximity and care. Oscillation between these levels alternates awe and empathy;
- Nature vs. anthropogenic contrast: Pairing images of natural landscapes (glaciers, forests) with human scenes (cities, factories, waste) visually constructs anthropogenic harm. Damaged natural environments function as symptom-images, while human scenes provide the responsible agent;
- Sound design and music: Non-diegetic scores, deep timbres, symphonic crescendos, and amplified environmental sounds orient the listener's body toward tension or relief. Chion shows that audio is not an "add-on" but a constitutive element of emotional impact; here, it orchestrates the affective threshold separating information from trauma;
- Data as image: Maps, graphs, and animations transform the abstract into the

visible. Integrated into emotional sequences, they legitimize fear via "numerical proof" but may also overload perception to emotional paralysis.

Theoretically, these mechanisms benefit from the concepts of "documentary as performance"[44] and Nichols' typology[45]: *Before the Flood* oscillates between expository and participatory modes, leveraging expert voice; *Demain* leans toward poetic/participatory modes, distributing authority and emphasizing practice. Benjamin adds that modern media "shape" collective experience by making trauma shareable; documentaries, in this view, act as experience-transmission machines, anticipating and shaping responsive practices (e.g., digital micro-narratives). Deleuze[46] elucidates how cinematic images can produce affects directly (time-image) beyond simple narrative cause-effect chains: fragmented editing and dissolved imagery create zones of direct experience that act upon the spectator's body.

Methodologically, the analysis develops as audiovisual close reading of crucial sequences (selected for rhetorical and aesthetic richness), accompanied by comparison with empirically documented emotional responses. Analytical frameworks include narrative mode (voice, structure), montage grammar (rhythm, continuity), cinematographic strategy (framing, color, depth), sound design (non-diegetic music, ambient sounds, silences), and rhetorical functions of data visualizations. This suite of categories explains not only what the documentaries show but how they produce, modulate, and convey eco-anxiety into the public sphere, which subsequently finds expression or defense in digital micro-narratives.

At this point, it is necessary to draw a critical distinction between *performance* and *agency*. In Bruzzi's sense, performance refers to the aesthetic and rhetorical staging of reality: through framing, editing, and sound, documentaries choreograph emotions and guide viewers into specific affective routes (shock, urgency, moral appeal). This orchestration is effective but also restrictive, as it narrows the spectrum of possible responses to pre-scripted affective outcomes. *Agency*, by contrast, designates the capacity of subjects – viewers, communities, and even non-human actors – to appropriate or resist these scripts, translating mediated emotions into concrete practices of resilience, care, or protest. *Before the Flood* and *Demain* thus perform eco-anxiety at the level of global imagination, shaping collective sensibility but confining action largely within the pedagogical or spectacular logic of the film. Digital micro-narratives, instead, foreground agency: here young creators take anxiety out of the cinematic frame, refract it into diaristic confessions, ironic memes, or ecological rituals, and reconfigure it as everyday practices of communal care.

6. Micro-narratives of eco-anxiety: from global trauma to situated digital care

Environmental documentaries such as *Before the Flood* and *Demain* have constructed, through distinct aesthetic strategies, a shared perception of the climate crisis. Operating through spectacular imagery, tight editing, and either planetary vistas or localized community practices, these macro-narratives frame eco-anxiety as a collectively organized experience shaped by a strong authorial apparatus. Digital platforms like TikTok, by contrast, transform this legacy into an affective counter-narrative: the crisis is refracted into diaristic fragments, irony, and everyday ecological rituals. Here anxiety emerges from below – through vulnerable self-exposure and participatory relationality – rather than from the top-down logic of documentary authority. The analysis focuses on a targeted selection of TikTok content published between 2020 and 2024, identified via hashtags such as #Ecotok and #Everydaylife. These discursive spaces exemplify two complementary modes of processing eco-anxiety: on one hand, an explicitly diaristic and political narrative centered on confession and denunciation; on the other, a performative grammar that transforms vulnerability into bodily gesture, ecological ritual, or ironic invention. In both cases, short-form language and rapid consumption are coupled with affective intensity, reconfiguring the climate crisis as a shareable experience.

The analysis adopts an interdisciplinary framework integrating visual culture, youth studies, and assemblage theory. TikTok contents are not treated as isolated texts but as nodes within socio-technical assemblages in which algorithms, bodies, affects, sounds, and environments co-produce forms of visibility and experience. In this perspective, the platform functions less as a neutral container than as a performative and relational device, where vulnerability becomes narrative material and ecological crisis is translated into situated affective ecologies. Within this field, the notion of a digital hiatus designates an aesthetic and affective space in which young people temporarily suspend the pressure of macro-narratives and experiment with micro-practices of agency. Short-form videos operate as multimodal perceptual units in which gestures, sound, text, and image act together; their impact depends less on linear discourse than on sensorimotor integration that mobilizes attention, emotion, and identification. Treating TikTok clips as such syncretic forms legitimizes a close-reading approach attentive to the interaction of media layers and to the embodied perceptual dynamics they activate.

The qualitative analysis developed along three axes, reinterpreted through a Foucauldian lens that considers narratives not only as expressive practices but as discursive formations that distribute subjects, objects, and regimes of visibility. First, narrative and temporality were examined through Bruner's framework: on TikTok, the interplay between action and consciousness generates a fragmented, diaristic time in which brief confessions and repeated gestures produce anxious discontinuities rather than linear biographical accounts. Eco-anxiety appears as a series of affective flashes that interrupt everyday life; in Foucauldian terms, these fragments act as micro-dis-

courses that reconfigure the temporal grammar of distress. Second, the study focused on affective performativity: emotions are not simply described but enacted. The body becomes a site of exposure, and the platform a stage where vulnerability and anxiety are performed and shared. Humor, irony, and ritualized gestures function as dispositifs that render eco-anxiety speakable and visible, defining not only what can be shown but also how subjects position themselves within a collective ecology of affects. Third, attention was given to visual assemblages and corporeal poetics. Drawing on Deleuzian perspectives, these videos do not seek stable meaning but generate intensity through the juxtaposition of images, gestures, and environments. Vulnerability is reframed as a resource, producing poetic and post-human imaginaries that deterritorialize the gaze. Read through Foucault, these assemblages can also be understood as discursive regimes that determine which emotions, bodies, and ecological references become visible, narratable, and shareable within a given historical horizon.

Comparative analysis of audiovisual and digital materials thus highlights two complementary ways of mediating eco-anxiety. Environmental documentaries employ a predominantly diagnostic language: they emphasize scientific data, global scenarios, and the urgency of collective action. This register enhances awareness but can also induce emotional paralysis, framing the crisis as overwhelming and difficult to translate into concrete practices. Short-form social media content, by contrast, develops prognostic and affective languages that reframe individual distress as shared narrative. Diaristic videos, micro-performances, memes, and ecological rituals translate eco-anxiety into everyday forms of resilience, care, and agency. Platforms like TikTok can therefore function as affective digital healthcare, where testimony, ecological gestures, and digital mediation intersect to generate distributed micro-scenes of support, even while being shaped by attention economies and algorithmic ranking that favour sensational and rapidly trending expressions of distress. In this articulation between formal and informal media regimes, eco-anxiety emerges less as a clinical state than as a cultural and relational dispositif: a shared affective formation that structures how distress is narrated, circulated, and reconfigured into collective resources of resilience and care.

a. @telospiegasofia: vulnerable self-portrait and political denunciation

Sofia's July 2022 video exemplifies how TikTok's diaristic temporality – composed of brief affective flashes rather than linear narration – functions as a micro-discursive form that reorganizes the temporal grammar of eco-anxiety, shifting it from coherent biographical accounts to discontinuous regimes of experience. Filmed with a fixed smartphone camera, devoid of filters or editing, the sequence is structured entirely around an aesthetics of vulnerability: flushed face, tears, and labored breathing compose a confessional self-portrait. Situated within the genealogy of self-testimony videos, this form transforms private intimacy into both a surface of truth and a political act of denunciation against institutional inefficacy. Her interrupted voice and curled

posture accentuate the sense of urgency: there is neither aesthetic mediation nor reflective distance, only immediate affective exposure that places the viewer within the same fragmented temporal register as the author. The interruption of this confession is minimal but crucial: a stitched graph showing perceived temperatures exceeding 43°C. This juxtaposition transforms emotion into evidence, individual fragility into collective testimony. The vulnerable body, the stitched graph, the caption, and the soundscape fold into one perceptual configuration rather than functioning as discrete layers. Meaning emerges from this multimodal integration: data and affect fuse into a common experiential field that addresses the viewer's sensorium directly. In this syncretic composition, eco-anxiety becomes legible not through discursive explanation but through the concurrent activation of perception, emotion, and cognition, enabling the video to function as a micro-device of digital care. The vulnerable body and the numerical datum merge in an assemblage that produces affective truth, echoing Benjamin's notion of a "poverty of experience" while simultaneously enacting a Foucauldian regime of truth in which suffering is rendered legible, diagnosable, and politically mobilizing.

Similar to environmental documentaries – particularly *Before the Flood*, where catastrophic imagery alternates with graphs and expert interviews – here objective data reinforces emotional impact. Unlike the film, however, communicative efficacy does not rely on spectacular staging but on an elementary audiovisual grammar juxtaposing the vulnerable body with numerical data, subjective experience with scientific fact. This stylistic choice reveals a distinctive temporality. Whereas documentaries construct linear, pedagogical narratives, Sofia's video inhabits the absolute urgency of the present. The narration does not form a complete story but exists as an immediate fragment – a "poverty of experience," in Benjamin's terms – where anxiety is not processed but poured directly into digital space. This immediacy grants the confession a political dimension. A conversation with her grandmother, who expresses fear of dying from extreme heat, becomes the trigger for a discourse implicitly denouncing institutional inaction while simultaneously calling the social media audience to mobilize. Narratively, as Bjoia and colleagues observe, the confession operates on two levels: diagnostic, identifying a real risk condition, and prognostic, transforming personal vulnerability into an invitation to collective action.

Comparison with documentary macro-narratives highlights the significance of this micro-narrative. *Before the Flood* orchestrated eco-anxiety through alternating shots of devastated landscapes, scientific graphs, and DiCaprio's witness-face, creating an aesthetics of shock; *Demain* modulated fear via filmed community practices, presenting images of resilience and proximity. Sofia draws on both logics but reworks them on a minimal scale. As in the first case, numerical data function as markers of truth and amplify anxiety; as in the second, the vulnerable body generates empathy and proximity. However, whereas documentaries construct discourse from above,

relying on narrator or directorial authority, Sofia's video operates from below, exemplifying what Bjoia et al. describe as a prognostic and affective language: not to paralyze the viewer but to activate them, transforming eco-anxiety into a communal resource.

This transformation represents perhaps the most significant insight of the audiovisual analysis. Far from a simple emotional outpouring, the video functions as a practice of affective digital healthcare. The intimate confession, made public in TikTok's relational space, generates empathy, attracts supportive comments, is shared and reworked. Individual anxiety thus becomes collective experience, and suffering transforms into distributed micro-care. In this context, the digital space operates as a digital hiatus: a symbolic suspension that mitigates the anxiety-inducing pressure of the climate crisis and enables it to be processed narratively, functioning as a form of digital healthcare. In this sense, Sofia's video is more than a diaristic fragment; it is an aesthetic and political scene capable of condensing in mere seconds the dual logic of climate audiovisuals: the objectivity of data and the pathos of confession. It is precisely this combination that demonstrates the power of the short-form format, rendering vulnerability a shared language and re-signifying eco-anxiety not as paralysis, but as a generative and communal act.

b. @lizlivingblue: ecological rituals and emotional humour

In the videos produced by @lizlivingblue, eco-anxiety is not displayed as paralyzing suffering but is transformed into an active and communicatively light response, consistent with TikTok's aesthetic codes. The creator stages small ecological rituals – such as beach cleanups – accompanied by viral audio tracks that immediately embed the actions within a language shared by the digital community. The gestures are repeated without dramatic variation: bending, grasping, discarding. This repetition, seemingly mundane, acquires therapeutic value precisely through its simplicity, translating anxiety into concrete, repeatable action. Eco-anxiety – often immobilizing in other contexts – is here recoded as everyday agency, made visible through accessible and replicable performance. The short-form grammar amplifies this effect: gestures, sounds, and graphic cues converge into a single perceptual configuration in which the viewer does not merely observe but tacitly rehearses the movements. These micro-choreographies function as sensorimotor exercises that reorganize affect, turning anxiety into embodied practice and small acts of care.

Another register characterizing Liz's production is ironic: parodies, exaggerated expressions, and comedic reactions to climate news. Humor does not negate the gravity of the issue but creates a symbolic hiatus in which emotional tension can be suspended and collectively shared. This constitutes a form of collective coping, echoing the genealogy of the "diseases of the time" reconstructed earlier: just as Renaissance mel-

ancholy was inscribed in shared aesthetic codes and nineteenth-century neurasthenia found expression in medical and social discourse, contemporary eco-anxiety is translated into ironic and ritualized digital languages capable of alleviating tension without denying it. In other words, Liz does not eliminate climate anxiety but transforms it into a communicable experience, demonstrating that vulnerability can become material for collective narration. This narrative modality clearly illustrates the function of affective digital healthcare: the videos are not clinical instruments but symbolic acts of care operating within a socio-technical assemblage composed of bodies, sounds, algorithms, and online communities. The lightness of tone, perfectly suited to the platform, lowers the anxiety threshold and recodes ecological trauma as an experience of participation. It is precisely in this capacity to combine irony, ritual, and visibility of quotidian gesture that Liz's response to eco-anxiety is most original: not a diagnostic discourse that risks paralysis, but a small, repeated, and shareable practice that becomes affective and communal care.

From a historical perspective, her work continues the tradition of narratives accompanying collective disorders. Just as twentieth-century stress found expression in media and literary accounts, contemporary eco-anxiety finds a symbolic outlet in short-form videos. Far from mere entertainment, these contents function as devices of emotional survival, in which lightness becomes a therapeutic instrument capable of translating anguish into everyday action and constructing, within TikTok's ephemeral space, a micro-community of care.

c. @theecooptimist: post-human bodies and poetic imagery

In the video published by @theecooptimist in September 2024, the protagonist appears in a space that seems to lie between a garden and a greenhouse, suffused with shafts of light filtering through the leaves. The shot, fixed and slightly wide-angle, places at its center the young woman with red hair, dressed in white, moving with an almost ritualistic slowness: a step, a slight shift of the torso, a caress of the plants. Minimal gestures are amplified by ethereal music, which imparts a contemplative rhythm to the scene. The viewer's attention is immediately drawn to the visible prosthetic leg, presented without hesitation, which becomes an integral part of the visual composition: a corporeal sign of vulnerability but also a symbol of resilience. There is no narrative progression, no action leading to a conclusion; rather, the sequence unfolds as a brief meditative choreography in which body and environment resonate with one another.

This formal choice produces an effect of suspension: the viewer is not guided by words or data but immersed in an aesthetic atmosphere that elicits a sensory rather than cognitive response. Eco-anxiety, which elsewhere appears as denunciation or diaristic confession, is here transfigured into poetic image. The visible prosthesis sig-

nals not only physical fragility but also a body that carries its wound yet continues to move – hybrid between organic and technical – thus becoming a metaphor for ecological resilience in an unstable world. The message is conveyed not through rational data or ironic commentary but through an aesthetic experience that transforms anxiety into contemplation. From this perspective, @theecooptimist's response to eco-anxiety stands apart from that of other creators: neither the repeatable everyday gesture of @lizlivingblue or the vulnerable confession of @telospiegasofia. Her strategy consists in constructing a poetic micro-world in which vulnerability is neither hidden nor dramatized, and where imagination itself becomes a form of symbolic care. The prosthesis, far from signifying deficit, functions as an allegory of survival: a body that adapts, resists, and reconfigures its relation to the environment. This aesthetic can be read through recent theoretical reflections on how digital media reshape imaginative and affective life. As argued by Montani[48], contemporary technological infrastructures co-determine new forms of sensibility, particularly through hybrid bodies that redistribute vulnerability and agency. Theecooptimist's video embodies this shift: corporeal hybridity, vegetal textures, and ethereal sound converge into a syncretic perceptual field that reorganizes affect, transforming eco-anxiety into a form of contemplative resilience. In this sense, the video does not merely represent ecological distress but reworks it into an imaginative figure of endurance and post-human possibility. Placed within a broader historical and cultural framework, this aesthetic can be read as a further stage in the long genealogy of the "diseases of the era". Whereas Renaissance melancholy transformed cosmological unease into artistic figures, and nineteenth-century neurasthenia gave the nervous body the function of metaphor for an overstimulated modernity, contemporary eco-anxiety here is elaborated through a post-human language: a vulnerable body that merges with nature and becomes its emblem. The digital medium thus does not merely collect diaristic confessions but operates as an aesthetic scene in which ecological trauma is translated into poetic and alternative visions. At the same time, read through Foucault's history of discourses, @theecooptimist's video exemplifies a dispositif in which subjectivity, vulnerability, and ecological crisis are redistributed. The visible prosthesis does not simply signify personal fragility but functions as a discursive marker: it renders visible a new figure of the ecological subject, situated at the threshold of human and non-human, organic and technological. This visibility is not neutral; it is structured by the socio-technical regime of TikTok, which selects, amplifies, and circulates fragments of experience. In this sense, the video does not only perform an individual narrative but inscribes itself in a broader discursive field where eco-anxiety is shaped, named, and shared.

From a Deleuzian perspective, the assemblage of gestures, prosthetic body, plants, and light does not seek narrative coherence but produces affective intensity, weaving a matassa of relations in which anxiety is deterritorialized into contemplation. From a Benjaminian angle, this fragmentary scene echoes the "poverty of experience": in

the impossibility of totalizing narrative, meaning arises from a fleeting image, a sensory constellation that crystallizes collective unease into poetic form. In this sense, @ theecooptimist's videos do not merely represent eco-anxiety but radically rework it, transforming it into an imaginary of fragile hope and a symbolic figure of resistance. As in *Demain*, where the filmed community embodied the possibility of action despite the crisis, here it is the protagonist's body itself that becomes an emblem of survival. No longer local communities, no longer climate data, but a single body that, through a poetic choreography, converts anxiety into imagination. It is this tension between vulnerability and resilience that renders her audiovisual approach an original response to eco-anxiety: it neither denies nor diagnoses it but transfigures it into the possibility of rethinking the relationship between human, non-human, and environment.

Conclusions and future prospects

The comparative analysis of environmental documentaries and digital micro-narratives confirms that eco-anxiety cannot be reduced to an individual pathology. Instead, it should be understood as a cultural and affective dispositif that both reflects and organizes collective responses to ecological crisis. By contrasting the spectacular and diagnostic logic of documentaries with the fragmented, affective, and participatory grammar of TikTok micro-narratives, this study demonstrates how eco-anxiety circulates across distinct media regimes, modulating perception, emotion, and practices of care. Read through a Foucauldian lens, this genealogy reveals not only thematic continuities with past "diseases of the time" but also epistemic shifts: different historical regimes redistribute subjects and objects of distress, define who can speak, and prescribe how suffering becomes narratable. In this sense, eco-anxiety emerges at once as symptom, cultural category, and discursive formation where medicine, media, and society co-construct new forms of visibility and vulnerability. This contribution has aimed to demonstrate that social media practices – diary entries, ironic memes, ecological rituals – are not limited to reformulating clinical language or film pedagogy from the grassroots perspective: they transform anxiety into affective digital healthcare, reframing fragility as a resource for community, imagination, and symbolic relief. This perspective enriches both the history of medicine and media studies, suggesting that the analysis of affective ecologies must consider not only symptoms but also the narrative and aesthetic infrastructures through which they become socially meaningful. Future research should proceed along three directions. First, interdisciplinary mapping of digital archives of eco-anxiety can trace how emotions are redistributed across generations and platforms, combining methods from visual culture, digital humanities, and discourse analysis. Second, the integration of documentaries and micro-narratives into educational and clinical-educative contexts may provide innovative tools for cultivating ecological literacy and resilience without pathologizing distress. Third, closer attention to the transgenerational dynamics of "diseases of the time" can illu-

minate how vulnerability, historically reframed from melancholy to neurasthenia to stress, reappears today as eco-anxiety, marking a continuity of cultural scripts and a rupture in their ecological grounding.

In conclusion, eco-anxiety emerges not only as an emotional response to environmental collapse but as a productive lens for rethinking the intersections of medicine, culture, and technology. By situating contemporary digital practices within longer genealogies of suffering and care, it becomes possible to recognize in eco-anxiety a paradoxical resource: a collective affective reservoir through which new ecological subjectivities and communities of resilience are being formed.

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