

*A film by Paolo Casalis*

# THE RESEARCHER

*Why I lost my job to save 5 tons of CO<sub>2</sub>*



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## Press Release

## NOW A FILM, THE STORY OF THE SCIENTIST WHO LOST HIS JOB AFTER REFUSING TO FLY

The documentary *The Researcher* by Paolo Casalis will be released in its World Premiere at the International environmental Film Festival *CinemAmbiente* on June 7th in Turin, Italy.

Dr. Gianluca Grimalda was dismissed after refusing, in order to limit greenhouse gas emissions, to fly home from his fieldwork research, becoming the first case of a worker fired because of a conscientious objection for environmental reasons.

*Turin, 23 May 2024* - The documentary film ***The Researcher - Why I lost my job to save 5 tons of CO<sub>2</sub>*** (Italy, 2024, 71'), directed by Paolo Casalis, will have its **World Premiere** at the International Environmental Film Festival *CinemAmbiente* in Turin, Italy, on **June 7th**.

The protagonist, **Dr. Gianluca Grimalda**, 51, an Italian scientist and environmental activist, was **dismissed after refusing to fly home** from his fieldwork research in Papua New Guinea, aiming **to limit his greenhouse gas emissions**.

Shot in a first-person perspective, with most of the footage captured by himself, the film recounts the tumultuous year in the life of this **climate researcher at the prestigious Institute for the World Economy in Kiel**, Germany, as well as environmental activist with *Scientist Rebellion*.

The story begins with Grimalda's **low-carbon journey to Papua New Guinea**, where he is sent to study how local populations adapt to climate change and globalisation.

The trip is a whirlwind of adventures, from the mountains of Iran to the wet markets of Mumbai, through the most remote corners of Pakistan, where the protagonist nearly finds himself trapped indefinitely. **35 days of travel** –taking trains, buses, lorries, taxis, ferries and ships- allowing him to save approximately three tons of CO<sub>2</sub>, halving emissions compared to a flight.

Then -after over **six months of fieldwork**, moving between remote villages of the Bougainville archipelago in the Pacific Ocean- the Kiel Institute orders the researcher to come back within days. He refuses, again, to catch a plane: a difficult decision, consistent with his beliefs.

This response costs him his job, making Grimalda the first person in the world to be **fired for refusing to fly due to carbon emissions and climate concerns**.

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As he prepares to go back to Europe, **the story is picked up by worldwide media**, starting with *The New York Times* and *The Guardian*, and goes viral, igniting a global debate. The return journey is entirely no-fly, producing only one tenth of an airplane emissions and **saving five tons of CO<sub>2</sub>**.

Recently, a German court stated that the climate crisis was not sufficient reason to delay his return to work, confirming Grimalda's dismissal. However, he filed a second appeal, hopeful of overturning the decision. If successful, **this could mark the first case of conscientious objection for environmental reasons**.

**Paolo Casalis**, 48, the **film's director**, says: «*This is a road-movie of travel, adventure, individual moral principles and universal issues, where undoubtedly there is an element of madness. It remains to be established whether madness is The Researcher's action or in its viewers' everyday behaviour*».

«*Grimalda chose to give up everything (a flourishing career, relationship, family ties and his beloved job) to sound an alarm about the desperate condition of our planet, to provide an example and, perhaps, a possible way out*».

The director found himself with **a story that evolved and changed, even abruptly**, as months went by: «*Initially, I was captivated by the figure of this quiet but determined scientist and his outbound journey to Papua New Guinea. When I thought I already had a good story, the "best" was yet to come. And so I was lucky enough to be able to record his feelings, emotions, hopes and disappointments in such special and unique moments*».

«*Gianluca's enthusiastic participation in the project made this documentary possible. He learned, from scratch, how to create video footage and content, equipping himself with tools and technical knowledge, and entrusted me with his complete openness to his most personal and intimate experiences. With perseverance and dedication, he captured hundreds of hours of footage*», Casalis concludes.

Dr. Gianluca Grimalda adds: «*I am glad if my story inspires people to make the extraordinary become ordinary in the fight against climate change. I am ready to return to Papua to continue my fieldwork this year*».

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## The Director

**Paolo Casalis**, 48, is an **Italian director and author, born in 1976**. He has several documentaries to his credit, many of which have won prestigious awards and have been distributed in cinemas as well as on TV channels and online platforms.

His works include ***The Runner*** (2009), a multi-award-winning documentary on the world of UltraTrail running made with Stefano Scarafia; ***Terra Madre*** (2009), a contribution to Ermanno Olmi's homonymous film, presented at the Berlin Film Festival; ***Langhe Doc*** (2010), selected at the David di Donatello Awards; ***Barolo Boys*** (2014), dedicated to the epic story of the King of wines and screened in over 150 cinemas; ***Not Just Football*** (2018), on the Darfur refugee national team; ***I stay home*** (2020), the world's first documentary on the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown; ***Food Rebels*** (2021), also selected at CinemAmbiente Festival.

***The Researcher*** is the second film in his "**Apocalypse Trilogy**", opened by ***The Preacher***, screened at several festivals and now available for streaming/download..

## The Festival

The CinemAmbiente Festival was **founded by Gaetano Capizzi in 1998** in Turin, Italy, to present the best international environmental films and documentaries and contribute to promoting both cinema and ecological culture.

Nowadays it is **the most important Italian event concerning environmental films**.

CinemAmbiente is also a founder member of the **Green Film Network**, an association gathering the most relevant international film festivals ecologically themed.

The World Premiere screening of *The Researcher* -within the *Made in Italy* section- will take place on **Friday, June 7th, 2024, at 9 PM** at cinema Massimo, Turin, the official theatre of the National Museum of Cinema. The director and the film's protagonist will introduce the documentary and answer questions from the audience.

## Short Synopsis

*A road-movie in which the protagonist's vicissitudes and adventures are intertwined with his climate activism. Gianluca Grimalda, university researcher, is the first worker ever fired for having refused to catch a plane for environmental reasons. He did an act of civil disobedience to save 5 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> and to raise awareness on the causes of climate change.*

*Was it worth it?*

## Links

Trailer: <https://vimeo.com/918932602> | <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P2yKJXq5wLA>

Website: [https://www.produzionifuorifuoco.it/portfolio\\_researcher.html](https://www.produzionifuorifuoco.it/portfolio_researcher.html)

Streaming/ Download: <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/researcher>

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