

Editorial

'Film education and the environment' – Special issue of the *Film Education Journal*Hunter Vaughan^{1,*}, Pietari Kääpä² and Mette Hjort³¹Assistant Professor of Visual and Media Arts, Emerson College, Boston, USA²Professor in Media and Communication, University of Warwick, Warwick, UK³Chair Professor of Film and Media, The Education University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, China*Correspondence: hunter.vaughan@emerson.edu

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Editorial review

This article has been through editorial review.

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Screen media (encompassing film, television and streaming) production and distribution leads to a significant environmental footprint built on carbon-intensive infrastructures, energy dependencies and waste production. The media industry's environmental impact has produced a growing body of research, with scholars such as [Maxwell and Miller \(2012\)](#), [Starosielski and Walker \(2016\)](#), [Cubitt \(2017\)](#), [Kääpä \(2018\)](#), [Vaughan \(2019\)](#) and [Kääpä and Vaughan \(2022\)](#) exploring a variety of ways in which every stage of our screen media culture – from production, distribution and maintenance, to consumption and digital waste distribution – leaves a substantial environmental footprint. Simultaneously, on the side of industry, green production strategies by organisations such as the British Academy for Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) and Producers Guild of America Green initiative (US) have developed and offered mitigation practices and strategies for bolstering environmental practice and content. These incentives – both industrial and academic – have focused on: (1) overcoming industry hesitation to adopt these practices; and (2) developing impactful on-the-ground methods to account for transforming screen industry workflows. Yet, this practical and analytical work currently overlooks the impacts of education and training on shaping work cultures and best practices, as well as their role as an incubator of innovative practice for future generations.

The philosophies, priorities, objectives and methods employed in media education and training are a vital source for understanding how concerns such as climate crisis and environmental injustice are incorporated into policy frameworks, management and strategy, work cultures and everyday production practice. Much of the academic work conducted on environmental media education has focused on content and the uses of media-based environmental communication in classrooms (see [Lopez, 2021](#)). Such perspectives build on extensive research into environmental messaging in diverse media – film ([Brereton, 2005](#); [Ingram, 2004](#); [Kääpä, 2014](#); [Monani et al., 2012](#)), television ([Good, 2013](#)) and the internet ([Anderson, 2014](#)). Here, scholarship in the field of environmental education draws from these approaches, as it tends to use media texts (films and so on) as illustrations of wider environmental concerns ([Kahn, 2010](#); [López, 2014](#)), highlighting the necessity to teach media literacy. Such perspectives are vital, as they address the pressing concern over the responsibility of the media industry in shaping perceptions of the climate emergency and communicating about both critical environmental concerns and sustainable ways of life.

Yet, what is often missing from these perspectives are the impacts of media production, distribution, exhibition and consumption – or the material impacts of the media industry. Accordingly, these studies do not engage with the environmental impacts of media practice itself, instead perceiving media output as largely free-floating contextless educational tools to shape knowledge, without acknowledging that the media itself may be the problem. While we agree that media literacy is vital in thinking about the ability of screen media to counteract the escalating climate crisis, current scholarship does not sufficiently address the material impacts of media production cultures. Refocusing attention to such perspectives is vital as: (1) the footprint of the media industry is significant (especially when aligning with the massive impacts of information and communication technology); and (2) film-makers (both current and emerging) need to be able account for their own practices, even as they in many ways lead on raising awareness and generating actionable responses to the climate emergency.

To address this gap, this special issue of the *Film Education Journal* spotlights the key intersection between media production cultures (drawing on [Caldwell, 2008](#); [Mayer et al., 2009](#)) and education that might offer crucial intervention for better future practice. This redirection is especially imperative as we are witnessing the beginnings of systematic educational initiatives in green media training in the media industry and the higher education sector. These include the Green Film School Alliance in the US (a consortium of film schools and industry announced in September 2020) and BAFTA's albert programme (providing environmental sustainability tools and training for film and television professionals, including an educational programme with UK universities). Yet, while the BAFTA albert Education Partnership, for example, has developed introductory training workshops for green production and climate content, the programme is offered on an optional, limited and monetised basis. There are also questions over the content of the training (as several articles in this issue highlight), as, for example, the speed of technological disruption quickly outpaces practical sustainability awareness and norms, and the general level of engagement embedded in the training does not necessarily account for the granularity of work in the UK screen industries. And this is before considering any scalability of the training to other cultural industrial contexts where, for good or bad, BAFTA albert continues to be a standard bearer for green production.

Thus, problems to do with the scope, content, aims and support structures of sustainable approaches to film and television education persist, especially due to the limited scope of such provisions. At the same time, educational incentives are developing innovative best practices and aligning these with contextual differences in ways that capitalise on the burgeoning interest in sustainability among the next generation of film-makers. Such practices are aligning with increased pressure to adopt sustainability as a production norm in industry work cultures, as well as mobilising emerging financial and policy incentives aimed at providing scaffolding for these practices to be adopted as an industry standard. Articles in this issue explore these dynamics from a wide variety of angles, primarily divided between expansive studies of where these topics and fields might overlap ('Beyond the classroom') and reflections on environmentalist and sustainability pedagogy in film and media production ('In the classroom').

In the first section, Becca Voelcker's 'Learning from land cinema: political pedagogy, plots and plantations' investigates community film-making in Negros, a sugar plantation island in the Philippines, as a material and discursive intervention in environmental media pedagogy. Focusing on the contemporary Filipino and Taiwanese American artists Enzo Camacho and Ami Lien (whose film-making makes extensive use of phytography, a process that harnesses chemicals within plants as a means of photographic development), Voelcker considers the phytogram as an index of contested land, and the co-production of film as a pedagogy of resistance against the plantation's political and ecological hold. These artists' expansion of film-making practice to teach-ins and *bungkalan* activities of tilling land as an act of agrarian protest, she argues, 'recalls Third Cinema's anti-colonial politics and extends them in ecological directions emblematic of a genre I am calling "land cinema"' (5). Similarly expansive, Michelle Mason et al. offer a critique of how the rise of assembly-line industrialised production models prompted the 'symbolic annihilation of marginalised communities, including Indigenous people' (20), and discuss potential pedagogical and institutional approaches to rectifying such problematic dynamics. In their article, 'Environment and society in Átl'ka7tsem/Howe Sound Biosphere: towards an integrated media ecology', they lay out the new Bachelor of Environment and Society degrees at Capilano University, Canada, as a pilot attempt to remediate these socio-scientific 'hotspots', integrating teaching and learning across many disciplines, platforms and locations through the concept of *consilience*. Working in the outdoor classroom of Átl'ka7tsem, in the Howe Sound Biosphere Region, the programme is intended to integrate different voices, knowledges and ways of being to offset the impacts of colonialism and corporatism, modelling reconciliation as a path to sustainability.

Many of our contributors, on the other hand, offer personal reflections on the strategies, challenges and support mechanisms for integrating environmental values and sustainability training into the conventional space of film and media practice training in higher education. In 'Incorporating ecocritical perspectives into introductory film production pedagogy', Adam Diller turns to the necessity of integrating ecocritical perspectives into introductory film production coursework, a crucial learning context that presents students with 'an opportunity to learn film-making as a relational, socio-material process, rather than as a set of predetermined craft skills or aesthetic concepts' (35). Diller argues for teaching film-making as a fluid, layered and communal encounter with fundamental questions about our ways of living and perceiving, offering an ecocritical pedagogy that promotes social engagement, community building, political mobilisation and resilience. James Fair, conversely, reflects on a decade of teaching to address the failures and missteps of this goal in 'Best intentions gone wrong? Lessons learnt from a decade of teaching in sustainable film-making practice by an eco-enthusiastic educator'. Fair investigates challenges such as embedding sustainable practice as education, versus offering it as co-curricular training, grappling with university quality procedures and student satisfaction, and establishing sustainable practice as a culture or narrative across a programme and staff team, concluding with a series of recommendations for approaching this in the classroom.

In 'Notes from the field: shooting green – the role of cinematography in eco-pedagogy', Jack Shelbourn focuses specifically on the role of cinematography in the film industry's carbon emissions, drawing together reflections on his sustainability-driven approach to teaching at the University of Lincoln, UK, alongside his working practice as a cinematographer. Shelbourn argues that by exposing students to the environmental impact of film-making and exploring less resource-intensive approaches, educators can help deliver the 'sustainable leaders' that the film industry needs. Turning to a particular institutional leader emerging in the UK, Andrew McWhirter's article, 'Climate change education (CCE): a case study of the BAFTA albert Education Partnership's Applied Skills for a Sustainable Media Industry module', probes BAFTA albert in the framework of climate change education and the university–industry partnership arrangements underpinning it. It draws from first-hand empirical material covering the establishment of the partnership, its delivery in the classroom, the conceptual and practical challenges it has faced, and the transformations it has undergone. The discussion provides important insight into the complex dynamics involved in delivering sustainability education for the film and television industry

in the context of UK higher education, even as it situates these practices in the context of wider industry transformations.

Taken as a whole, this special issue aims to provide readers with a balance between practical insights into the importance, complexity and potential pathways for film education in an era of climate crisis, and broader visions for ways in which environmental media practice and programmatic innovation might expand the horizon for what might be understood as media education through a green lens. As the dictates of escalating environmental instability and a shifting industry adapting to the mechanisms of a greener practice both challenge and, hopefully, support and inspire educators of the moving image to import more environmental awareness and sustainability practice, we hope this is only the beginning of an expanding conversation regarding the importance and potentiality of green media education.

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