

## Action, (Media) Research, and the Environment

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It started a few years ago with a throw-away line by someone working in the Dutch television industry. Because LED lights are not warm and cozy, the person said, film and television crews oppose the introduction of sustainable film lighting. Since then, I came across several similar assumptions: film technicians are supposed to insist on meat-based catering, directors fear the loss of their creative freedom over sustainability, and time pressure makes it impossible to expect environmental awareness from people who work in the film and television industry. The stereotypes and presumptions on which such statements rest are obvious, and much could be said about their conception of

gender, artists and creative labor. At the same time, such remarks trigger questions about the industry's willingness to act upon the climate crisis. Is it really possible that (alleged) sensitivities of art-minded directors and meat-eating gaffers impede green measures?

Fortunately, a student from the MA Film and Television Culture shared my curiosity and together we embarked on an interdisciplinary project that turned our academic interest into activism. After conducting a few interviews with Dutch film professionals, we realized that it is not individual crew members who hinder eco-friendlier productions, but on the one hand a lack of knowledge and planning, and on the other the refusal to take on responsibility that is constantly passed to someone else.

These findings are not different from the difficulties that other industries face in their green transition. However, the fact that film (and on-location television) production is not standardized increases the challenges. Every production has to figure out anew for each of its film locations if there is,

for example, a local possibility to use renewable energy (instead of diesel generators), how the transport of crew and equipment can be organized in an eco-friendly way, or how waste is locally separated and where it can be disposed.

From the interviews we also learned that (mostly younger) film professionals in the Netherlands are fairly aware of the climate urgency but expect that others take the initiative to change work routines. Crew members are waiting for instructions from their superiors, and film producers demand incentives from funding bodies while film funds expect that producers implement green measures on their own account who are in turn assuming that crew members autonomously take the initiative to work more eco-friendly.

To overcome this deadlock, we decided to take action. First, we organized an expert meeting with film professionals, sustainability managers and policy makers at the Netherlands Film Festival, then we approached the Netherlands Film Fund with the suggestion to help them stimulate green filmmaking in the Netherlands. Since then, our small team of (former) students from Media Studies and Sustainable Development has done a survey of existing green measures in the European film and television industry and is currently implementing some of them in six film productions to evaluate their effectiveness. However, to be able to do this we first had to find Dutch film professionals who were interested in taking on the role as eco-manager for our pilots. With the help from our international green film contacts, we organized a training

for them and now they are advising (and sometimes pushing) film makers to work in a more sustainable manner. Our evaluation of the different measures will be reported to the Netherlands Film Fund this summer and we are hoping that our conclusions will impact their future policy.

While writing up how this project evolved, I am still amazed what a small remark can cause. It started out of curiosity and resulted in research projects for students, new job profiles for Dutch film professionals, and it will probably also inform policy decisions. As researchers we not only broadened our own academic horizon but are also contributing to a new field within Media Studies and an international network of professionals. This project will not save the world, but it is an example of action research that will hopefully proliferate in the future. ♦