

Film Festivals and Ecological Sustainability in the Age of the Anthropocene

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Abstract

Over the past two decades, film scholars have offered new theoretical frameworks that define and strengthen ecocinema studies. In this regard, sensitive environments (Parikka 2015) are the film festivals that scholars mainly refer to as sites for promoting the consumption of ecocinema (Monani 2013). This contribution attempts to highlight what have become established practices aimed at educating an audience aware of the issue of environmental sustainability (Cubitt 2005). After a historical excursus, the author proposes an analysis of the Italian case: AFIC constitutes a space of discursive elaboration that has developed guidelines and parameters.

Keywords: Film Festival; Sustainability; Practices; AFIC; Audiences.

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This essay sets out to reflect on those festivals that are committed to the screening of films focused on the topic of ecological sustainability and have pledged to become green-sensitive environments in their practices (Parikka 2015).

It is well established that film festivals have played a crucial role in historical and critical studies as a vehicle and showcase for trends. Only recently, however, have they emerged as an autonomous field of research within film historiography. Until now, a theoretical perspective on festivals has been traced, often linked to their historical role, geopolitical and economic-geographical issues and their close link to reception studies (Dalla Gassa et al. 2022; de Valck, Kredell and Loist 2016; Iordanova 2013; Stringer 2013). With the rise, in recent years, of thematic film festivals/showcases, in which awards are granted and juries confer, an increasing number of film festivals have been transformed from a place and vehicle for the screening of completed films to a determining factor for the creative process - the conception, production and distribution of films (Iordanova 2015). In this regard, a good example to reflect on are those festivals that increasingly address the issue of ecological sustainability, first as a container of content and, secondarily, as an all-round ecocritical device.

Starting from an overview of these practices on an international level, we will conclude by focusing on a small number of case studies of environmental film events and festivals,¹ understood here as events with a cultural, economic, or touristic weight that cannot be ignored. They are places of knowledge, of discovery and, above all, alternative circuits that validate moments of reflection in a cohesive relationship between territories to be protected, ethnographies and tourist flows.

First and foremost, the paper will attempt to explore how film festivals have established themselves over time as privileged sites of eco-film and eco-documentary – transnational and cross-border (Acciari and Menarini 2014; Iordanova 2015): from the Sundance Film Festival to the latest practices adopted by the Biennale Cinema-Venice International Film Festival. This practice, which is still well established, has clashed with an increasingly pronounced demand for raising awareness. For example, the Ekofilm Festival is the longest-running European festival dedicated to environmental issues.² It was founded in Prague in 1974 by breaking away from Techfilm – International Festival of Films on Science, Technology and Art.³ Every October, the festival presents dozens of competing films and docufilms from all over the world and invites important Czech and international guests. These films show that the engagement and commitment of individuals is a major factor in changing the way we think about our planet. Since 2015, the festival has been held in Brno (Czech Republic) and is jointly organised by Key Promotion (advertising agency), Masaryk University and EkoInkubátor (employment agency). The president of the festival is Ladislav Miko, former and current advisor to the Minister of the Environment. Each year, the festival opens with a topical environmental theme. In addition to dozens of films, from various categories, both in and out of competition from the Czech Republic and abroad, the festival offers lectures and workshops with experts, discussions and debates with guests and directors of competitive films, an evening concert and other cultural programmes. These are the reasons why Ekofilm Festival is a valid interlocutor with more recent realities, precisely because it has transitioned from being an event more focused on raising awareness to an ecocritical device par excellence. It brings a wide range of viewers the latest findings about the condition of nature and the environment across the globe, which often expose serious issues. As a result, Ekofilm has been gaining increasing acclaim at an international level.

It is among the oldest environmental film festivals in the world and is a significant platform for encounters between the general public and filmmakers, experts and government administration. Foreign experts are often attendees, and in the last five years, more than 5000 films have been submitted to the festival.

1. Just as there is still no agreed definition of the festival phenomenon (cf. festival, review, award), the definition is also complex. The different ways in which festivals and sustainability dialogue create further confusion will also be considered: to date, these are referred to in literature as environmental film festivals; ecofilm festivals, ecological film festivals, sustainable film festivals.

2. <https://www.ekofilm.cz> (Last accessed: November, 2022).

3. <https://starfos.tacr.cz/en/project/LP01008> (Last accessed: November, 2022).

1 Becoming an Environmental Festival

Over the past two decades (Past 2019; Fay 2018; Wai Chu 2016), the growing number of films addressing environmental issues shows that environmentally conscious cinema is a powerful tool for disseminating knowledge, raising awareness, stimulating public debate and, hopefully, educational initiatives. But it is especially the space of the environmental film festival that not only draws attention to particular films as productive tools for public awareness and education on environmental issues, but also encourages us to adopt an ecocritically informed point of view (Bladow and Ladino 2018) towards all forms of film production, not just those that openly focus on environmental issues.

These festivals encourage us to become more ecologically conscious viewers as we adopt ecocritical perspectives in studying films as cultural products, as made and consumed by culture, and as a means through which culture re-produces itself, its values, and its worldviews.

Whilst ecocinema aims to impact audiences' environmental values and behaviours, and thus to inspire viewers to take personal and political action, information alone does not guarantee action.

Although assessing the actual impact of these films on environmental conduct is fraught with complexity, recent research in social psychology and the emerging field of community-based social marketing suggests that awareness and understanding of particular environmental problems have only a limited capacity to promote behavioural change in individuals and communities. According to environmental psychologist Doug McKenzie-Mohr (2011: 32), community-based social marketing works to identify the barriers that prevent knowledge from influencing behaviour. He argues that, since the barriers that prevent individuals from engaging in sustainable behaviour are activity specific, community-based social marketers can begin to develop a strategy only after they have identified a particular activity's barriers. Once these barriers have been identified, they can develop a social marketing strategy to remove them. The effectiveness of information in producing social change thus partially depends on how it is conveyed.

It is in this direction that the environmental film festivals proceed: they organize discussions, workshops, and playful activities from an ecocritical point of view. Understanding how information is conveyed visually is critical to its effectiveness in reaching audiences.

As of the field studies I have conducted, I propose an initial distinction between three dimensions that, to a greater or lesser extent, characterise and pertain to the environmental film festival.

The first one is a social dimension. These festivals increasingly strive to develop specific practices aimed at modifying and reinventing ways of dwelling in an urban context, of being in a group.

The second one is an intellectual dimension. It seeks antidotes to standardization, trends and accepted opinions that are closer to the approach "of an artist, rather than of professional psychiatrists who are always haunted by an outmoded ideal of scientificity" (Guattari 2014: 35).

The last one, an environmental dimension, can be understood as the context of relations that makes a phenomenon possible beyond the festival's circuit.

It is precisely from this interdisciplinary perspective that institutions view the film festival ecosystem, particularly in the last two decades. By way of its ability to consolidate diversified practices, the festival ecosystem warrants a complex categorization for its product: an articulate phenomenon, rich in continuous interconnections with the historical, economic, touristic and cultural context in which it emerges.

2 Categorizing Environmental Film Festivals

The dialogue between film festivals and environmental sustainability is deep-rooted, but in-depth studies are missing in the literature. As there is still no unambiguous definition of an "environmental" film festival, to study the phenomenon, we seek to clarify the trends detected by an initial historical mapping. Based on the assumption that supports what de Valck and Loist have argued, namely, that any categorization or mapping of film festivals is bound to be contestable (de Valck and Loist 2016), the study of the main film festival platforms

has led to the identification of three main trends: festivals with an entrepreneurial spirit, public sphere festivals, and performative social events.

2.1 Festivals with an Entrepreneurial Spirit

The first trend is related to entrepreneurial festivals, recalling Dina Iordanova's definition of "industry node" (2015):

Recently, a growing number of festival organizations have been capitalizing on the fact that filmmakers, producers, and other professionals congregate for annual festival events and have sought to exploit the presence of these production-oriented stakeholders. Many [of these] festivals provide forum space for interpersonal encounters and negotiations between companies and creatives, or hold special events (pitching sessions, development fund awards, sessions for additional financing rounds) that foster production-related activities as part of their festivals (Iordanova 2015: 8).

The Jackson Wild Film Festival (JWFF)⁴ and the Wildscreen Festival in Bristol⁵ are examples of this: places to "conduct business" and serve as a crucial marketplace where films are bought and sold. As a matter of fact, their main audience consists of delegates who can afford the expensive entry fees. In highlighting their ties to the filmmaking and environmentalist elite, these festivals validate and profit from corporate models of top-down competence and power. These corporate models also influence the communication strategies of these fair festivals: they seem to be less interested in exchanging information than in disseminating it.

Wildscreen describes its initiatives as follows: "All of Wildscreen's activities are about harnessing the best of the world's wildlife images and media to promote a greater understanding of the natural world."⁶ The Jackson Wild takes a similar approach: "Equally committed to education and outreach, the festival is dedicated to raising awareness and action through the innovative use of media. The webpage begins with "You're invited!" and suggests "No matter where you're from, whether you're a veteran or a newcomer, or a student, JWFF welcomes you!"⁷ These uses of direct speech invoke inclusivity, but these words are simultaneously limited by claims such as "All films submitted and screened have undergone a rigorous selection process prior to JWFF. When your film wins an award, it means something!"⁸ This rhetoric highlights how the word "you" is aimed at a specialized audience. But most interestingly, the inclusiveness they refer to involves a relatively high entry fee: up to \$450. Due to such models of top-down interaction, these festivals are substantially sponsored by corporate interests.

2.2 Public Sphere Festivals

The percentage of festivals that fall into the second category, that of public sphere festivals, are more focused on the representation of the *civic and socially legitimate*. Even if they turn symbolic value into economic value, unlike festivals with an entrepreneurial spirit they promote public participation through attendance - a mass audience, award ceremonies or panel discussions. The average audience, however, remains passive. These festivals tend to market themselves as prestigious events that attract large crowds and celebrities and are characterised by official government sponsorships. Jurgen Habermas' theory of the public sphere is applicable here, a way of examining how ordinary citizens "prepare to force authority to legitimise itself in the

4. Founded in 1991, Jackson Wild is a film festival based in Jackson Hole in the state of Wyoming, USA. The festival is held annually in September and consists of panel discussions, film screenings, workshops, and networking opportunities. It is noteworthy to mention also the Jackson Lake Lodge, typically held within Grand Teton National Park, an international conference for professionals in natural history filmmaking and media industry, as well as the Jackson Wild Media Awards, which recognize excellence in natural history filmmaking. Cfr. <https://www.jacksonwild.org>

5. The Wildscreen Festival was first held in 1982, in Bristol, UK. A Women's Leadership Organization with a dynamic team, every year, connects the creative filmmakers of the film, television and photography industry with environmentalists to raise awareness of the environmental crisis and inspire positive changes.

6. <https://wildscreen.org/about-us/> (Last accessed: November, 2022).

7. <https://www.jacksonwild.org> (Last accessed: November, 2022).

8. <http://wildlifefilms.org> (Last accessed: November, 2022).

face of public opinion.”⁹ Two types of festivals fall into this category. The first refers to film festivals that call themselves “environmental”, but upon closer inspection it becomes evident that their commitment to such notions is debatable. The second refers to circuits, major film festivals, that include spaces in their programming schedule dedicated to highlighting films in competition that have been made according to best practices and green certification.¹⁰ Among the most notable instances is the establishment of the Green Drop Award, given by Green Cross Italy to one of the films competing in the official section of the Venice International Film Festival that best interprets “the values of ecology and sustainable development, with particular attention to the preservation of the Planet and its ecosystems for future generations, lifestyles and cooperation among peoples.”¹¹ The award, made of blown Murano glass, contains a drop of water with a soil sample that is chosen from different countries each year. The link between land and water and the connection to an ever-changing place in the world is meant to symbolise the fertile humus in which future generations can reconcile development and ecology. The drop also symbolises the strength of every small action, including the very powerful one of a film.

Green Cross also promotes, among the various education and information initiatives on ecological transition, the “Screen in Green” competition together with the Ministry of Ecological Transition, the Sardegna Film Commission and Premio Solinas. The goal of this project is to promote new content and increased environmental awareness in film and television productions through the creativity of young talents between the ages of 18 and 30. A cash prize is established for three categories: short films, TV series subject and feature films.

2.3 Performative Social Events

Lastly, the final and most recent category is that of performative social events. As Stringer (2013) suggests, thematic film festivals often set out to both encourage a general audience (by promoting the notion of the official public sphere of the civic and the socially legitimate), on the one hand, and a specialised audience (celebrating “cult and social opposition”), on the other. Evolving from the second category and taking shape from the second half of the 1990s onwards, we are referring to festivals that have specified, structured spaces and time frames for gathering, discussion and exposure, while also helping to promote informal connections between programmers, audiences and creators. They are distinguished by a distinctive community nature and a sociocultural drive which operates through the theoretical framework of the public sphere, where these festivals, particularly in the last decade, have been the main promoters on an extended, ongoing process with the aim of publicly mobilising their audiences through the process that Monani calls “riot(ing) in the streets” (2013: 267), forging of a tangible form of environmental action.

These audiences address the perceptual modes of the individual, thus creating an immersive experience which is capable of reframing and readjusting the sensitivities of cohesive relationships between involved territories and ethnographies. Thus, this kind of festival offers tools for socio-cultural education through shared critical reflection in a culturalist perspective.

However, in addition to these all-embracing gestures, festivals also encourage dialogue on a specialised topic, the environment, in intimate contexts: screenings combined with seminars, workshops, roundtables and events as networking and socialising parties. Words such as resilience, environment and sociability are common to all websites.

As public and alternative spheres, film festivals highlight the democratic nature of participation. Audiences are notably encouraged to interact with festival organisers and filmmakers in contexts that inspire conversation. Ultimately, everyone takes their environmental missions seriously. These festivals are not simple forums for

9. Public sphere theory has been successfully applied to other types of film festivals by scholars such as Julian Stringer, Derek Ros and Soyoung Kim, because film festivals often present themselves as meeting spaces for expanding spheres of democratic and public engagement.

10. As Kääpä (2013) acknowledges, among others, there is still no precise definition of green film. On an international scale, there are certifications, protocols, and evaluation systems: these allow audiovisual production companies to certify that a given audiovisual work has been produced in an environmentally friendly and sustainable manner. Action on the following issues must be implemented: organisation of activities, use of resources, waste management, energy consumption, and atmospheric emissions.

11. <https://www.greendropaward.org> (Last accessed: November, 2022).

general entertainment but are structured so as to bring communities together to share a common cause. As a matter of fact, as Stringer has pointed out, most thematic film festivals are aimed at both specialized minorities and the general public.

The thematic areas being promoted are not only related to energy consumption, but especially to mobility (visiting and moving around the city with low-impact means of transport), merchandising, material recycling, and food sustainability; such dimensions, in particular the latter, are mostly related to cine-touristic practices.

This is the case, for instance, of the Finger Lakes Environmental Film Festival. It is an annual multi-art, interdisciplinary, cross-media festival in Ithaca (New York, USA), dedicated to showcasing global media projects that are related to sustainability issues. Launched in 1997 as an outreach project through the Center for the Environment at Cornell University in Ithaca, since 2005 it has been hosted by Cornell's Division of Interdisciplinary and International Studies, which has strived to raise the festival's profile as a regional event with an international appeal. It can be described as a successful operation, in its longevity but also in its attendance, which has exceeded 10,000 people in recent years. As Monani (2013) writes:

Significantly, FLEFF presents itself not only as an alternative ecocritical space, where different ways of thinking about the environment take centre stage, but also as an alternative public space. The festival's programs display a series of unconventional opportunities for audiences, artists, and organizers to exchange dialogue. FLEFF hosts galas and gatherings free to festival attendees, staff, and featured guests; a FLEFF lab, which is an all-day "unconference," open to any and all free of charge where you participate rather than observe: one credit mini-courses open to all Ithaca students: an internship program that engages over 100 students; and the Fellows program, which invites graduate students of color from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds and institutions to spend three days at the festival [...] My observations and experiences suggested that most participants allow the festival's frames of "vigorous debate" coupled with "collective joy" and "safe zone" to forward amiable but critical exploration and negotiation (272-273).

Here, Monani explains that FLEFF's goal is to steer the festival as a link between intellectual enquiry and new media, as an additional platform for interrogating sustainability in all its forms: economic, social, ecological, political, cultural, technological and aesthetic. Through films, videos, new media, installations, performances, panels and presentations, the festival engages in a vigorous debate between media and disciplines. Each year, it hosts a large number of national and transnational artists for a week and showcases Ithaca College as a regional and national centre for thinking differently - in new ways, interfaces and forms - about the environment and sustainability.

3 Environmental Film Festival Network

We have already mentioned that the international schedule is too vast to be guaranteed a complete cataloguing of all the Environmental Film Festivals active on a global scale. However, over the years, as evidence of the strong link between cinema and sustainability, there have been attempts to create digital platforms (blog, sites) that could serve as showcases tethered to discussion sessions. As much as it is an open network, a major component is missing: minor festivals (as based on budget, audience, star system).

Returning to the structure of these digital platforms, there is one common characteristic: these networks seek to signal initiatives as well as the many open systems active on a global scale. In particular, the content is aimed at filmmakers or distributors, rather than the audience.

Active from 1999 to 2011, the first, rudimentary attempt to create an online showcase for this type of festival was the Environmental Film Festival Network (EFFN),¹² which contained links to about twenty film festivals worldwide. This blog functioned as a true glasshouse: it provided each festival with a dedicated space and a profile of its own. Information published at the request and recommendation of the festival itself, in addition to the title and link to the festival's official website, includes a short description and in some cases the opening of the call for entries. There are several other similar but less successful attempts to create a digital platform

12. The blog has not been updated since 2013, but is still visible. Cfr. <https://effn.wordpress.com> (Last accessed: November, 2022).

to facilitate access to environmental film festivals: for instance, the EcoIQ, which has remained a blog, and EcoFootage, the first to have a database architecture, was founded in 2006 but is no longer active.

Probably the most widely available platform is the Green Film Network,¹³ a recent initiative boasting a global reach: in 2012, in Turin (Italy),¹⁴ 39 directors (of annual film festivals focused on environmental issues) signed up to form an international organisation to promote exchange, communication and collaboration on environmental issues through film. Membership of the Green Film Network is open to any environmental film festival that adheres to the principles and practices recognised by the agency, which can be summarized in three points:

- to promote audiovisual products with ecological and environmental themes and encourage initiatives to safeguard the natural, social and cultural environment;
- to disseminate and promote artistic and cultural international production, in particular film, through events, debates, publications, television appearances;
- to realise audiovisual events and activities to contribute to the growth of a culture aware of the relationship between man and nature, and social and cultural environments.

Most of the aforementioned festivals seem to evoke categories pertaining both to the public sphere and to performance events, but without making distinctions with respect to their primary intents nor to their best practices. They welcome audience involvement, provide open invitations to attend screenings and use language that emphasises the second person or direct speech. Almost all of these festivals have either very low or no entry fees for filmmakers aiming to submit their work. The network examples mentioned above were born as international showcases.

But there are other types of containers that are based on a national dialogue. Unlike the previous ones, as in the production sector, these networks are operational in nature and move towards the definition of shared guidelines.

For example, these are moving under the aegis, first and foremost, of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The common goals include the fight against poverty, the eradication of hunger and the fight against climate change, to name but a few. Regarding the composition of the international system, the Italian network that is currently being set up is of interest.

4 The Italian Case: the Festival Green Protocol¹⁵

To reflect, we will now draw inspiration from a specific case study: the current Italian context. Indeed, over the past decade, Italian film festivals have largely focused on the spatiality of cultural events, to be understood as a cohesive relationship between territories, touristic flows and ethnographies involved in a perspective of sustainability. In line with the practices adopted across Europe, recent legislation has led to the signing of the Green Festival Guide (2022), a protocol that engages with the realm of the Italian festival by primarily focusing on the material impact that film and television distribution practices have at every stage (Vaughan 2019; Starosielski and Walker 2016): organisation, promotion and communication, and realisation and post-event activities in both socio-economic and touristic-cultural terms.

The Green Festival Guide protocol does not outline practices but rather (unlike the case of production, for example) formalize those that are already widely adopted. The festival protocol is not a starting point, but a programme already partly tested in terms of its feasibility. The fact that this protocol is in the making is demonstrated by the repeated statements of the Association of Italian Film Festivals (AFIC) President, Chiara

13. <https://www.greenfilmnet.org> (Last accessed: November, 2022).

14. Turin has been hosting the annual green film festival CinemAmbiente since 1998. It was set up with the aim of presenting the best environmental films and documentaries at an international level and to contribute, with activities taking place throughout the year, to the promotion of cinema and environmental culture. Founded by Gaetano Capizzi, the Festival is organised by the CinemAmbiente Association with the National Cinema Museum. CinemAmbiente is one of the co-founders of Green Film Network.

15. The contribution refers to ongoing work.

Valenti Omero, who speaks of ecological transition and adaptation, alluding to the practices that have already adopted and can be used as a point of reference to start outlining common procedures, at least on the national level.¹⁶

What is the starting point and what is the ending point? If a conclusion has not yet been reached (presumably the publication of a protocol), the start can be recognized through the statements of Laura Zumiani – representative of the Trento Film Festival and AFIC board member – who has claimed that:

The work began with a mapping of what exists in Italy, and of the good practices that were immediately available. We based ourselves on the Trentino eco-events specification, combined with some international tools, to create a guide, practical and operational, with advice divided into thematic areas. But also to lay the foundations of the Protocol, on which we are working in collaboration with the relevant Ministries and in synergy with all the festivals.¹⁷

In addition to the Trentino case, there are other festival directors who have been working for years on the realisation of festivals as environmentally sustainable social and performance events.

Under the coordination and supervision of Laura Zumiani, nine associated festivals took part. The green festivals working group consisted of Monica Goti (Trieste Film Festival),¹⁸ Marco Trevisan (Euganea Film Festival),¹⁹ Raffaella Canci (Trieste Science + Fiction Festival),²⁰ Luca Elmi (FCP - Porretta Film Festival),²¹ Gaetano Capizzi (CinemAmbiente),²² Renato Cremonesi (Lessinia Film Festival),²³ Riccardo Volpe (Biografilm Festival),²⁴ Rocco Calandriello (Lucania Film Festival)²⁵ and Sheila Melosu (Siciliambiente Film Festival).²⁶ By observing the makeup of this working group/team, it is worth noting the decision of establishing a dialogue between festivals – that we have defined – of the public sphere and those here identified as performative events, true devices of social sustainability before being environmental. In anticipation of the forthcoming protocol (expected to be issued on October 2022), the AFIC has outlined ten thematic areas²⁷ on which the team is working on, and not exclusively in terms of energy consumption. We propose the ten parameters by identifying them in the three previously proposed categories: 1) social (promotional materials, set-ups, social sustainability, guest management); 2) intellectual (training and communication, production of gadgets, sustainable mobility); and 3) environmental (energy and sustainable consumption, food sustainability, environmental culture, waste management).

16. The statements of Chiara Valenti Omero are available at the link: <https://italianpavilion.it/eventi/italy-supports-green-awareness/> (Last accessed: November, 2022).

17. My translation.

18. Trieste Film Festival is a film culture event held annually in January. The main aim of the festival is to encourage information, discussion and mutual cooperation between those working in the field of audiovisual production <https://www.triestefilmfestival.it> (Last accessed November, 2022).

19. Euganea Film Festival is an environmental film festival held annually in June. The festival is held in Monselice (Padova). <https://www.euganeafilmfestival.it/it> (Last accessed: November, 2022).

20. The main purpose of Trieste Science + Fiction Festival is to present and promote science fiction and fantasy cinematographic and audio-visual works. The festival held in November. <https://www.sciencefictionfestival.org> (Last accessed: November, 2022).

21. Every edition is dedicated to a famous director of the national and international scene. It takes place in Porretta Terme, in the province of Bologna, every year in December. <https://porrettacinema.com> (Last accessed: November, 2022).

22. CinemAmbiente is the first environmental film festival in Italy. It was started in Turin in 1998 with the aim of presenting the best international environmental films and documentaries, with activities taking place throughout the year. <https://www.festivalcinemambiente.it/> (Last accessed: November, 2022).

23. The festival is dedicated to the production of multimedia material on the life and history of mountain peoples. It is held every year in Bosco Chiesanuova, Verona, at the end of August. <https://www.ffdl.it/it/> (Last accessed: November, 2022).

24. Biografilm Festival - International Celebration of Lives is a film festival held in June in Bologna, dedicated to biographies. <https://www.biografilm.it> (Last accessed: November, 2022).

25. The Lucania Film Festival has been held every year in Pisticci - Matera since 1999. Every year it presents major film productions that have had Basilicata as their set. <https://www.lucaniafilmfestival.it> (Last accessed: November, 2022).

26. Siciliambiente is an international film festival related to environmental themes, sustainability and human rights. It takes place every year in July, in San Vito Lo Capo - northern Sicily. <https://www.festivalsiciliambiente.it> (Last accessed: November, 2022).

27. <https://www.aficfestival.it/2022/02/25/afic-guida-festival-green-transizione-ecologica/> (Last accessed: November, 2022).

An initial mapping of the outcomes, based on 47 festivals that have adhered to the guidelines, shows a positive increase in practices as of September 2022. In particular, we propose a focus on data relating to the “training and communication” section.²⁸ Bearing in mind that 2022 is the first year almost in full compliance after Covid restrictions, the involvement of the public has yielded excellent results: an average of 65% have claimed not only to have succeeded in realising environmental education initiatives involving the participants, but also to have succeeded in preparing a sustainable communication plan, demonstrating the strategies of sustainable activism. The response of festivals that are not environmentally themed but want to conform to these themes (second category) is still weak in terms of 1) activating forms of tutoring and mentoring with more experienced festivals (32%), and 2) in proposing environmental training for hired and volunteer staff (32%). An outstanding case in Italy, signatory of the ten guidelines, and promoter of the working team, is Euganea Film Festival.²⁹ It is a network of social sustainability and cultural inclusion in the interpretation of events, such as mobility (visiting and moving around the city by low-impact means), merchandising (social, creation of shared maps to discover the territory), and even food sustainability (with zero-mile products). A successful case, it fulfils most of the ten points in the AFIC’s guidelines. It is a case study that, based on thorough enquiry, has allowed us to being addressing the performative social events category.

5 Communicating and Avoiding Greenwashing: the Case of the Euganea Film Festival

“It is our conviction that cinema can lend a hand to understand, to comprehend, especially in the less clear moments, when the shortest road seems the only one to take.”³⁰

This statement by the Euganea Film Festival’s director, Marco Trevisan, perfectly sums up the intentions of the Euganea Film Festival which, since 2002, has managed to liaise with other sectors in the regional territory in promoting of local culture through audiovisual media.

The festival is the flagship of the activities carried out by the Euganea Movie Movement, an association founded in 2005 and which operates in the Veneto region to promote Italian and foreign film cultures through the organisation of events, courses, reviews and shows, with a special focus on regional productions. Its main expression is the Euganea Film Festival, which takes place in the Euganean Hills area during the summer and has offered, since 2002, a selection of over fifty submissions each year (a varied line-up of documentaries and shorts on the theme of eco-sustainability), of which fiction and animated documentaries and shorts are included, presented in evocative settings such as parks, villas and castles, accompanied by special events such as concerts, workshops, meetings with authors and theatre performances. Euganea Movie Movement collaborates with various exponents of the international film cultural scene and works with a dense network of organisations, municipalities, institutions and associations in the province of Padua and within the Veneto region. The association’s activity is oriented towards a dialogue between film and regional culture. In doing so, it promotes initiatives in unconventional contexts. It chooses to revitalise spaces and environments that are reconsidered and used in new and original ways, becoming splendid open-air cinemas: a unique cultural format that combines the high-level offer of the films in competition with the promotion of the territory.

In 2021, with the collaboration of WOWNature,³¹ Euganea Film Festival supported the Bosco Fontaniva area of the Brenta River by increasing its biodiversity and improving the provision of water-related ecosystem services to river habitats, wetlands and agricultural areas of the Natura 2000 site. For the 2022 edition, the festival, together with the support of Crédit Agricole Friuladria, aims to continue the path of environmental accountability by renewing the *Euganea Film Festival Climate Positive* initiative, which will generate positive impact by enhancing the environmental quality of the territory. To this aim, the festival plans to plant new

28. A full reading of the report is available at the link: <https://www.aficfestival.it/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Guida-Green-v290822.pdf> (Last accessed: November, 2022).

29. <https://www.euganeafilmfestival.it> (Last accessed: November, 2022).

30. Interview with the director Marco Trevisan, March 2022.

31. <https://www.wownature.eu> (Last accessed: November, 2022).

trees in the area of the Brenta River Park (roughly a 50-km-long stretch), which runs from Bassano del Grappa in the Province of Vicenza to Padua, as well as vowing to protect the Po River Woods.

By protecting the existing forests, the organizers aim to zero the festival's CO2 emissions; however, they intend to plant trees where they are most needed, thus helping reduce the impact of the climate crisis. Euganea Film Festival is also deploying another initiative to minimise their climate impact: the Solar Cinema, a van equipped with a photovoltaic system that reduces the emissions that a normal film screening inevitably entails. The Solar Cinema is also a tool for generating ecological knowledge and the diffusion of cinema. From the outset, the practices of tourism and territory promotion have a more international, rather than national, impact, thanks to original and pioneering initiatives: it opened a bike point to reach highly evocative and underused locations where screenings take place during the festival. This practice, initiated in collaboration with a local tourist agency, enables directors, producers, and audiences from all over the world to discover venues in the Euganean and Berici Hills during Euganea Film Festival.

An extension of this project is the creation of a cycling tourism webapp, *Euganea Film Tour*,³² a film tourism project created with the intention to discovering and visiting independently, or with guided tours, film and television production locations.

In an invaluable dialogue with the Department of Cultural Heritage of the University of Padua (Cinlands research project, 2014),³³ the web application responding to the objective of implementing a project of cultural dissemination in the area, in an honest enquiry into local realities. It combines the study of audiovisual products with the exploration of the hillside territory, advancing film tourism itineraries interested in an in-depth analysis of film locations in relation to places and monuments of interest. The webapp user can enter the territory in two ways.

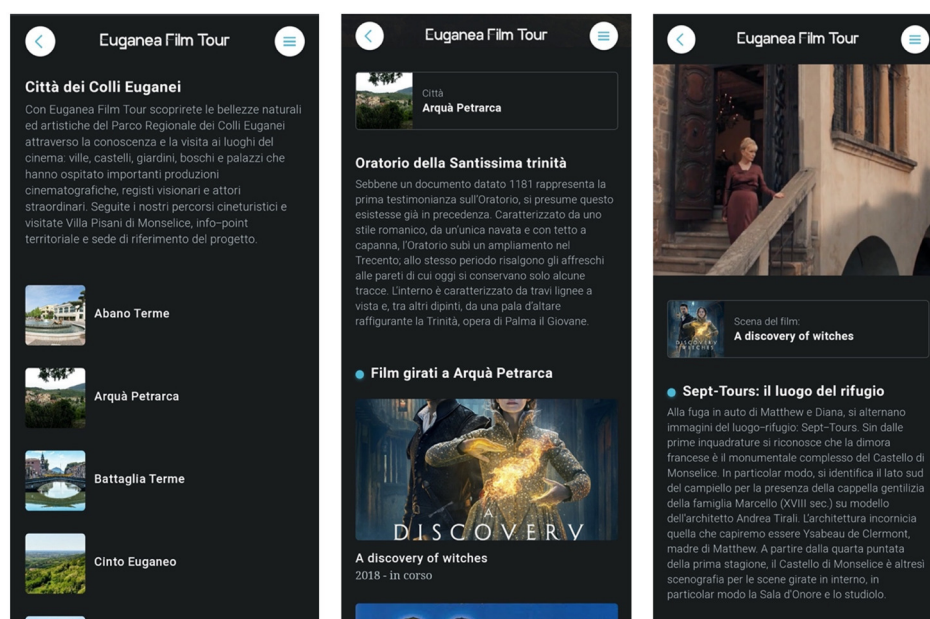
The first way to enter the territory is highly explorative, entailing the discovery of a location through three different approaches: from a historical point of view through the city history (fig.1); from a touristic point of view, in visiting monuments, places of worship, points of interest (fig.2), symbology and history; and from a cinematographic point of view: through a film of which the film review offers a detailed description, a synopsis and, in particular, a section dedicated to the relationship between film and territory. An analysis of the latter allows a further in-depth study with the analysis of sequences (fig.3) prompting, in the perspective proposed by Lavarone's studies (2021, 2018, 2016), an awareness of the films, as well as providing basic knowledge of film language to allow a more sophisticated reading of films as a means of communication, as a carrier of a messages. Hence, each sequence, shot in a specific location, was subject to census and georeferencing works. This process was useful for outlining heritage enhancement experiences with a positive benefit for the territory.

The second way of accessing the territory was developed in dialogue with a local tourist agency, the proposal of four film-related tours. These tours have been included on the webapp to provide users with gamification experiences, thus potentially strengthening the relationship between cinema and the territory on multiple levels.

The dialogue between the images visible in films and television series, on the one hand, and the naturalistic panoramas of the Euganean Hills Regional Park, on the other, allows the visitor to think about the changes the area has undergone. A landscape particularly marked in the last twenty years by the progressive urbanisation of the park, the destruction of the flora and the gradual disappearance of various species of animals that have migrated and/or become extinct. This latest practice adopted by the Euganea Film Festival broadens these considerations and encourages us to reflect not exclusively on the ways in which the media (in this case, the cinema) portray the theme of environmental ecology, but rather on the various ways in which environmental ecology is rooted in technological mediation, implying collective updates of perceptual paradigms, attention

32. <https://www.euganeafilmtour.it> (Last accessed: November, 2022).

33. Cinlands was created by Farah Polato and Giulia Lavarone across the Department of Cultural Heritage: Archaeology, History of Art, Film and Music (dBC) at the University of Padua. Cinlands is a research project examining media, landscape and tourism. Starting from the field of film, photography and television studies, this exploration has subsequently adopted interdisciplinary perspectives, involving computer science, tourism economics, geography, history of art and communication. <https://cinlands.beniculturali.unipd.it> (Last accessed: November, 2022).



Figs. 1-3. Some screens from the web application 'Euganea Film Tour'

(Citton 2014) and forms of knowledge. The festival, although providing an alternative service to the usual spaces, is a promoter of an ecological conception of experience, relevant also to social and mental sustainability spheres.



Fig. 4. Giardino Storico di Valsanzibio -PD-. Tours in September 2021. Marco Trevisan; all rights reserved; Fig. 5. Castello del Catajo, Battaglia Terme -PD-. Tours in September 2021. Marco Trevisan; all rights reserved

In analysing the Italian case, it is apparent how the exploration of environmental film festivals leaves room for the ecocritical examination of other film festivals, albeit not always focused on the environment.

Studies on film festivals have examined the festival space, but have mainly focused on interests: for instance, through a focus on the timing of the festival circuit and the importance of jury awards, or through an emphasis on how cities project their tourism appeal.

Green festivals provide an additional and valuable framework for reading both the methods and the linguistic and cultural choices of the entire festival world, which in recent years is becoming increasingly attentive to the combined themes of sustainability and ecology.

New festivals continue to spring up that link cinema and experimental forms of ecological sustainability in both practice and content. The model I have provided can thus be refined or redefined through case studies that reveal how public and participatory evocations are realised and practised. The terrain of the festivals I outline here and the interpretations I suggest lay the groundwork for initial steps for future research which, until now, has been lacking.

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