



## **ScreenCraft Works Cross-Border Careers talk: How can you work more sustainably on international productions**

### **Green Eyes Production**

6 February 2024

#### **Elizabeth McIntyre:**

Welcome to our Cross-Border Careers talk: How can we work more sustainably on our international productions? What are some of the ways we can strive to be greener, either as an individual or as a team? We welcome sustainability consultants Green Eyes Production to discuss good practice.

#### **Zsófia Szemerédy:**

Hi everyone. There's actually four of us here today presenting. My name is Zsófia, I'm one of the co-founders of Green Eyes Production, and here with me is Júlia Tordai, who is the other co-founder of Green Eyes Production. We will kick off today's presentation the two of us, and then we will have our junior project manager Vénusz, and our office manager and junior project manager Lola, who will be also presenting to you.

#### **Júlia Tordai:**

Hi everyone. So on this picture, it's not a full team yet, but just a quick word about Green Eyes, how we founded it with Zsófia. It was almost 3 years ago now - our baby is growing fast! We met on a film production, both coming from different backgrounds: she's coming from a filmmaking background, a script developing, script writing background, and I'm coming from a science background, and we both lived abroad and we're surprised - I think waste is always the top thing that people just start talking about when it comes to sustainability, but sustainability is so much broader than just waste, and we will touch on this later on in our presentation. After we just started talking about this topic in the office, we really quickly became our first project, and it was Marvel's *Moon Knight*, which was an eight-month shoot here in Hungary. Since this, we are working in the central eastern European region and we have also a UK limited company. As you see here on the list, it's mostly high-end TV and tentpole productions. In the list there are some productions - we are really proud of all of them, but especially *Poor Things*, which just came out recently with Oscar nominations, Golden Globes, won the Venice award; *All the Light We Cannot See*, also Golden Globes; *Hijack* is absolutely my favourite series. We worked on a lot of cool projects!

As mentioned at the beginning, sustainability is not just about environmental issues but it's also about social and economic aspects. The United Nations created in 2015 the 17 SDG

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goals. I'm sure you're all familiar with those goals. Always on a film production we try to implement all these SDG goals, which is not always easy, but because it's a complex issue, we need to handle it as complex as it is to try to implement everything as possible.

**Zsófia Szemerédy:**

Why are we talking about sustainability? We all came to this question from different angles. It's a bit like the film industry - how do you fall into the film industry? Everyone kind of just it happens to them, although I think the film industry is a little bit more alluring than what's happening right now in terms of climate change on the planet. But we tried to make this a little bit as a game for you, so in the next couple of slides we will be mentioning some of the most impactful disasters and issues.

We're telling you that Antarctica is losing a shit ton of ice every year, Julia knows the exact number.

**Júlia Tordai:**

151 billion tons of ice per year, which is huge. It's actually the same amount as Mount Everest has in the rock weight.

**Zsófia Szemerédy:**

Now my question is going to be, what kind of film pops in your mind? We've done this on a training for producers and showrunners and development execs, and I think they guessed, almost all of them, *The Day After Tomorrow*.

On the next one we're talking about forest fires. I think no one has to really say anything more about this. There are more frequent fires, they're happening, they're more violent, it's harder to put them out, it's insane, and it's happening everywhere. Whatever happened last year Greece, whatever happens in the US all the time, Australia. *Jurassic World*, at the end there's a really big forest fire.

On the next one, this is a pun intended. You'll see the evolution of a bird turning Twitter into X on one level, but you also see that there are a million species at risk at the moment and the number is increasing and it's not really getting any better, it's a real big issue of our world today. It's *Ice Age*, the entire series. I think we don't have to say anything else.

On the next one, plastic production is speeding up, it's absolutely insane. I have actually recently seen a crazy documentary which was titled *The True Cost*. I recommend it to everyone; it's about fashion but it's also about consumerism, it's also about plastic, it's about everything that's wrong with our world at the moment. I recommend it. It's very shocking - it's one of those heart-pounding ones.

**Júlia Tordai:**

I think what is really shocking about plastic pollution is that we all hear about turtles with their neck round and animals suffering, but also your blood is now containing microplastics. Despite that, the statistics show that in the upcoming years plastic pollution will not decrease but it will increase, it will double. Pretty sad. I saw that there is in chat *Isla del Plastico*.

**Zsófia Szemerédy:**

A film about a plastic toy! I think on one level it's extremely obvious why we've chosen this. On another level, I don't know if you know this or if you followed it in the trades, but Mattel, who produces *Barbie*, has actually announced that they'll be making at least ten more

feature films based on toys, which is shocking. What are they doing? They're selling us more toys, more toys. In some way it's horrible, although I did like *Barbie*. Sorry about that!

On this one, to give you a clue, we've chosen an Apple series which is more of an anthology. It is connected in every episode but each episode jumps in time quite a lot, which is unusual for a series. I don't know if you know which one I'm talking about. I also give a tagline usually on this one - it's a bit like *Black Mirror* with sustainability. *Extrapolations*.

A fun fact - and we're saying all these examples because we want to show you how many different ways you can depict climate change on screen and that it doesn't have to be sometimes overt. I'm saying this when it's one of the most overt films we've chosen! You don't necessarily have to spoon feed it, it can be an underlying topic. But the fact that we're talking about it, to me I think it really matters that it's in almost every film and it has an impact on our lives. We know that films have an impact on our lives. So I think it's very important to learn how to talk about sustainability in films. And actually the writer of *Extrapolations* is also the writer of *The Handmaid's Tale*, Dorothy Fortenberry, and she heads up a sustainability writers' group in the US at The Writers Guild, and it's absolutely amazing what they're doing in terms of how they are trying to change the narrative on a larger scale.

The homes of 200 million people will be lost and under sea level, it's pretty scary, the melting off the ice, rising sea levels, doesn't sound that great. *Water World*.

75 million kids suffer from food insecurity. It is a big deal as well, it's very sad. We're throwing out a lot of food and we'll come back to this on the production side of this presentation when Lola and Venúsz will be talking about food donation, because that's one of the cornerstones of our operation. We do quite a lot of things but food donation, for example, and composting is very important to us.

The **international landscape and a bit of market overview**. We put this together at the very beginning when we started actually just thinking about sustainability as a company. It was one of the first things we've done, we researched what do all the really big companies think about sustainability and where they stand on this topic. Surprise, surprise, all these large, very easily recognizable studio streamers, broadcasters, production companies have publicly announced their sustainability commitment goals. They either have a commitment goal, a sustainability policy, or some kind of targets. Everyone calls it differently often. Soon hopefully we'll have a more universal language for this. What matters here that each and every one of them cares about it. This was three years ago when we put this together. Ever since then regulations are getting stricter on a governmental level as well. So although they started perhaps with, let's just say, more loose regulations and requirements, more like suggestions for productions, since they're getting more pressure from the government, from policy makers, these are becoming more streamlined and more strict in the future, which in practical terms means quite a lot for productions. It means no one will be able to do greenwashing anymore, hopefully, and everyone will have to do proper data providing and sustainability analysis.

#### **Júlia Tordai:**

You probably heard about the new ESG and CSRD regulations. Those are mainly big companies being present on the stock market, and it's really important for them also to present for their investors that they have sustainability goals. Also it's coming through the broader industry as Zsófia said. Smaller companies will also give data for these bigger companies. I think, like Zsófia already talked about, what you can put on the screen thematic as sustainability, but I think as filmmakers we have a lot of responsibilities, because - so

much influence - we are 8 billion people on the planet, maybe more now, but 5.7 billion people had a TV or home video, so you can reach a huge audience if you want to communicate sustainability, and it's a big market, but I will leave that to you, Zsófia, to talk about.

**Zsófia Szemerédy:**

I think you have to look at it from two perspectives. One is what Júlia has mentioned already, which is how many people are out there and how many people you can get your message to via a device, which is absolutely very important and very brilliant. That's the messaging side, and that's what we look at when we look at scripts as well, the on-screen message. The other side is actually production and how much we're making and what it means and what it costs to earth and to us that we're making all these films.

This is recent data from 2022 records. 599 high end TV series were released and broadcast in the US alone in one year. That's absolutely insane. We know that, since our industry has been changing a lot, high end TV is very similar to feature film numbers, what it's producing. It's a lot higher than actual cable or broadcast TV. I think it's a bit daunting if we think about it. If we just think about similar numbers, how many films get made in Europe alone? Around 2,000 films per year and it's increasing. How many films are getting released in cinemas in the UK? When I started about 10 years ago, the number was 560 per year. When I left the UK after 10 years it was around 900 that were released in cinemas. It's insane, the sheer volume that's coming at us, I think it's just very overwhelming.

Those films get made somewhere, and very often those films don't just get made in one single country, they get made in multiple countries. Whether you're shooting it in multiple countries or you're doing post-production in a different country or you're doing pickup shoots in another country, it's all so complicated and we can't just look at one territory or another. It's also very important to note that there are so many regional differences as well, so there's no blanket solution for anything. What we're giving you here basically is a really big scare that there are really high numbers of films getting made; we're in the golden age, hopefully after the strike we're going to have a lot more films and series getting made again, but that comes with a price and we have to think about this price and we have to constantly be aware of it in some way.

This data actually comes from 2014, so this probably has changed quite a lot and this was only for the broadcast industry. This is just going to shock you a little bit more. Basically the global broadcasting industry's production emissions equal the global aviation industry's emissions. We hope we can see a more up-to-date number, but I think it is shocking as it is. I'll pass it on to Júlia now.

**Júlia Tordai:**

As we mentioned before, we mostly work on tentpole and high-end TV. This is an average tentpole carbon footprint. We measure carbon footprint with CO2 equivalent, which is a matrix and it contains all the greenhouse gases together, and you can calculate that with life cycle assessment or just measuring it. You see that the biggest chunk of the carbon footprint usually is the fuel consumption. This can vary. Actually it depends on the genre of the film. Is it a scripted period film? The fuel is a big chunk and it comes from transportation - the use of cars, if you want to heat up a tent using diesel generators. Then the other big part - 30% - is energy utilities, and it's how the electricity was produced. Then air travel. For international or co-productions or if it's service production, then a lot of crew is just flying into the country, or they are shooting in multiple countries. Unfortunately air travel is still here and it's really polluting. 4% is accommodation. More and more sustainable hotel options are available and

there are really good search engines - already I think also built in in booking.com - where you can find more sustainable options. We have good practices for all of these things and we will give you case studies later.

**Zsófia Szemerédy:**

We can also add, because I've seen there are a couple of people from the UK, there are particular regulations around flying in the UK. I don't know if you know about this but domestic flights are banned, in terms of if you're doing an Albert certification and you can't explain why you have done a domestic flight, you won't be getting your certificate. In some ways this is a really good regulation, in other ways it's debatable, especially because the UK has part of Ireland as well where it's really hard to get by ship, but those explanations go through. This is quite an important thing, I think, no other country has done this that they've banned flights when you're doing a carbon calculation. If you have any questions around that, you can check up on the Albert website.

What we're showing here on the screen, this is quite a new initiative and it's also absolutely amazing. It's one of the most trendsetting and a really impactful campaign. The organization Equity - they represent all the English talent and the cast - Equity has announced and published the screen rider. You can look it up on their website as well. They have over 300 actors who signed up with quite an amazing roster on this. Basically they're stating they don't want to live with their star quirks, they're requiring sustainable treatment in some ways. If it's not necessary, they're happy to sit in a car with others, they don't want to fly on business or first class. There are a lot of elements to this question. It's definitely worth looking it up because it's really pointing forward. What they're trying to do here is that we don't need those additional lavish requirements that used to set us apart from someone else, establishing our worth. Their worth is in advocating for sustainability as well now. So this is a very cool project.

You don't necessarily have to think about just the blockbusters. Any production's carbon footprint. You can think about an unscripted 30-minute TV show, that will be very different to, for example, a 22-episode returning high end TV series. One of them will be shooting on stage. So, for example, returning magazine shows will be always on the same stage, at the same studio, with the same set, with the same people, there will be not much travel involved, often the crew lives around the area. The UK is really good with this in terms of boosting the regional film efforts, so Birmingham, Yorkshire, Manchester, all of that. But also travel in terms of large shows very often come to Hungary, as you could see from the list of projects we worked on, because we're a service country. That means we're servicing all the productions that come here from the UK, from the US, and from Europe in general, and from India, and from anywhere else. That will involve travel, a lot of travel.

After now that we've talked about this and thought about this a little bit, who do you think in the film chain is responsible, who's accountable? Accountability is a big thing in sustainability, because anyone can make really big announcements but who holds them accountable? I don't know if you've attended or seen it, but there's a really really good talk on BBC Creatives, it's recorded, you can watch it, and they talk exactly about this topic. It's about your point of leverage. There's no wrong answer here. The producers definitely have responsibility; purse holders, they do too; production managers, of course; but even individual single crew members have responsibility. Everyone has their own point of leverage where you can do the most. A showrunner will probably have a bigger point of leverage than someone from the catering department, simply because they make bigger volume decisions. For example, a film fund will have quite an important role, because they're paving the path of what's to come with incentives, with recommendations; but then again the

government will have a big role to play; the streamer itself will have a big role to play. A lot of the purse holders will have a role, but we don't have to shy away from anything, because of often as suppliers and vendors, they have a role to play as well, they have the purchase power. So this is not like it can come just from the top or just from the bottom, it's kind of like a pressure squeeze thing. It has to come from every angle.

**Júlia Tordai:**

Everyone is involved, everyone has a responsibility, and you can implement it in all levels. With the past three years' experience, what we love in our job is that it's so broad and so many industries are involved in the film industry, and that's why it's always really exciting.

On a production level you have different departments, and all the departments can implement sustainability in different aspects. So you need to talk with the costume department how to reduce their emissions differently than to a location department or a production level. Then having policies for vendors and suppliers is also really important. On the studio, broadcaster and streamer level, I think it's the development, the green light stage, which Zsófia, I'd like you to jump in.

**Zsófia Szemerédy:**

This is plugging time! At Green Eyes we have developed this new training. We're doing it for the third time now, hopefully we'll be doing a lot more of this. When we're doing greenlight stage development sustainability training. It means the show, for example, has been greenlit - very good, but it's still in development stage, it's late development basically, and that's when we get all the decision makers in one group - the showrunners, the exec producers, producers, line producers, the development execs and everyone, and we look at the project from two angles.

One is the storyline - what can we do, without shoehorning in sustainability, to actually hold on to the power of messaging. We know - what we talked about it so far - it's a very powerful medium. We have to make our voice heard as well and we have to be sure how we're representing sustainability. Sustainability is not just about environment sustainability, it's about social sustainability, it's about diversity and inclusion, and all of these come together when we're talking about the narrative. This usually works with scripted content.

The other angle that we're looking at here is what we talked about in terms of point of leverage. These people have a very intense point of leverage here. They make decisions on where we're shooting, when are we shooting, how many crew members are coming, who will be the vendors and suppliers, in terms of - what kind of trucks are we getting, is it electric trucks? What kind of generator company are they engaging, are they using clean power technology? For example, we have a show on which they're trying - I mean this is the goal - they're trying to make it diesel free. They might have to use a little bit of HVO, but in terms of everything they'd like to make it diesel free. They're also at this stage deciding which studio they're going to be shooting at or which location they're going to be shooting at. Now you see the sound stage studio on this screen and it's very important, because the more equipped each sound stage studio is in terms of sustainability, the better and easier for the production to reduce their carbon footprint. We actually do deal with that too. We've just done a studio standard for one of the studios in Hungary, which is an Albert certificate basically that you can give to studios. Sorry, just to explain that, because maybe not everyone knows what the studio standard is.

**Júlia Tordai:**

How the sustainability department looks when we start on a production. Ideally, and it really depends on the film size, the crew size, budget size, but ideally it's the consultancy, the manager who is talking with all the heads of department, setting up the strategy, looking into the carbon calculation method - because in the UK it's Albert, which is mandatory, but there are other territories where other calculators need to be used - and who is there every day as the sustainability coordinator, coordinating the PAs, the runners or sustainability PA trainees - we have different positions here. The coordinator is mostly aggregating the data, collecting the data, and there is a lot of administration task which is related to our department, like placing purchase orders, liaising with the vendors, and then the sustainability PA is on the set, teaching the crew, showing how to recycle, and make everything visible which is happening in the background already.

We lobby a lot, because I think our job would be really valued as there would be also a third party, someone who looks into your job. I think Germany is a really great example, because they have the so-called minimum standards and to achieve those minimum standards they also need to have a third party company which looks through all the data and checks if it's really true. I would be happy if someone would check on us. Then we would be proven that we have a value, that we aggregate the data really correctly, and then there can be less greenwashing involved. We are really fighting for this too.

**Zsófia Szemerédy:**

It's the question of accountability that we talked about here, because there are three pillars. It's great that we have data in the industry, but we have to have comparable data, and then we also have to check where the data comes from. So we definitely think there's a role for everyone here at every level.

Now we've reached the end of our section and we'd like to pass it on to Lola, who'll be talking to you about the production side, and then Vénusz will take over from her.

**Lola Janzsó:**

Thanks Zsófia. Hi everyone. I'm going to talk about our impacts for the first time. What is this impact slide? We use it to show our measured improvements and to boost morale amongst crew. Since they are already tired, it's good for them to see our results.

We are fighting food waste. It is one of the biggest problems in the world right now. We are donating food. The hard part about that is that food regulation changes country by country, and even some of our crew members do it by themselves, so that's very nice of them. We are also composting leftover food so it doesn't go to waste at all, because then later we can use it to plant flowers and more food.

We give reusable water bottles to crew members, or we say bring your own water bottles, and this way we have eliminated 1.5 million plastic bottles, so that's a very big number, I would say. There are water stations with water machines so the cups can be filled again very easily and fast.

We offset £100,000 and it is equivalent to planting 7,500 trees - big numbers, very big numbers. We have used vetted offsetting companies who support communities also, and we prefer more in setting anyway.

As Júlia said before, fuel is one of the biggest contributors to the carbon footprint of a production, so depending on the genre, the length and location of the productions, we can

burn thousands of diesel every week. But we have alternatives to put in the generators. We can use HVO to power; it doesn't contain the handful components of diesel and it is made from 100% renewable feed stocks. There are biofuels also, which are commonly made of corn ethanol, and biodiesel and biogas from organic by-products. By using these renewable fuels, we reach five sustainable goals out of the 17 we had said before.

A few words about the generators and the mobile battery packs. Hybrid generators run on diesel, and when less electricity is needed, they can run on solar power or battery power, and the diesel generator produces electricity, but the mobile battery packs provide energy, so they have to be charged from time to time.

Clean power is the way to go forward and there will be more solutions in place, with the clean mobile power initiative which was made to make the entertainment industry a little more clean. Measuring the data output and fuel consumption is most important in our industry at the moment.

A few words about waste. By recycling and composting we can divert 75% of our trash from landfills. We always develop a wrap plan, and we can donate or reuse the props of the sets. Some companies specialize in this in the UK such as PropUp and CAMA.

As the infographic shows, the best way to live would be the circular economy where nothing is dumped, everything can be repaired and reused, there would no single-use products. We say rental is always better because there is less waste, less money spending, and we don't have to create a world that is disposable.

#### **Vénusz Kárász:**

Now I would like to continue and finish off our presentation by just continuing off with the waste management bit of it. Waste management is usually our biggest task on a production, even though in the carbon footprint of a production it is usually the smallest portion. We need to make sure that all the bins are placed in correct places where people will most likely use them and the more the better. We, or the sustainability coordinators and assistants, are there to make sure that the crew recycle properly. It's important to be present to observe and also to advise and be at the front of the line of engagement with the rest of the cast and crew so we can actually see our progress. We also have tried composting before and it is great and it does work, but unfortunately we have run into some issues here in Hungary with regulations. But if you can, then please compost, it is a fantastic way. Also in the new ESG regulation, now the waste will have to be weighed, which is a great step forward to gathering more accurate data for us.

Catering as well. It's a really big, big topic in sustainability. In terms of production, we are always trying to push to eliminate meat, to have less meat, or at least eliminate red meat from the production, because as you can see on the left there on the list, beef has the highest carbon dioxide emission out of all of the other meats, which is of course due to a lot of different factors, but one of them is that cattle require a huge amount of land. If going fully vegetarian is a little bit scary at first, switching to chicken instead of beef is already a big step forward and makes a huge difference in reducing a production's carbon footprint. We also try to create some sort of contract with catering or make them sign a pledge, where we have an agreement between the production and the catering company where we agree on some goals and that they help us reach our goal of doing more vegetarian-based meals. As we've said before, we also try to reduce waste by donating and by also doing pre-orders when it is possible.



Involving the community and the rest of the cast and crew is also crucial to be able to achieve the sustainability goals set out because, as it is with filming or being involved in a production, sustainability is also a joint effort. That's why we always have a lot of visuals, such as we send out newsletters, or attend safety meeting presentations. We also try to verbally engage with everybody, send out some memos, just really to try and build this community that we have.

This communication also goes upwards and downwards in the chain. We send data to the producers, results to executives and to the studios as well, but we also push on the effort to engage with the crew. We have implemented little games before in the past, for example we implemented the game Green Hero, where the crew had a month to nominate somebody who they think were the best at following some of the sustainability standards, and then someone at the end of the month was picked and was awarded a little treat and a special shout out as well to the crew. It's always just nice to incite people to be on your side and to act as an example, so that everybody can start taking responsibility of their own actions, and it's also always good to explain to them why we do what we do.

It needs to be easily understood: when we put out recycling or the waste, we really go for clear communication, because sets can last tons of hours and a lot of people will be tired and it's not when you want to be looking at which goes where and using your brain powers to think about where to put what. That's why it's really important for us to make this process even easier for everybody. We have the power to shift people's mindset with some of the infographics that we put out and some images, even if it's one person throughout the entire production, it is a whole life that we have already changed and that is a big step for us as well. As people adjust to sustainable practices the demand will change as well and the market will adjust to that demand, so it is important to make sure the departments are aware of the sustainable practices, so that more sustainably conscious choices can be made from the get-go.

**Elizabeth McIntyre:**

Thank you so much to our speakers for this insightful and vital talk.