ecoPROD

SCREENWRITING

Sustainability guide for screenwriting professionals

(scriptwriters, creative producers, script consultants)

A practical guide to anticipate green production from the screenwriting phase and address environmental subjects in the storylines

FRANCE 2030

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Consulting partners of the guide:

ECOPROD

For over 15 years, Ecoprod, a French non-profit organization, has brought together the international film, TV and advertising sector around environmental challenges.

As an association, Ecoprod unites more than 450 members (including broadcasters, producers, service providers, institutions, unions, associations, and schools). Ecoprod offers free tools, training, and studies to raise awareness and support professionals working in cinema, television, advertising, corporate video, radio, and podcasts in their environmental transition.

Its mission is structured around three core areas:

- Unite the film industry to foster cooperation and raise awareness of environmental challenges;
- Provide education and training to help students and professionals change their practices;
- Equip industry stakeholders with free tools, including professional guides, the Carbon'Clap carbon calculator, and the Ecoprod Label.

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Intro

The climate and nature crisis is transforming the way we work as film and TV professionals. On set, in post-production, distribution, and festivals, many are seeking and finding solutions to reduce the environmental impact of our sector. However, screenwriting and script development have so far remained relatively on the sidelines, with the exception of a few pioneering initiatives.

This guide has been designed for screenwriters, development executives, script doctors and consultants across all genres and formats, from continuing dramas to short films, from high end series to arthouse features or blockbusters, who are looking for **practical tools to apply sustainability in their work**. *It has been conceived as a counterpart to the Practical Guide to Green Filmmaking, where we explore the role a director can play in reducing the environmental impact of a production. Through their artistic and technical choices,* **an ambitious script can be a film with a low environmental impact.**

In the **first part**, we address the role of screenwriting choices in green production practices, or **how to anticipate the environmental impacts of production at the writing stage in order to help reduce them**. This section is tailored to live-action. Animation professionals can refer to the *Green Animation Guide*.

The **second part** focuses on narratives, representations, and content. Through an overview of existing initiatives and tools, we **explore the various ways to address environmental issues** through the stories brought to the screen.

This section applies to all genres and raises questions that are also relevant for documentary, video games, or any other narrative medium.

Finally, the appendix offers a list of **50 examples of environmentally responsible** situations to integrate into a story.

This guide addresses creative subjects. We therefore acknowledge that **there is no single truth** and that our approaches are continually evolving. Our time of profound transition can and must encourage a diversity of works, and we need all our creativity to face it. **We will not present an ideal way of writing**. On the contrary, we believe that ecological issues open the door to a fertile and multifaceted renewal of our storytelling.

01 Green production and screenwriting

1. Anticipation and collaboration

Making a film or a series is a collective effort in which every perspective and every area of expertise supports the artistic vision of the project and helps bring the production to completion by balancing creative ambition, budget, and logistical constraints. To this must now be added, given the ongoing ecological crisis, the need to limit the negative environmental impacts of production.

The term "green production" has become widespread over the past ten years to reflect the growing commitment of the film and television industry to limit the environmental impact of content production. Far from being a constraint that would restrict artistic freedom, green production offers a new angle from which to reassess a project and can open creative possibilities. Cinema has always been shaped by the technical possibilities of its time, and some writers have already reconsidered their creative approaches in response to the ecological crises we face. One example is the ***Action! Manifesto*** of the Federation of European Film Directors, itself inspired by Dogme95.

The Green Production Impact Study published by Ecoprod in April 2024 highlighted three key organizational criteria for reducing the footprint of a production: anticipation, collaboration, and training. The study also showed that "green production ultimately appears as an investigation born from a search for meaning for an emblematic sector, the dream factory, which is rewriting the imaginary of its own professional culture and inventing new ways of living, creating, and working that align with the need to do better with fewer materials, less energy, less waste, and fewer inconsistencies."

Considering the material impact of a script during development therefore allows screenwriters to join all other professions that are transforming their practices.

a. Anticipation, green screenwriting and environmental script breakdown

Although green production, as the name suggests, **relies primarily on production, logistical and directing choices**, it can only meet our ambitions if everyone takes responsibility of it from the development stage. This is what American scholar Hunter Vaughan calls an "eco-materialist" approach:

"By 'eco-materialist' I mean an approach that does not limit its environmental scope to questions of representation (for example, how nature is represented or how environmental issues or social groups are shown on screen) but instead explores **the material environmental impact of the practices of the film and television industry**." Hunter Vaughan, *Hollywood's Dirtiest Secret*, 2019

An eco-materialist approach to screenplays reminds us that **every written element takes material form during the shoot.** Environmental impact can therefore become one of the criteria considered when making writing choices.

By keeping in mind the potential consequences of certain scenes, whether in terms of logistics, sets, transport, or special effects, screenwriters can help **identify early on the sequences that will require particular attention** during implementation. The aim is not self-censorship or abandoning strong ideas, but rather considering different ways to bring them to the screen, in close dialogue with the director, **so that creative ambition and environmental responsibility can coexist.**

The following pages are designed to help screenwriters better understand the impacts of the production process, anticipate them within their creative work, and foster **productive discussions among departments** to collectively reduce the footprint of our productions.

b. A collaborative commitment

The second success factor of green production is collaboration and involving the entire team and stakeholders in shaping the impact-reduction strategy.

Even if a screenwriter who is not directing is only marginally involved in production and directing decisions, they can still **initiate a discussion on the environmental impact** of the shoot. By bringing these issues forward, including on projects that are not thematically related to environmental issues, you can encourage the team to question impactful production methods and find shared solutions.

Screenwriters have always worked with production constraints, especially budgetary ones, which inevitably influence writing choices. Today, a new dimension enters this equation: the environmental impact. The same story can lead to a low-impact production or a very resource-intensive one, depending on directorial and production choices. **Establishing a dialogue with the production and the director** about green production can help identify **creative solutions to limit the environmental impact** and generate collective momentum. Environmental constraints can stimulate inventiveness in narrative choices, set design, or visual effects.

It is also important for productions to anticipate green production so that it can be integrated into budgets and funding applications, **by drafting a green production note.** This will make it possible to plan the resources and means required to implement an impact-reduction strategy, in particular by allocating sufficient prep time so that teams can put green production actions in place without operating in emergency mode.

Investing in people by ensuring adequate preparation and wrap time will ultimately generate both **financial and environmental savings** by optimising production schedules and reducing purchasing and transport.

Upstream dialogue with the various stakeholders (production as well as funders and broadcasters) can help anticipate decisions that will affect directing and production choices. **By establishing this exchange as early as the development phase**, key orientations can be validated in time, preventing environmental considerations from being pushed to the final stages of the process, when decisions are often constrained. This also requires agreeing on a timeline for script approvals that allows the team to anticipate the needs of the shoot as effectively as possible.

Script Breakdown Sustainability Checklist

This work **can be supported by a green production coordinator who can conduct an environmental script breakdown once the script has been stabilised.** A *Sustainability script breakdown checklist* is available on the Ecoprod website. This analysis will help you identify the most polluting scenes and determine how to rework them in advance.

The aim is to find solutions together. Producers may sometimes hesitate to "impose" an environmental script breakdown of your project. If you are a writer, make it known that this is something you value. The green production coordinator does not rewrite the script, but **brings ecological insight and expertise**.

Their role includes establishing a preliminary carbon assessment based on the budget and the script and recommending a green production action plan. Their recommendations are most often addressed to the producer.

Training on environmental issues

Environmental challenges are complex and can sometimes feel overwhelming or provoke anxiety in the face of the scale of the changes required. One key to overcoming these feelings is training, to better understand the causes and consequences of environmental crises and identify levers for action. There are many general resources available, as well as tools and training programmes specifically designed for our sector.

You can begin by consulting and sharing the following free Ecoprod resources with the director and the production team:

- *Guide to green production*
- *Guide to post production*
- *The director's guide to sustainability*
- *Green Animation Guide*
- *The Ecoprod Label*

Ecoprod, in cooperation with Eurimages - the Council of Europe, also provides online training courses for green production on the *platform StepUP*.

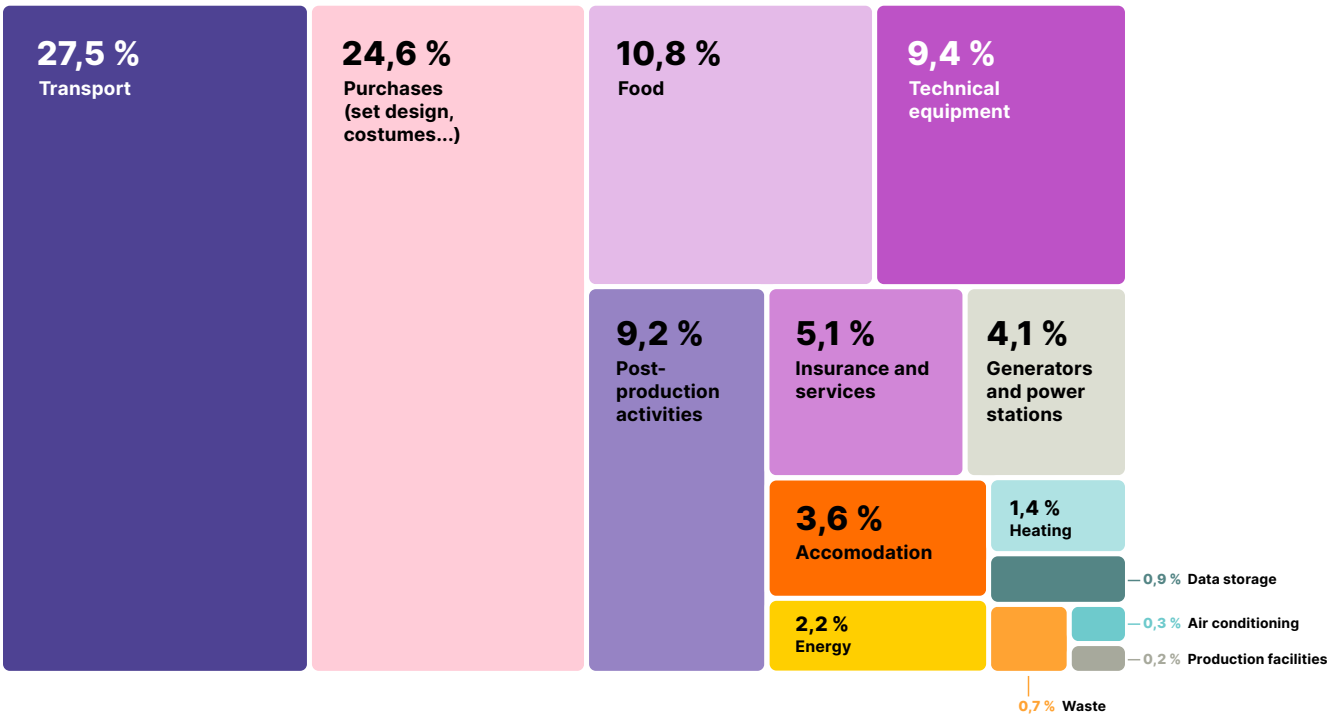
2. Identifing the main impacts of the production process

Every stage of production has an environmental impact. Knowing how to identify them, and understanding their scale, helps guide choices towards a more sustainable production.

Different types of environmental impacts must be distinguished:

- **Carbon Impact.** Production activities emit greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change. Various industry-specific carbon calculators exist to measure the amount of greenhouse gases emitted through a production process: by inputting data from the production such as electricity consumption, transportation or the amount of food served, into one of those tools, one can **estimate the carbon footprint of a production** and identify the most impactful activities to make more sustainable choices. In some countries, funders or broadcasters have made carbon calculation mandatory to access financing.
- **Impact on resources.** Production uses many resources, from materials for set design to textiles for costumes, as well as energy and digital equipment. Responsible resource management involves **limiting overconsumption and encouraging reuse**, ensuring that they can be shared, recycled, or repurposed after the shoot.
- **Impact on biodiversity.** Filming in natural environments can **disturb flora and fauna** if protective measures are not implemented.

Distribution of carbon impact across the 14 categories of Carbon'Clap (all formats combined)



Source : The environmental impact of audiovisual, film and advertising production – Ecoprod 2024

The following pages are designed to help you better understand the main environmental impacts of a shoot that relate to writing choices. Although many impacts arise from production or directing decisions, this section aims to shed **light on the choices that can be made at the writing stage** by asking the following questions:

What is **the environmental impact of this specific artistic choice**, whether in terms of greenhouse gas emissions, biodiversity loss,waste generation, or overuse of natural resources?

- Can this impact be **avoided** through writing? Or **reduced**?
- If so, can this constraint be used to **enrich the script**?
- If not, can a directorial or production **solution be anticipated**?

These questions are not intended to encourage screenwriters to write only small-scale stories set in a single urban location, but rather to put certain writing habits into perspective in order **to engage in a progressive effort to reduce our environmental impact**, continually improving practices from one project to the next.

a. Choosing shooting locations and the impact of transport

"The team limited the film's locations to the area around the main shooting site, which suited us because we were looking for simplicity. Constraints can sometimes push you further and prevent you from taking the first solution that comes to mind."

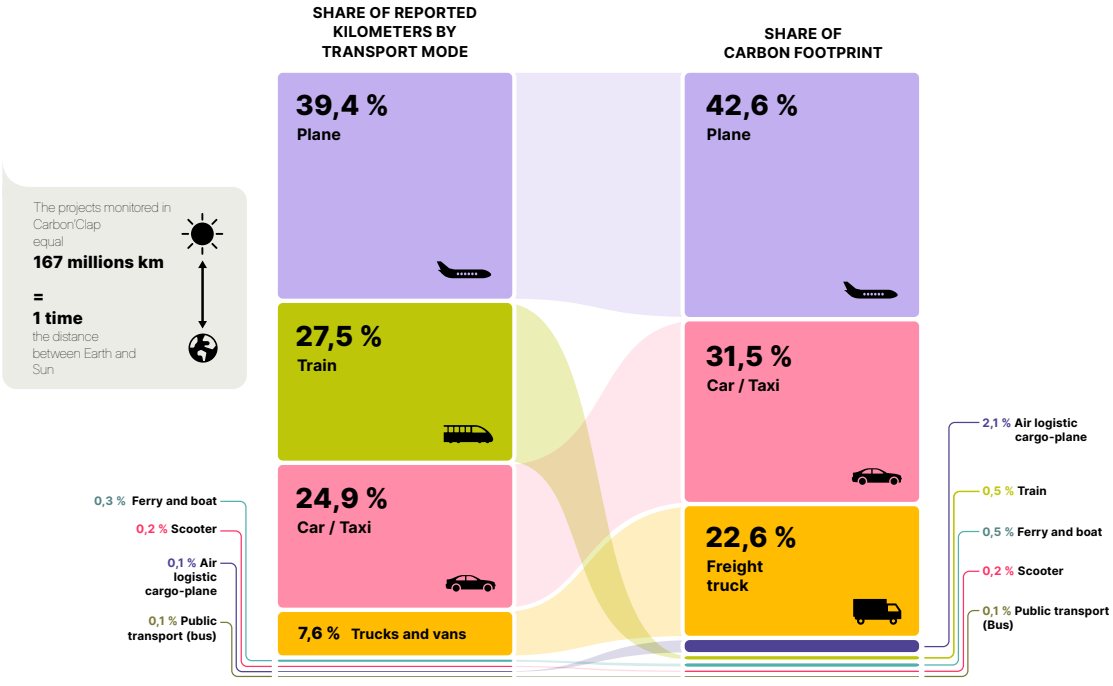
> **Peggy Hamann**
(co-screenwriter, *Under the Fig Trees* (dir. Erige Sehiri, 2022))

Impacts: **Travel and transport** represent around 30 percent of the carbon impact of a production. From scouting to prep, shooting and post-production, each stage requires moving teams and equipment. The more numerous and distant the shooting locations are, the more travel is required and the more CO_2 is emitted.

To anticipate at the writing stage:

- Do any scenes take place in locations that are clearly identifiable as **abroad** or in places that require carbon-intensive transport to reach?
- **How many locations** are included in the script? Is it possible to group scenes within the same locations to reduce scouting, travel between shooting sites, and set-building needs? The type of location described may involve specific logistical requirements. For example, a conversation between two characters can take place in a stadium full of supporters or in the stadium's bathroom. Setting the scene in the stadium requires a large number of extras, who need to travel and be provided with food, a larger technical crew, and therefore heavy logistics.
- Are there scenes set in locations that are difficult to access or that involve **significant logistical** constraints (mountains, boats, natural areas)?

In the French series *L'Effondrement* by the collective Les Parasites (Canal +, 2019), the team chose a single location per episode and wrote the episodes as sequence shots. This reduced energy needs while serving the narrative, as it heightened the tension within the scenes.



Source : The environmental impact of audiovisual, film and advertising production – Ecoprod 2024

b. Filming in natural environments and the impact on biodiversity

"Of course, we could have told the owner of the orchard where we shot most of the scenes: 'If we break a branch, we'll pay for it,' and he might have said, 'I'd rather have the money than the branch.' But we chose not to damage the environment. And it was great because it brought us back to the core of the film."

> **Peggy Hamann**
(co-screenwriter, *Under the Fig Trees* (dir. Erige Sehiri, 2022))

Impacts: Filming in a natural environment, whether a forest, coastline, field, or similar setting, can significantly disrupt local flora and fauna. Biodiversity is extremely sensitive to human disturbance, even temporary. ***Ecoprod's Guide to Filming in Natural Environments*** identifies **ten potential direct risks**: noise pollution, trampling, air pollution, human smells, light pollution, toxic pollution, diseases and invasive species, human–animal proximity, overflight disturbance, and overcrowding.

For productions with scenes planned in natural settings, it is essential that scouting includes ecological criteria and is **supervised by experts** such as ecologists or wildlife rangers.

The impact extends beyond the shoot itself. Showcasing an iconic location can increase tourism and amplify negative impacts on local biodiversity.

To anticipate at the writing stage:

- Do you describe on-screen actions that have a **direct impact on natural environments**, such as a character throwing a cigarette butt on the ground or litter into water, damaging flora, or frightening local wildlife?
- Do any scenes take place in sensitive **natural environments**? Can you imagine the scene in a setting less vulnerable to human disturbance?
- Do **particular filming conditions**, such as stunts, night shoots, or special effects, risk increasing biodiversity impacts?

The shoot for *The Beach* (Danny Boyle, 2000) filmed on the island of Koh Phi Phi Leh in Thailand, had a severe **impact on local biodiversity**. The crew altered the natural environment to make the beach more cinematic by replanting coconut trees, removing local vegetation, and levelling the sand. In addition, the influx of tourists following the film's release contributed to damaging corals and vegetation. In 2022, the Thai Supreme Court **ordered 20th Century Studios to pay ten million Thai baht (approximately 250,000 euros) to restore the site.**

C. Set construction and props

Impacts: Set design is one of the main environmental impacts of a shoot because it **requires significant resources**. Raw materials such as wood for construction, paints and varnishes, along with purchases of furniture or props, all contribute to the footprint. Set design also generates considerable **waste**, since part of what is built or purchased is not reused after filming and ends up discarded.

An ***Ecoprod study*** estimates that building set walls with new materials that are discarded at the end of the shoot emits 1.8 t CO_2e. Reusing set elements that have already been used and putting them back into circulation after the shoot would reduce the carbon footprint by half.

To anticipate at the writing stage:

- Does the script require significant **set construction and props**?
- Can the set descriptions in the script guide the directing and **art departments toward eco-design** by giving them, for instance, the flexibility to use existing sets? Conversely, is it possible to avoid excessively specific descriptions that could hinder eco-design and limit opportunities for reuse?
- Can scenes be **grouped** within the same set?
- What **vehicles** have you **chosen for your characters**? Can you specify them at the script stage? Does the script require showing carbon-intensive modes of transport such as helicopters, private jets, or yachts?
- Does the script imply the **destruction** of a set or props?

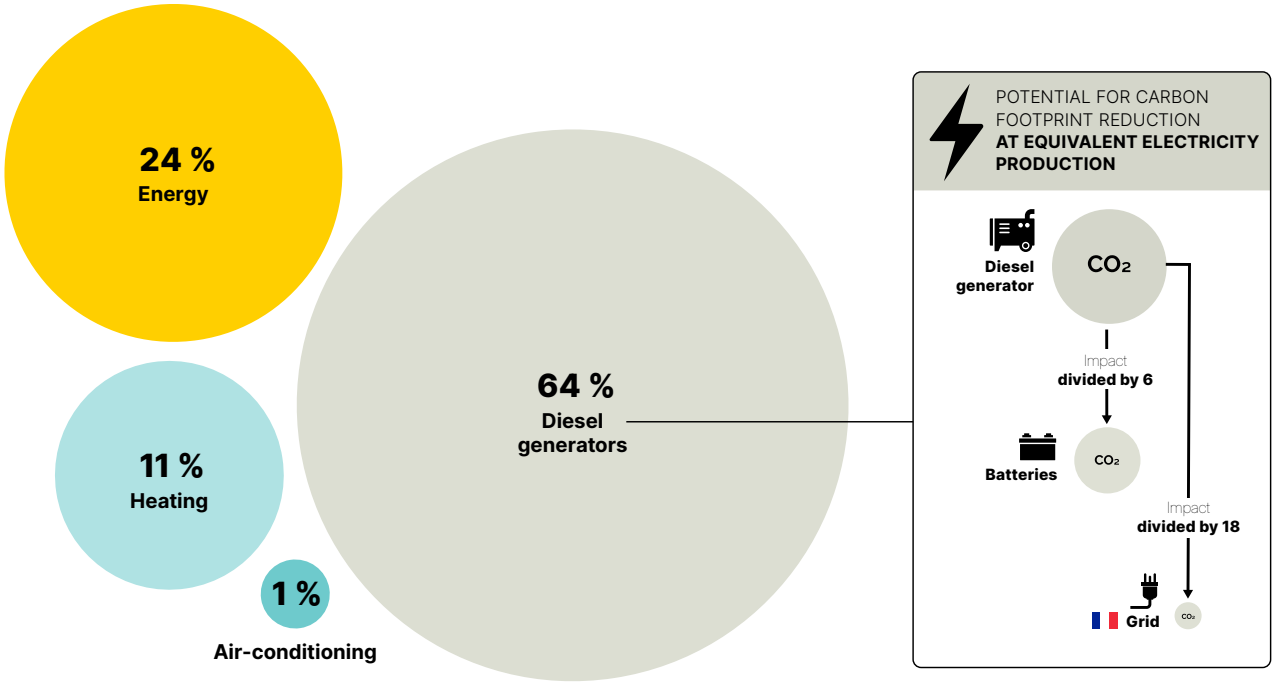
For *Maria* (2024) co-written and directed by Jessica Palud, the team chose to prioritise existing resources in order to reduce the ecological impact, adopting a "**reverse design**" approach. A scene initially planned in a café requiring the construction of a specific set, for example, was rethought and shot in an already available location. This choice reduced travel, avoided the creation of single-use set elements, and strengthened the narrative. This type of approach illustrates how creative adjustments can not only reduce a production's carbon footprint but also **enhance the authenticity and artistic coherence of a project**.

Questions of production and representation are already inherently linked. One often opens the door to the other. However, **contradictions can arise within this "green screenwriting"** approach. Choosing to have a character travel by bus rather than by car may require additional extras and the transport of a bus, generating greenhouse gas emissions, yet it may also promote more sustainable transport options (see second part). **Everything depends on informed choices and what best serves the story.**

d. Special effects and specific filming conditions

Night

Night scenes **require more energy** to light the set. If these scenes take place in natural environments, the production may need to use a **generator** to supply the necessary power.



Source : The environmental impact of audiovisual, film and advertising production – Ecoprod 2024

Rain

Rain scenes consume **large amounts of water**. Depending on the duration of the scene and the intensity of the rainfall required, a sequence may need anywhere from hundreds to tens of thousands of litres of water. It is possible to include indications in the script that evoke rain without requiring heavy water use, such as wetting the ground, using off-screen rain sound, or showing a wet umbrella.

This production question also raises script considerations that can enrich a story. How do characters relate to the outside world? How does this world appear in the script beyond the rain? This can be an opportunity to **explore your characters' relationship to reality, the world, and the poetic**.

Snow

The probability of filming with "natural snow" is decreasing. **Artificial snow risks polluting soil and requires heavy logistics**. Why not integrate the reality of climate change into your script by having a character react to the lack of snow in your next Christmas comedy?

Explosions and fire

Destroying sets and using explosions generates **waste that cannot be recycled, greenhouse gas emissions, and impacts on fauna and flora**, including light and noise pollution and the emissions of fine particles.

According to an Ecoprod estimate from a recent shoot, the explosion of a vehicle emitted half a tonne of CO_2. Fire, like explosions, emits greenhouse gases and fine particles. Must the explosion or the fire be shown? If yes, can only part of it be seen? Could it take place off-screen and exist through sound from the writing stage?

Digital alternatives

Faced with the environmental challenges linked to shooting locations or set construction and their material impact, **it can be tempting to turn to digital alternatives such as visual effects** (VFX), artifical intelligence (AI), green screens and virtual production studios. These technologies offer significant creative freedom, making it possible to recreate any environment, real or imagined, without the material or logistical constraints of shooting on natural or built sets.

Yet this illusion of a "clean" solution hides a very different reality. **VFX, AI and virtual production also have significant environmental impacts**, particularly in terms of energy consumption, technical infrastructures, servers, intensive computing, and digital resources. They also require specialised teams, often dispersed across locations, generating substantial data flows and transportation.

Digital tools do not eliminate impact; they shift it.

Integrating an environmentally responsible approach at the script stage therefore remains essential, even in an increasingly digital production landscape. While these solutions can sometimes reduce environmental impact, this is not always the case, and the screenwriter cannot rely on them entirely.

For further exploration of this topic, Ecoprod has published a ***guide on post-production and VFX***.

Conclusion

Each project is different and raises new questions. Some productions can easily adopt a low-impact approach, such as those with small crews or a single shooting location. Others require a **detailed analysis to balance artistic requirements, budget, and environmental constraints.**

This is where collaboration between the screenwriter and the green consultant becomes essential for assessing the environmental impact of the script, taking into account elements such as set choices, materials, crew travel, and more. **These are all factors that should be considered at the writing stage with an anticipatory mindset**. The environmental script breakdown is crucial because it allows certain scenes to be rethought, logistical aspects to be reviewed, or more sustainable alternatives to be found.

The green production coordinator, drawing on their understanding of ecological issues and the multiple impacts of an audiovisual project, can support the screenwriter in shaping a narrative that minimises these impacts while remaining faithful to the artistic vision. They become an ally in the creative process without restricting the writer's imagination.

However, environmental action cannot rely on one person alone. **A deep transformation of practices also requires screenwriters to strengthen their own skills** on this matter without becoming green production specialists themselves.

This fosters a more coherent approach aligned with a sustainability strategy embraced as widely as possible by the entire film team.

02 Storytelling

Introduction

"People see what is happening around them and want it to be represented far more accurately and in a much more diverse way in fiction."

> **Clémentine Gayet**
Netflix France, *Nouvelle Séquence roundtable, La Rochelle Festival 2024*

According to a study by USC Norman Lear Center's Media Impact Project with support of Good Energy, out of 37,453 scripted TV episodes and films from 2016-2020 only "2.8% of all scripts included any climate-related keywords, and only 0.6% of them mentioned the specific term "climate change."[2]

The Observatoire de la Fiction analyzed 268h of scripted TV content on French television and compiled their findings in a detailed report. Their study found that **62% of the programs referenced climate change, but in 91% of these instances, it appeared only in brief dialogue, without influencing the storylines**.

Audiences seek stories that resonate with their emotions and questions, including those related to the climate and nature crisis. For a long time, environnemental subjects were only addressed in disaster movies. However, **talking about the environment is not limited to instilling fear or describing doomsday scenarios**. As Valérie Zoydo notes in *Des Récits et des Actes*, viewers also expect to be surprised, moved, and inspired, in short, to experience the full range of human emotions. "To create a different society, we must first imagine it," states the director Cyril Dion, calling on storytellers and screenwriters **to write stories that project us into a sustainable and desirable world**.

Still, many writers hesitate to tackle these themes, out of fear of doing it poorly, feeling illegitimate or uninspired, or because of the pitfalls of moralising, dystopian, or anxiety-inducing narratives. It is time to move past these barriers. In recent years, numerous initiatives have emerged in France and internationally to support screenwriters in integrating environmental issues into their stories. This guide forms part of that movement, encouraging, equipping, and inspiring those who wish to tell stories differently.

The following pages draw on these resources, tools, guides, checklists, and collective works. In France: *L'écran d'après*, *Imagine 2050*, *Nausicaä*, *Nouvelle Séquence*, *le Collectif CUT*, *l'Observatoire de la fiction*, *le guide de l'EpE*. In Germany: the *MOIN* checklist. In the United Kingdom: *Climate Spring* and publications by *BAFTA Albert*. In the United States: projects such as *GoodEnergy Stories*, *RARE*, and the *Climate on Screen* website.

[2] *A glaring absence the climate crisis is virtually nonexistent in scripted entertainment - usc norman lear center media impact project*

1. Representations of the world

a. Representing environmental transformations

"The great, irreplaceable potentiality of fiction is that it makes possible the imagining of possibilities. And to imagine other forms of human existence is exactly the challenge that is posed by the climate crisis. For if there is any one thing that global warming has made perfectly clear it is that to think about the world only as it is amounts to a formula for collective suicide. We need, rather, to envision what it might be."

> **Amitav Ghosh**
The Great Derangement (2016)

"This is not an easy struggle to represent. We are talking about violence inflicted on nature, a very long process. The moment to act is now, if not yesterday. How do you represent that? What do you show? And ecological issues encompass a multitude of problems. What do you show?"

> **Julien Tricard**
Producer Lucien TV, *Podcast L'écologie...et le scénario*

Ecological transitions and crises already affect our ways of life, our daily routines, our political systems, our family, romantic, friendly and professional relationships, our health, and our free time. **Without making these issues the central subject, a work anchored in the present benefits from allowing them to permeate its fictional universe**.

In the guide ***The Stories We Need*** by the organisation Climate Spring, founder Lucy Stone notes that most environmentally themed films today follow **a narrative designed to « sound the alarm »** (what the climate crisis is and how does it make us feel?). Political ecologist Clément Sénéchal invites us to connect this to social questions: "Environmentalism, as it emerged in the 1970s, was coded as a cause of the elite. Why? Because in those years, an ecology of spectacle and awareness-raising developed that entirely sidelined the social question."
It is time to move beyond « simple » awareness-raising.

The ***Climate Spring guide*** proposes three main directions for "the stories we need", which also align with notions of social justice and move away from a narrow definition of what a climate story should be: stories of **justice** (why hy are we here and who is really accountable?), stories of **journey** (How are we navigating out of here?), and stories of **worldbuilding** (where are we heading?).

In its ***"Telling Climate Stories Pocket Guide"***, BAFTA Albert offers five areas of reflection for integrating environmental issues into a narrative:

- Portray climate action as everyday
- Avoid the doom loop and stay positive
- Information is key – but how it's presented matters too
- Be inclusive and collaborate
- Show the bigger picture and how we're part of it

Representations can therefore take many forms. This does not mean abandoning politically engaged cinema in the more traditional sense, but rather **questioning the entrenched patterns of what an "environmental film" is**.

There is, in fact, a myriad of possibilities in form, genre, and subject. Environmental themes can be explored in any type of fiction and through varied approaches, whether metaphor, protopia, thrutopia, arena, or plot. Explore the different resources shared here to find what aligns best with your projects!

b. New narratives

"[As noted by Professor Jean-Gabriel Ganascia, a specialist in artificial intelligence], "For many years, science fiction was inspired by science to imagine scenarios. Today, the situation is reversed. Science is inspired by science fiction." Imagination often precedes action, and the stories that emerge shape our perceptions, our beliefs, and our cultures, particularly at a time when stories benefit from powerful channels of dissemination."

> **Cyril Dion**
Petit Manuel de Résistance Contemporaine (2018)

"Dystopia is nothing more than the projection of the present; it is not at all a shift in representation."

> **Boris Razon,**
Editorial Director, Arte France
Nouvelle Séquence, roundtable Festival de La Rochelle 2024

For some, we are experiencing a **crisis of imagination.** Stories of the apocalypse are overrepresented, and alternatives are almost entirely absent.

This raises the question, addressed by Cyril Dion, of whether **our difficulty in building a desirable future stems from our inability to imagine and represent it**.

Although this conversation often focuses on science fiction, it also applies to what we choose to depict about the present and even the past.

In France, the **Nouveaux Récits [new narratives] movement** promotes these alternative imaginaries by helping citizens and screenwriters imagine desirable worlds. Among them, ***Imagine 2050*** offers Nouveaux Récits consultations and conferences, including a ***free MOOC***. The ***Festival Atmosphères***, has, for nearly fifteen years, showcased projects and films aligned with this approach to "new narratives".
To help screenwriters understand the richness of the issues and conflicts tied to ecological crises and transitions, the ***Nouvelle Séquence*** collective organises conferences and events throughout the year, as well as open-source toolboxes on given topics. Also notable is the ***CUT collective Cinéma Uni pour la Transition***, which organizes conferences and workshops, and the ***ADEME website on responsible communication***, which helps bridge fiction with real initiatives in local communities.

The Assemblée Citoyenne des Imaginaires brought together citizens and screenwriters to collectively imagine the « blockbuster of the future », a co-created story expressing desire and possibility.

These initiatives encourage screenwriters to consider questions that are particularly relevant when constructing the world of your story:

- How do environmental issues shape the world you depict, whether the story is set in the past, the present, or the future?
- Can you tell your story in a past, present, or future that respects planetary boundaries, or attempts to do so?
- Where do energy, water, food and raw materials for housing, communication, and clothing come from?
- What has happened or is happening to non-human species?
- If you imagine a desirable world, does it already exist today, even in a minority form?
- If so, could you set your story in that transitional space rather than in the future?

2. Rethinking what is *"desirable"*

a. Questioning normality

"Through billions of dollars in advertising, lobbying, campaign financing and educational work, the fossil fuel industries have secretly written our climate present, targeting in particular the narrative power of the media. They cast themselves as heroes and undermined the main actors of the transition, public policies and public action, all without most of us realising the extent to which they have been, and still are, controlling our climate reality and our imagination."

> **Good Energy Stories**
Good Energy Playbook

Contemporary fiction very often portrays carbon-intensive behaviours as normal, even desirable: an American way of life with large cars, oversized houses with poorly insulated glass walls, lawns without biodiversity, barbecues, and air travel. Not only can these representations create frustrations and desires that push towards ecocidal lifestyles, but as climate disasters become more frequent and awareness of environmental injustice increases, resentment toward such portrayals may also rise. Backlash phenomena are already emerging, for instance around private jets.

To address this, the ***Planet Test*** developed by ***Futerra*** suggests, among other ideas, **associating a negative behaviour with a negative character** and, by extension, a virtuous behaviour with a positive character. The guides from ***Screens of Tomorrow*** focus on world and character building, **helping writers move beyond automatic writing patterns toward new narratives**. They include questions about character motivations, relationships to success, consumption, and happiness, as well as representations and interactions with wildlife and plant life, modes of transport, and everyday gestures such as cycling, sorting waste, or reducing waste production.

The **Planet Test** is inspired by the Bechdel test. A TV programme or Film would only pass The Planet Test if :

- It acknowledges the natural world actually exists,
- Negative environmental behaviours are shown as negative character traits,
- One person does something at least once to make the world a better place.

Ways of life that tell a different story

Writing has the power to open the imagination and to reflect norms that are more aligned with our society, to re-examine our relationship to daily life, comfort, and even happiness. It can present another path, one that is more restrained yet just as joyful and desirable. Without heavy-handed messaging, a script can subtly bring another vision of the world into being, make it exist, make it possible, through simple details. The setting of the action, an ordinary gesture, a subtly committed line, a character's aspirations, and small clues scattered throughout can all carry this ambition.

These five verbs — **Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Restore to the earth** — can also inspire writing. They reflect a more conscious relationship to the material world without hindering narrative or realism.

Here are some ways to suggest these practices on screen, in the background or over the course of scenes:

- **REFUSE**
  Without being didactic, one can imply a choice: refusing disposables, rejecting overconsumption, or simply declining what is not truly needed. Soft mobility, politely refusing a bag at checkout, or a moment of self-limitation can become micro-acts full of meaning.
- **REDUCE**
  A character does not need to be exemplary. A scene in a second-hand shop, a moment of repair instead of a purchase, a minimalist interior, these can all hint at a more restrained lifestyle without sacrificing authenticity or nuance.
- **REUSE**
  A reused object can tell a story. Whether it is a reusable coffee cup, passed-down or transformed clothing, or small everyday hacks, these elements add texture to both the set and the characters.
- **RECYCLE**
  Simple gestures can appear as natural reflexes: sorting and putting an item into a dedicated bin. There is no need to emphasise it; the gesture exists as part of the represented world.
- **RESTORE TO THE EARTH**
  Planting, composting, watering, and nourishing the soil are practices often quiet and sometimes invisible yet full of meaning. They can punctuate a scene or reflect a broader connection to the living world.

b. Reconsidering the markers of success

Today, traditional models of success, built on relentless performance, conspicuous wealth, and constant mobility, are being questioned. While the materialistic model of the American Way of Life remains present, **alternative models that emphasise conviviality and human connection are increasingly valued**. Happiness is no longer tied to consumption but to relationships. Other aspirations are gaining importance: living freely, slowing down, shedding the superfluous, putting down roots, building lasting connections, reconnecting with the living world and with nature. A different idea of happiness, calmer and deeper, is emerging. By integrating these shifts into storytelling, writers can widen the field of possibilities and propose different life trajectories and other versions of a happy ending.

Exemples of questions from the Screens of Tomorrow guide:

- What does money represent for the characters (success, pleasure, anxiety, power, freedom, constraint, taboo, goal)?
- What elements of the story bring happiness to the main characters (access to abundance, sense of belonging to a community, cultural heritage, need for ownership, social ties, connection to nature, technology embedded in daily life)? Which ones make them unhappy?
- What emotions are associated with moments of consumption (joy, excitement, addiction, suffering linked to precarity)?
- What settings, props and leisure activities are shown on screen (types of mobility, housing, clothing, tourism)?
- The key question becomes: “Does the work promote models, narratives or imaginaries that you wish to endorse?”.

C. Representing Nature

"Fiction is a set of conventions, the established world we live in. It is very difficult to shift that paradigm. We struggle because, as soon as we operate within the traditional framework of fiction, we create characters, and characters who, by habit, are positioned as masters and owners of nature."

> **Boris Razon,**
Editorial Director, Arte France
Nouvelle Séquence roundtable, Festival de La Rochelle 2024

The following pages on biodiversity include a contribution from Frédérique Sussfeld, a communication researcher and audiovisual professional for twenty years. For several years, she has been raising awareness among film and television professionals about the disappearance of living species in fiction and documentary images and narratives. Since 2023, she has been conducting an action-research project with four researchers from the IMSIC and GRESEC labs (Aix-Marseille University, Toulon, and Grenoble) together with the team of the series *Alex Hugo*. Their research analyses how professional behaviours change when biodiversity becomes present in image and sound, and what effects this has on viewers.

1. How and why represent Nature at the script stage?

Films are anchored in a socio-historical context and influence viewers, particularly when identification occurs between the characters' daily lives and those of the audience.

Think of the last film you watched:

Which animal and plant species did you see? Can you name them?

Integrating biodiversity into a film is not automatic and requires consideration at the writing stage if we want species to appear on screen or in characters' everyday lives.

2. Representations of nature and professional habits

An anthropological look at our stories, focusing on what the films of our era reveal, makes it easy to see that **nature is disappearing from characters' daily lives in French films**.

As art historian Estelle Zhong Mengual explains in *Apprendre à voir, Le point de vue du vivant (2021)*, in the living world, nature is often represented as a backdrop, a symbol or a support for human emotions. Are we, as authors and viewers, heirs to landscape painting when **biodiversity is almost always reduced to "scenary" in many films**?

The impoverishment of biodiversity in screenwriting, in a context where fiction shapes social perceptions and in an era of urgent preservation needs, raises several issues. It:

- Perpetuates **generational environmental amnesia**, meaning that with each generation, knowledge of nature diminishes (Prévot et al., 2014).
- Indicates **standardised writing processes** that do not take into account the presence of species in characters' daily lives.
- **Suggests that writers may lack knowledge of the living world or interest in nature.**

You can begin by drawing on your own experience, noticing which species you observe or encounter daily, and what your experiences of nature have been. Then try to answer these three questions:

- In which line of dialogue could I name a species?
- In which scene could we hear a species?
- At what moment in the story could we see species?

Practical case study : the series Alex Hugo

Alex Hugo has been produced by France TV Studio since 2014 and brings together more than six million viewers during broadcasts on France 3.

It is a French police series following a former Marseille policeman who, weary of urban violence, becomes a municipal officer in the Alps, where he conducts investigations as dark as the surrounding nature is majestic. Blending thriller and contemplation, the series mixes suspense and humanity in the heart of breathtaking landscapes.

Since 2023, two episodes have received support **to test ways of introducing species into the series**. The series has furthermore been produced in a sustainable way and has been certified by the Ecoprod Label for episodes 31 and 32. These episodes depict rural life where nature is already present. Many loyal viewers appreciate the vast spaces and magnificent landscapes featured in the series. The study presented here seeks to understand **how to show species on screen and name them without disrupting the story**. This work is a co-construction between the screenwriter Jean-Luc Estèbe, director Sylvie Ayme, producer Delphine Wautier and a team of researchers[3] specialising in sustainable narratives. Below is a simple, **transferable method applicable to all films** (fiction, documentary, animation).

The first script examined *La vallée des vautours*, included only three vultures, usually to signal the presence of a corpse.

1. We read the script using a breakdown method to identify where an ordinary animal or plant species could appear on screen while respecting the narration:
   → For example, a cat passing through the frame, chickens in front of a house, a lizard on a wall, a frog in the river, a fly in an office, birds in the trees.

2. We then reread the script to find scenes in which a species could be named.
   → For example: "He has a Labrador" rather than "He has a dog", "I'll take the sea bream" rather than "The dish of the day", "Meet him in the birch forest", "He lives on the fourth floor opposite the plane trees".

3. We also offer adding natural sound.
   → For example: the deafening sound of a waterfall, birdsong, or a rooster crowing.

4. We test human–non-human interactions.
   → For example: a gunshot and species reacting.

The director expanded the proposals according to the inspiration provided by the shooting locations (for example: the cat crossing the frame). To our surprise, the screenwriter wrote an additional scene to allow a marmot to be seen and heard. In the end, **18 species appear in this episode** (fox, birds, eagle's nest, owl call, vultures, marmots, cat, chickens, goats, wasps, ibex, and more).

After a screening, one viewer exclaimed, "The cat crossing the frame is wonderful, just like in real life!".

The following year, the script of another episode contained numerous species (kite, squirrel, owl, Scots pine, larch, roe deer, barking of a solitary dog, Swiss pine). The completed film therefore included species planned in the script and others added by the director during filming.

The research process opened a door, and the creative skills of the screenwriter and director did the rest, with the producer's support.

[3] Researchers: IMSIC Anne Gagnebien, Audrey Bonjour, Natacha Souillard, Frédérique Sussfeld and GRESEC Amélie Coulbaut Lazzarini

3. *Indirect impact: considering how audiences will receive your story and anticipating over-visitation*

To complement this reflection on representing Nature, here is an extract from Ecoprod's ***Guide to Filming in Natural Environments***, which is particularly relevant during development and writing:

"We have observed in recent years a growing use of natural environments by productions and rising public interest in these spaces. Even with the best intentions (highlighting regions, informing, inspiring wonder), negative consequences can occur for natural areas. Image production (films, content creation, advertising) influences viewers in their choice of destinations".

This power of influence has impacts on natural spaces:

- **Over-visitation** caused by showcasing remarkable sites.
- Attraction of the public to **sensitive areas** previously preserved (for example, breeding zones of protected species shown to the public without precautions).
- **Imitation phenomena** by visitors mirroring prohibited or inappropriate behaviours highlighted in works and normalised by images presented without guidance (for example, swimming with marine mammals)
- Must the film take place in this setting?
  → Does this location need to be recognisable or named?
  → Do the characters' behaviours harm the environment? If yes, is it possible to avoid making this behaviour appear desirable?

In summary

Including biodiversity in a script is an opportunity to maintain the human–non-human connection on screen and contribute to raising awareness among crews and audiences about the ordinary living world that surrounds us. The questions to ask at the writing stage are simple. You can incorporate them into all your projects, in subtle touches, allowing species to reappear in films.

3. Characters

a. A tool for characterisation

Across the world, citizens are taking action in their private or professional lives, each at their own scale. **Climate change is a concern for 80-89 of the world's population**.
According to ***ADEME***, 45 percent of French people say they are already experiencing the consequences of climate disruption in their lives, with an additional 34 percent expecting to feel them within the next decade.

This is where fiction has an essential role to play: representing this social norm, imprinting in the collective imagination the existence of this silent majority that is neither in denial nor passive, but taking action. Eighty-nine percent of citizens say they sort their waste[4] or want to do so. **Showing simple, daily actions integrated into everyday life** - even if they are not always systematic or perfectly executed, **helps normalise them**.

Without speeches, without injunctions. Simply by showing what already exists, what many do but few notice. Ordinary figures, full of contradictions yet acting at their own level, can help reconcile viewers with their own capacity to act. Sometimes a single, simple scene can shift a perspective.

When creating a character, any character, you may consider the following questions:

- Is the character **informed** about ecological crises and transitions? How might these issues affect their daily life, work, loved ones, values, or certainties?
- What **"ordinary"** gestures or choices could your character make that subtly help establish a new norm without their even being aware of it?
- To what extent might the character **embody the contradictions** of a society in transition, torn between the desire for change and the weight of habit, between individual action and a sense of collective powerlessness?
- Is the character **aligned or at odds** with their behaviours, knowledge and values?
- In which spheres of their life is the character **affected by ecological crises and transitions**: social, family, romantic, health, professional life, holidays, daily routines, finances, or housing?

We invite you to move beyond polarised representations (engaged youth vs "boomers", climate deniers vs activists) and to venture into your characters' contradictions and denials.

[4] Third edition of the Observatoire du geste de tri des Français/ Ipsos for CITEO, 2021

b. Diversity and inclusion

It is often assumed that socially disadvantaged characters (and people) cannot also be concerned with environmental issues. Yet social justice and the climate and nature crisis are instrisincally linked. Refusing to acknowledge this means repeating clichés and missing a large part of your audience. Globally and locally, the people least responsible for the climate and nature crises are also the most vulnerable.

"Excess mortality in the suburbs during heatwaves is explained by the urban heat island effect, but also by the living conditions of residents: overcrowded and poorly insulated housing, few green spaces, limited access to water for some populations, excessive concrete, air pollution, degraded general health, or inadequate dissemination of information on how to protect oneself during extreme heat. (...) Women are 14 times more likely to die during a natural disaster than men. Moreover, gender-based violence (rape, sexual violence, etc.) already present in normal times increases in post-disaster contexts as well as during population displacement and migration."

> **Notre Affaire à Tous**
Un Climat d'Inégalités

There is enormous diversity in **emotional responses and in real and possible actions** when discussing the climate and nature crisis, and the word itself does not mean the same thing for everyone. The Magazine ***Socialter*** summarises the situation : *"Environmental initiatives are far more numerous in working-class neighbourhoods than we think, according to geographer Léa Billen. They are simply very discreet, because the people behind them do not necessarily communicate about their actions outside their immediate area. Sometimes, the people who carry these initiatives do not even identify as environmentalists"*. Indeed, these modest, low-impact gestures are rooted in cultural practices and family heritage.

Allotment gardens, permaculture, and reuse, for example, were common practices in working-class communities, in the villages and rural areas where many grew up, and younger generations often continue them out of pragmatism rather than explicit activism.

This model is gradually returning to the French urban landscape. In Île-de-France, there are already 190 hectares of cultivated land and 1,303 community gardens (family and shared), supported by the Réseau Francilien des Agricultures Urbaines (REFAUR).

These initiatives serve multiple functions, including ecological ones, and are widely recognised for strengthening social ties through collective and participatory dynamics.

[5] Recensement ADEME 2019

[6] Le Réseau Francilien des Agricultures Urbaines – fondé en 2023 avec l'appui de l'ADEME - a pour missions de fédérer et d'animer, d'orienter les collectivités et porteurs de projets, de diffuser des ressources, et de promouvoir l'agriculture urbaine auprès du grand public.

Be careful not to reinforce existing clichés by associating climate disasters with stereotypes already present in fiction, such as depictions of violence in working-class neighbourhoods. In reality, populations often respond through mutual aid rather than conflict, ***contrary to what is shown in many narratives***.

Fiction has the capacity to shift perspectives, moving from a narrative of confrontation to one of cooperation. Local solidarities and shared intelligence are narrative engines just as powerful as traditional conflicts. Faced with adversity, two groups may choose alliance over opposition. Rather than depicting the transition as a battlefield between opposing camps, stories can present it as a collective construction. In doing so, they help gently shift how people perceive and experience our changing world.

Stories profoundly influence the place each person believes they can occupy in this change. Highlighting characters from diverse social, territorial and cultural backgrounds who move forward together despite their differences helps offer the reflection of a possible, organised society.

To help writers avoid clichés, the Nouvelle Séquence screenwriters' collective offers "toolkits" that identify arenas and conflicts for specific subjects. The first published toolkit focuses on ***agriculture***.

Inspiring male figures to embody the transition

What if we sketched a new masculine figure for the ecological transition? A figure other men might want to resemble, not out of duty, but out of a sincere desire to act differently?

According to a 2023 study by ***CITEO and and the Observatoire Société & Consommation (ObSoCo)*** on the role of women in adopting and sustaining environmental practices, **women display a stronger ecological sensitivity** and are at the forefront of day-to-day environmental initiatives. Their engagement often rests on an additional layer of responsibility within the household, which can create overload and reduce the effectiveness of ecological actions.

It is time to broaden the collective imagination. To create stories in which men fully take part in this movement. Men who are more pioneering, who take care, who sometimes renounce, who repair as well. Not as unreachable heroes, but as possible figures, embodying a sincere desire to build differently. New models: inspiring, necessary.

C. Activists

Environmental themes are often carried by activists in contemporary fiction. Yet they are sometimes caricatured, ridiculed or portrayed as "deranged": the one who cares or acts is always the *Other*.

A ***BAFTA Albert study*** reminds us, however, that we must "Utilise characters and talent that audiences relate to, not just in terms of life experience and community, but through characters who **align with audience values, beliefs, motivations and social norms, [which] increases engagement**." The scope for crafting characters with ecological awareness is therefore extremely broad.

In the daily show *Plus Belle La Vie*, Lola, the eco-conscious teenager, becomes a central and heroic character when she decides to sleep in a remarkable tree to prevent it from being cut down. Before that, she was mostly portrayed as a rebellious barefoot teenager.

Even for secondary roles, it is essential **to rethink representation**, diversify it and give it complexity, avoiding characters who are laughable, ridiculous, depressed or overly anxious, or conversely, completely disconnected from others, too perfect or superior. Such portrayals reinforce antagonism, whereas ***environmental activists are generally supported by public opinion***.

It is also crucial **to reflect on the labels we use** and the immense power we have to normalise certain words and the concepts they carry. For instance, the term "***eco terrorist***" has become commonplace despite being widely contested.

Commitment does not retire!

Environmental activism is not limited to an angry youth.

Although they are rarely represented in narratives, retirees or older people embody a quieter and more patient form of engagement, rooted in experience, discipline and a desire to pass things on, far from clichés of « extreme activists ».

For 85 percent of retirees[7], passing down environmental gestures and knowledge is a priority expressed through shared activities with their children and grandchildren: walks in nature, gardening, buying local and seasonal foods, and repairing objects. These are civic and moral values, grounded in concrete actions rather than anxiety-inducing discourse.

Integrating these figures on screen means first reflecting reality, but it also opens up rich narrative possibilities: inverted generational tensions, unexpected alliances, and calm yet formidable strategies of resistance.

And perhaps, indirectly, it allows for the emergence of another style of activism, quieter but just as determined.

[7] Research conducted for ADEME by OpinionWay on a representative panel of people aged 55 to 75 (2022)

4. Nudge or "clandestine pedagogy"

Even when a screenwriter has little control over a project, **there can be a discreet, subtle, almost invisible form of influence**: the nudge[8], or clandestine pedagogy[9]. The word *nudge* refers to a soft method of influence designed **to guide individual behaviour without coercion**, relying on cognitive biases. It offers a way to weave responsible gestures, choices and habits into the everyday fabric of characters' lives, without making them the core of the narrative, influencing behaviour while preserving individual freedom. These are barely emphasised details: carpooling, choosing a vegetarian dish, and repairing an object instead of replacing it. Micro-signals that, without being overly highlighted, suggest other ways of living.

Among the most powerful *nudges* is salience (the discreet yet formidable "S" of the MINDSPACE tool). It operates on a simple principle: **the more visible a behaviour is around us, the more desirable and therefore imitable it becomes**. Film and TV, through their reach and power of suggestion, become fertile ground for cultivating new reflexes. Simply through images and the quiet repetition of a gesture that appears natural, almost banal, and gradually becomes part of collective norms. In the appendix of this guide, you will find a list of 50 nudges to integrate into fiction.

The "designated driver": an example of a successful nudge

A well-known case illustrates the power of salience: the designated driver. In 1988, an unprecedented initiative emerged in Hollywood, the Harvard Alcohol Project. Its goal was to establish a new social norm through a simple gesture: designating a sober driver during alcohol-fuelled evenings. The goal was not to prohibit alcohol but to instill a concrete and responsible alternative.

To achieve this, screenwriters from more than 160 prime-time series (*Cheers*, *Dallas*, *L.A. Law*...) integrated the concept into dialogue, in context, without explanations, as an obvious part of life. In parallel, massive television spots were broadcast. This coordinated effort across networks, studios and institutions led to a new cultural reflex: the "designated driver" became a common term, entered dictionaries and was practised by more than half of Americans by the early 1990s.

[8] This concept was popularized by the economist Richard H. Thaler and the legal scholar Cass R. Sunstein in their book "Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth, and Happiness" published in 2008.

[9] "Clandestine pedagogy" refers to an approach that does not treat ecology as an end in itself, but rather weaves it subtly into discourse—at the level of character psychology, set design, and narrative stakes. It is developed and promoted by Imagine 2050, which supports media and cultural sectors in their ecological and social transition.

[10] MINDSPACE: A behavior change framework developed by the UK government's Behavioural Insights Team (often referred to as the "Nudge Unit"). MINDSPACE is a mnemonic for nine psychological triggers that can influence people's actions and decisions, often without their awareness: Messenger, Incentives, Norms, Defaults, Salience, Priming, Affect, Commitments, and Ego.

BAFTA Albert's Planet Placement introduces treating "**planet placement"** (echoing product placement) as the integration of everyday gestures or dialogues that do not change the story (eating vegetarian food, using low-carbon transport, having a job tied to the transition, practising digital sobriety, etc.).

> In *Tu ne tueras point* by Leslie Gwinner, a courtroom drama, the defence uses reusable bottles while the civil parties drink from plastic bottles.

If you are writing fiction set in the present day, you have likely already incorporated Planet Placement naturally. To go further, **coherence** is key: too often, a Planet Placement is entirely undone two scenes later by a behaviour that is highly harmful to the environment. For example, a character refuses a plastic cup at work for environmental reasons but then goes on a shopping haul minutes later without hesitation. Understanding the orders of magnitude of everyday impacts can inform more consistent decisions.

Collaboration, once again

A successful Planet Placement must be coordinated with the art department, prop masters, costume designers, and production designers.

Writers can anticipate some choices and ensure they are presented as desirable or at least normal (the character goes to the local farmer's market rather than an Apple Store; a family lives in a small apartment but are not portrayed as a failure; the lawn is not mowed but that does not signify depression). But writers cannot include or control every detail in the finished film or episode. Producers and directors, in collaboration with green production coordinators if they wish, can bring these points to HoDs. It is one of the areas examined in the environmental script review.

5. Climate and environmental expertise

"The scientists always added something new...one of them made us completely change the ending. It was this cross-pollination where we came to the scientists... They brought new ideas into the room or new perspectives on the science : we'd reflected it into a scene or something a character would say."

> **Aisha Prigann**

Co-writer of Everything Will Change, *directed by Marten Persiel, 2021*

Environmental issues are complex and require continuous learning, exposure and awareness-building. You can research, draw inspiration from and deepen your understanding of these issues according to your interests, whether social, scientific, psychological, financial, spiritual or political. This is how these questions begin to enter your work naturally.

Because our experiences of environmental crises are deeply personal, collaboration between writers with different sensibilities, ages and cultural backgrounds can be particularly fruitful.

For technical questions, it may be necessary to work with experts, just as one would consult medical or police specialists. Inaccurate scientific information can weaken a story and contribute to the increasingly dangerous misinformation surrounding these subjects. We recommend at minimum arranging for the final version to be reviewed before production.

"Combine technical expertise with creative expertise so that the technical dimension of a film is handled properly. If there is a scientific component, it should not be implausible."

> **Jean-Marc Jancovici**

December 2024, Ecoprod Green Production Summit

The profession of **environmental script-doctor or environmental story consultant** (distinct from green production coordination) is slowly developing. Their role is to verify scientific information, guide writers toward more specialised experts when needed, share insights that may inspire them, and help address dramaturgy, characterisation and representational issues such as those explored in this guide. Environmental experts can be found in the ***Ecoprod directory***.

Conclusion

Integrating environmental issues into stories can take many forms, and you are encouraged to **explore these questions freely and with courage, drawing on your creativity**, imagination, passion and experience. Every story matters, and every unique perspective can help raise awareness, spark emotion and open new horizons. This is not about following a formula or delivering a fixed message, but about **inventing worlds, asking questions, and making space for life in all its complexity**.

If we push these questions further in our writing, we may even begin **to question dramaturgy, the very structures that shape our stories**. Some writers are rethinking the form of their narratives in response to the unique moment we are living. In *Alternative Scriptwriting, Contemporary Storytelling for the Screen*, Ken Dancyger, Jessie Keyt and Jeff Rush emphasise the political dimension of dramaturgy: "We may find ourselves reinforcing, through the structure of our screenplays, the very conservative notions we wish to challenge in our stories... To express a more disjointed world, changing content is not enough; structure, too, must function in more ambiguous ways."

Whether your stories are intimate or spectacular, realistic or fantastical, whether they address the climate and nature crisis directly or simply let its echoes seep through, **they have the power to help transform our collective imagination**.

Appendix

50 environmentally responsible actions and situations to include in storylines

Translating the ambition of reimagining our imaginaries into concrete scenes does not mean turning every story into an ecological fable, but rather grounding characters in a world where responsible behaviours feel natural and unquestioned.

The objective is normalisation through quiet infusion. The more visible these gestures become in our narratives, the more they will turn into reflexes within the collective imagination, without ever needing to be highlighted or explained. They become a texture of everyday life, a detail that rings true.

What follows is not a set of requirements but a creative toolbox. An invitation to integrate these actions and situations organically, drawing on the full palette of emotions and narrative situations.

Pick ideas, adapt them, and reshape them to suit your characters and worlds.

The logic of the 5 Rs

These examples are inspired by the five core principles of a sustainable lifestyle:

- **Refuse**: saying no to the unnecessary, to disposables, to overconsumption.
- **Reduce**: lowering consumption, choosing sobriety.
- **Reuse**: giving products and packaging a new life, favouring bulk, refills, and deposit schemes.
- **Recycle** : making sorting a natural reflex.
- **Return to the earth**: privileging the cycle of organic matter through composting.

1. At home

→ Kitchen, bathroom, decoration, equipment

1. In the kitchen, glass jars filled with flour, sugar, pasta, rice or lentils are neatly lined up.
2. In the bathroom, solid soaps and shampoos in reusable containers appear.
3. In the bathroom, next to a regular bin, there is a dedicated recycling bin for packaging.
4. A character removes their make-up using washable pads.
5. A box filled with reusable baby nappies is visible in the bathroom.
6. The kitchen includes one or several more or less “homemade” systems: a bin for household waste, a yellow recycling bin for packaging, a bag for deposit jars, or a compost bin (sometimes placed on the balcony or in the garden).
7. Near the entrance, a basket or crate filled with empty returnable jars waits to be taken back to the shop.
8. A character enjoys repairing an object (a toaster, a piece of clothing).
9. A character carefully prepares homemade products (cakes, cosmetics) or meals for the next day.
10. The interior decor includes second-hand items with stories or creatively repurposed objects.
11. When a household appliance breaks down, a character chooses to keep it and have it repaired.
12. To store leftovers, a character uses a reusable food cover before placing the dish in the fridge.
13. A character grows vegetables in their garden or in a community garden.

2. Outdoors / in the city

→ Shopping, transport, fast food, delivery, on-the-go habits, exterior shots

14. When paying for groceries in an independent shop or supermarket, a character takes out their own reusable bag or bags.
    → Bags can match the type of shop: a bread bag at the bakery, a tote at the market and empty jars at the supermarket.
    → A character may also be shown grabbing their bags as they leave home.
15. A character uses their own travel cutlery for a meal outside or drinks from a reusable bottle.
16. For takeaway food, a character hands over their own containers or their own cup for a drink.
17. The main character walks, cycles or uses public transport.
18. Characters meet up to carpool.
19. A character chooses to take a trip by train.
20. A scene takes place inside a bulk shop or in front of bulk dispensers in a supermarket.
21. A character refills a bottle (detergent, shampoo, wine...) in a shop.
22. A character throws a cigarette butt into a bin after making sure it is extinguished.
23. A character drops off cardboard or glass at public recycling points during another errand.
24. A character deposits bottles, jars, batteries or bulbs in a dedicated collection point in a shop.
25. A scene takes place in or near a community garden.
26. A "not perfect" garden appears, with an unmown lawn supporting biodiversity.
27. Solar panels are visible on the roof of a house.
28. Local flora and fauna are visible and named.

3. With family / with friends

→ Education, culture, shared habits

29. Family members or friends pick herbs or vegetables from the garden.
30. For a birthday, a character offers a shared experience (a concert, a class), a second-hand item or something they made themselves.
31. A family or group of friends considers environmental criteria when choosing their holiday destination.
32. A lively and friendly discussion emerges about thrift-store finds.
33. A joyful meal scene shows everyone sharing a seasonal vegetarian dish.
34. A character explains sorting or reuse to a new flatmate in a simple, playful way.
35. Friends organise a clothes swap or a group repair workshop in a festive atmosphere.
36. After a big dinner, a character brings home leftovers in a returnable or recyclable container.
37. Neighbours make a shared purchase (a lawnmower, DIY tools) to avoid unnecessary consumption.

4. At work / at school

→ Office, catering, travel, equipment

38. The characters use mugs at the coffee machine rather than single-use cups.

39. A character proposes a creative alternative for an event, without goodies or unnecessary printing.

40. At lunchtime, colleagues bring out their homemade dishes.

41. The coffee machine uses coffee beans.

42. A waste paper bin for drafts is visible and used near the printer.

43. Recycling bins can be seen in the kitchen of an office.

44. The characters wear clothes appropriate for the season indoors: jumpers in winter to signify that heating has been limited.

5. In cultural / media consumption

→ Fashion, high-tech, entertainment, interior design

45. A character takes care of their smartphone, computer or tablet to make it last longer / has the screen or battery repaired.

46. The characters wear second-hand clothes or upcycled accessories without being caricatured.

47. When giving a gift, a character uses fabric wrapping (Furoshiki technique) or a pretty reusable box.

48. A character regularly visits a local library or media centre.

49. One scene shows a character consulting with interest an application for reselling or donating items.

50. A character chooses to support a local artisan or creator rather than a large retailer.

Further resources

This guide is deliberately practical and not intended to be exhaustive.

To go further:

- Take an ***Ecoprod training course*** on green screenwriting. It explores this guide in depth and offers space to exchange with peers and apply the different sections in practice..
- Create or join collectives to make this topic your own. If you are already part of a professional association, carry it within that space.
- Keep informing yourself. Use the list below as a starting point.

Follow the collectives, associations and organisations working on these topics. They regularly publish guides and studies, organise meetings and events, and maintain newsletters or online channels.

In English:

- ***Ecoprod***

Ecoprod is a network of companies from the film, TV and advertising industries committed to reducing the environmental impacts of their production practices. The non-profit initiative offers a free toolbox with guides, a carbon calculator, a certification for sustainable productions and trainings

- ***StepUP***

StepUP is an elearning platform dedicated to green production. It was developed by Ecoprod on the initiative of Eurimages - the Council of Europe and offer multiple courses on the topic of sustainability in the film and TV industries.

- ***Screen of tomorrow***

This guide, created by and for TV and film professionals, serves as a means for reflecting upon writing and storyline development routines to create new reference points for viewers. It includes a questionnaire and resource centre containing studies and expert advice.

- ***Climate Spring***

Climate Spring champions the power of storytelling to transform our cultural response to the climate crisis. It offers development funding for climate stories, editorial consulting and workshops to train scriptwriters, development executives and creators.

- ***stories.life***

This project was inspired by the question “how do we tell the story of a new economy?”. It offers tool and reference, for how to talk about the interconnected crises caused by a flawed economic system that doesn’t prioritise people and the planet, and illustrate how a new economic paradigm can help us through the challenges we face.

- ***BAFTA Albert***

Albert is an environmental organisation aiming to encourage sustainable film and television production. They offer practical guides and trainings on climate content and green production and have launched the Climate Content Pledge that broadcasters and streamers signed at COP 26 in November 2021, committing to using their content to help audiences understand what tackling climate change might mean for them, as well as inspire and inform sustainable choices

- ***climateonscreen***

ClimateOnScreen.org is a project of the Sustainable Entertainment Alliance that offers tools and resources, such as NRDC’s Rewrite the Future initiative.

- ***Good Energy Stories***

Good Energy is a story consultancy for the age of climate change.Their playbook is an open-source digital guide to portraying climate change on-screen, including story inspiration, cheat sheets, character profiles, solutions, and projections into the future.

- ***MOIN Green Storytelling Checklist***

The «Green Storytelling Checklist» is a tool from the Green Storytelling Initiative for Script Writers, Dramaturgs, Executive Producers, Editors and other decision-makers to consider the ecological impact of their stories and productions.

- ***Futerra Planet Test***

Developed with BAFTA Albert the Planet Test is inspired by the Bechdel test. A TV programme or Film would only pass The Planet Test if: It acknowledges the natural world actually exists; Negative environmental behaviours are shown as negative character traits; One person does something at least once to make the world a better place.

- ***The Climate Reality Check***

The Climate Reality Check is a simple tool to evaluate whether our climate reality is being represented in films, TV shows, and other narratives.

More and more training initiatives, such as the *TorinoFilmLab Green Narratives*, include sustainable storytelling in dedicated labs or within their existing trainings.

In French :

- ***Nouvelle Séquence***

Nouvelle Séquence is a collective of French screenwriters committed to improving the representation of environmental topics on screen. They organize events where they bring together creatives and scientists and develop guides and resources on specific subjects such as Agriculture which provides interviews, storytelling inspirations and information on agricultural issues so that screenwriters can develop their expertise on this subject.

- ***L'Observatoire de la fiction***

Quantitative studies on how environmental topics are conveyed by films and television series and analyses.

- ***Imagine 2050***

Imagine 2050 supports cultural leaders in their ecological and solidarity-based transition through new narratives in the audiovisual, communication, advertising, journalism and film sectors, as well as in the corporate world (CSR).

- ***Collectif CUT***

A collective to highlight, support and unite all cinema initiatives that help to preserve a habitable world for everyone.

- ***Festival Atmospheres***

Festival Atmospheres Pioneering festival for a sustainable, fairer world in harmony with nature based in the outskirts of Paris.

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