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INTRODUCTION

In the last twenty years, the relationship between media production and places has been a key topic in the field of media studies¹. Despite that, in the post-lockdown world this relationship still needs to be properly investigated since nowadays it embodies new meanings that invite media scholars to redefine their understanding of how media may serve and/or impact places and vice versa.

It is widely known that film and audiovisual shoots can have a positive impact on the host location economy: more tax revenues, new employment, facilities etc.². Sometimes, film and audiovisual products stimulate tourism too, which implies once again economic benefits³. In both cases, they feed local pride and contribute to redefine the image and status of the host places⁴. In the framework of the post-pandemic recovery, these two capabilities are receiving even more attention than in the past: tourism, for instance, was one of the sectors that suffered at most due to the health emergency, and its relaunch is at the top of the agenda of many public institutions. Thus, the current scenario moves film and audiovisual production at the center of the action plans for the post-pandemic economy and society. However, all the current recovery policies base on the concept of sustainability, and this raises a question: how does film and audiovisual production meets the concept of sustainability?

In the pandemic (or post-pandemic) world, the capability of film and audiovisual production to serve places has to be reshaped through the lens of sustainability and its three pillars: economic sustainability, environmental sustainability and social sustainability. This reconceptualization challenges the widely accepted idea of a win-win relationship between audiovisual production and places. In doing that, it invites to distinguish between good and bad practices, to investigate complex networks of stakeholders

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¹ T. Miller, N. Govil, J. McMurria, R. Maxwell, T. Wang, *Global Hollywood 2*, London: BFI-Palgrave, 2005; J. Hallam, L. Roberts, *Locating the Moving Image: New Approaches to Film and Places*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014.

² G. Elmer, M. Gasher, eds., *Contracting Out Hollywood: Runaway Productions and Foreign Location Shooting*, Lanham: Rowan & Littlefield, 2005; B. Goldsmith, “It’s Africa. It’s Arizona. It’s Antarctica. It’s Afghanistan. Actually, it’s Alberta. Marketing Locations to Film Producers”, in N. Mingant, C. Tirtaine, J. Augros, eds., *Film Marketing in the Twenty-First Century*, London: BFI-Palgrave, 2015, 174-84; J. Wasko, M. Erickson, eds., *Cross-Border Cultural Production: Economic Runaway or Globalization?*, Amherst: Cambria Press, 2008.

³ See S. Beeton, *Film-Induced Tourism*, Clevedon: Channel View, 2005; M. Mansson, C. Cassinger, L. Eskilsson, A. Buchmann, eds., *The Routledge Companion to Media and Tourism*, London: Routledge, 2020.

⁴ S. Reijnders, *Places of the Imagination. Media, Tourism and Culture*, Farham: Ashgate, 2011.

that pursue different goals, to adopt new research perspectives and research tools that allow media scholars to fruitfully address the most urgent issues of the political agenda.

Of course, the post-pandemic scenario (as well as other global phenomena like the climate change)⁵ is challenging for film and media scholars: they are asked to expand their knowledge, to adopt new research methods and to establish collaborations. As Petr Szczpanick writes: “the readiness to work in cross-disciplinary teams and to respond to the practical needs of different stakeholders involved in screen media industries and cultures are perhaps the key lessons we could learn from the pandemic era, which so drastically placed a question mark on our role in society and the ability to survive as a research field”⁶.

This special issue of *Comunicazioni sociali* endorses Szczpanick’s invitation and places itself as starting point for new research paths. The six articles composing this issue prove that the relationship between audiovisual production and sustainability in the post-pandemic era is multifaceted and cannot be fully understood through the traditional scholarship and research tools of the film and media studies community.

Federica D’Urso investigates the green policy for the audiovisual sector (production companies during the shooting stages and film festivals), taking Italy as case study within the European Union framework. She compares the pre- and post-pandemic green protocols paying particular attention to the key-role played by local governments and their film commissions, which reveal the potential of bottom-up initiatives. While D’Urso discusses green protocols and their integration within audiovisual companies’ business models, Cristina Formenti’s article denounces how these protocols and other initiatives aimed at greening film and television productions often are informed more by greenwashing intents than by an actual desire to increase the eco-sustainability. In doing that, Formenti considers the paradoxical cases of the so-called eco-documentaries, suggesting to improve existing good practices in documentary filmmaking (such as the use of archival and crowdsourced materials or animated segments) for reducing their environmental impact.

Paolo Carelli, Massimo Scaglioni and Anna Sfardini’s article introduces the topic of film/screen-induced tourism presenting sustainability as potential pillar for new touristic flows. The article invites to adopt a new perspective, shifting from the idea of sustainability as a cost (for companies and institutions) to the more challenging suggestion of considering nature, biodiversity and uncontaminated places as strategic assets able to combine economic and environmental purposes.

Also Nicoletta Vittadini investigates the relationship between audiovisual products and tourism. While Carelli, Scaglioni and Sfardini look at scripted and unscripted TV products, Vittadini’s article investigates contents for social media and the role played by TikTokers in creating or negotiating destination images. According to Vittadini, the work of these new intermediators is situated between the narratives provided, on the one hand, by national tourism organizations (NTO) and destination marketing organizations (DMO), and on the other hand by travelers. In doing that, she provides an original perspective on the relationship between audiovisual contents and tourism, which helps to enrich our understanding of destination images, mass tourism, and their economic and cultural implications.

⁵ M. Pabiś-Orzeszyna, J. Keilbach, “Green(ing) Media (Studies)”, *Necsus – European Journal of Media Studies*, 10, 2 (2021), 105-112.

⁶ P. Szczpanick, “Beyond the Crisis of Film Studies”, *Necsus – European Journal of Media Studies*, 10, 2 (2021), 13-17.

Also the fifth article of the issue addresses tourism. In this case the focus is on Egypt and the efforts to promote the country as tourist destination after the revolution, several terroristic attacks and the travel restrictions during the Covid pandemic. Sherin Moody investigates the initiatives undertaken by the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities paying particular attention to the use of websites and social media. Once again audiovisual contents, pandemic and tourism sectors look like the three components of an unusual triangle that needs to be explored and to be located in the framework of sustainable development.

The final article provides a further original gaze on the relationship between tourism and the Covid pandemic. Olga Reili and Anu Masso investigate both the use of digital passenger locator forms for monitoring border crossing during the pandemic and the travelers' perceptions towards the new rules in Estonia. The article addresses datafication in the current historical moment, discussing the influence of algorithms and the need for more transparency and communication.

As this summary demonstrates, on the one hand the six articles provide original research about the complex current scenario addressing in different ways the relationship between audiovisual contents, sustainability and in some cases tourism. On the other hand, they represent just the starting point, the entrance door for a new era in academic research where film and media scholars could provide a significant contribution in case they are willing to partially renegotiate their agenda and reconsider their methods.