"Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better":

An environmental discourse analysis of animated films *The Lorax* (2012) and *Tomorrow*

(2019)

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Abstract

Fostering understanding and support for environmental and climate issues requires a foundational understanding of how environmental discourse interacts with the public. Animated films exist as a medium in which environmental messaging is distributed to the public with the goal of inducing behavioural change in an audience. The goal of this paper is to link the messaging of such films with audience feedback. This will be accomplished by analyzing the impact of two environmentally focused animated films, *The Lorax* and *Tomorrow*, produced in Hollywood (United States) and Dhallywood (Bangladesh), respectively, and by using environmental humanities discourse analysis to examine how people responded to these films on social media websites. The first part of the article is the analysis of selected social media pages to understand the impact of these two films on contemporary environmental discourse, and the second part comprises an analysis of the environmental narrative of the films. I selected these two films for four reasons: i) they are both environmental educational and pedagogical tools; ii) they use environmental storytelling; iii) they both address sustainability; and iv) they may have influenced some discourse on environmental issues on social media. The study demonstrates that environmentally driven animated films can affect and shape the discourse of their audiences. This study also demonstrates how narratives from films such as *The Lorax* and *Tomorrow* can lead an audience to consider large-scale environmental issues.

Keywords

environmental storytelling; environmental discourse analysis; environmental education; environmental communication; sustainability; sense of place; films; social media

Introduction

Using environmental discourse analysis as a narrative inquiry, I investigated two animated eco-blockbusters, selected for the rich social media feedback available for

37 them: *The Lorax* (Chris Renaud, 2012) and *Tomorrow* (Mohammad Shihab Uddin, 2019).[1]

38 The films were produced in Hollywood (United States) and Dhallywood (Bangladesh,

39 Bangladeshi production house Cycore Studios), respectively. *Tomorrow* specifically was

40 selected as standout film produced recently within the global South that has received good

41 reception both domestically and internationally, having won the Cannes World Film Festival[2]

42 award in August 2021 and having received praise from western environmental journalist Bill

43 McKibben. Another major factor in the selection of *Tomorrow* was that it came out at a time

44 in which there was a relatively large population of Bangladesh had internet access, going

45 from 5% of the population having access in 2012 to 23.8% in 2019,[3] providing an early look

46 into how a key population within the global South reacts to environmental messaging

47 targeted specifically at them. The 2012 incarnation of *The Lorax*[4] was selected as a

48 contemporary western environmental blockbuster due in part to its similarities in art style to

49 *Tomorrow*, and due to sharing a message that promotes a world where sustainability is not

50 prioritized over economic development.[5] Animated films may be a powerful medium of

51 environmental education and shape the public discourse, as discussed below. That said, both

52 stories take different approaches to this end - while *The Lorax* describes the severity of waste

53 and environmental collapse caused by deforestation (and implicitly climate change, given the

54 media environment and promotional material around the release of the film),

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[1] Although the television version of *The Lorax* produced by DePatie-Freleng Enterprises is closer to *Tomorrow* in terms of time format, the 1972 TV version is not suitable for a social media analysis due to the time of its release risking viewer nostalgia being a factor in the discourse, potentially compromising the analysis.
[2] Not to be confused with the *Festival de Cannes*.
[3] ITU. (February 14, 2022). Internet penetration rate in Bangladesh from 2011 to 2020 [Graph]. In *Statista*. Retrieved August 30, 2023, from https://www.statista.com/statistics/764102/internet-penetration-rate-bangladesh/.
[4] It is important to note that the 2012 film version of *The Lorax* has many deviations from prior material labeled as *The Lorax*, particularly the book version, or the 1972 TV special.
[5] *WALL-E* was also considered as a film, but *The Lorax* was selected as it shares a more direct display of cause and effect with Tomorrow, where *WALL-E* mostly does not show the world prior to environmental collapse, with the closest scene focusing on the fictional Directive A113, occurring well after the planet has become uninhabitable. This helps reduce variables that may affect sentiment. While another award-winning film closer to *Tomorrow* would have been better for the comparison, no such film appears to exist.

55 *Tomorrow* describes how such events result in climate change. *The Lorax* uses a fictional

56 world to deliver a general message while *Tomorrow* highlights the reality of severe climate

57 injustices in the global South such as Bangladesh. I undertake a meticulous analysis of social

58 media commentary to gain valuable insights into the perception and response of the general

59 public in both Bangladesh and the United States, specifically in relation to the climate-change

60 themes depicted in the animated films. By carefully examining the discussions and reactions

61 of individuals from diverse backgrounds and demographics on various social media

62 platforms, I aim to unravel the profound impact these films have on the broader population

63 and their role in shaping the discourse surrounding climate change and environmental

64 concerns.

65   Humanities scholars such as Alexander Elliott and James Cullis (2017) argue that

66 research on climate change has shifted to a global scale from a previous focus on the Euro-

67 American perspective. The film *Tomorrow* reflects this trend in the realm of popular culture.

68 *Tomorrow* came out in 2019 after being in development for two years, notably about the

69 same period as Bangladesh had experienced several environmental disasters, including flash

70 floods attributed to climate change.[6] 2012's *The Lorax* is similar, despite not being set in a

71 specific place, in that it was released at a time when environmental catastrophes including

72 earthquakes, wildfires, and hurricanes were major stories in media across the globe, including

73 the previous year's Fukushima nuclear disaster stroking fears of nuclear contamination across

74 the Pacific ocean, and the remnants of Hurricane Irene causing atypical damage in parts of

75 New England.[7] Both films therefore addressed the global nature of environmental crisis in a

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[6] This is further substantiated by two supporting sources. *The Business Standard* (2021) news highlights this correlation, while Hossain et al. (2020) explore the implications of these extreme flood disasters, emphasizing their impact on the livelihoods and coping mechanisms of the Char Village.

[7] Though Hurricane Irene was in many cases not as bad as it was predicted to be in regards to the effects on New York City, it did cause a media frenzy prior to landfall, and actual catastrophic flooding in many places, especially parts of Vermont and New Hampshire.

76 timely manner. Through the joint analysis of the films and their reception by viewers on

77 social media, this study finds evidence that these two films gave their viewers thematic

78 narratives and talking points that they then incorporate into personal discussion and in

79 general promotion of environmental causes.

80 **Methodology**

81 Using environmental humanities discourse analysis as a tool, the principal question of

82 this study is: *How do* The Lorax *and* Tomorrow *instruct viewers about key environmental*

83 *messages?* To answer this overarching question, I consolidated the public comments and the

84 narrative analysis of the films into three main categories: *environmental catastrophe,*

85 *environmental storytelling,* and *environmental education* in order to address three questions

86 related to these three environmental discourses. First, *how are these two films situated within*

87 *the discourses of environmental catastrophe*? Second, *how do these two films perform*

88 *environmental storytelling while emphasizing a sense of place, i.e., spatiality*? Third, *what*

89 *sorts of educational messages do these two films spread regarding sustainability*?

90 The environmental discourse analysis in the paper is structured as follows. First, this

91 paper provides a brief synopsis of the films. Second, this study considers the literature on

92 how public comments online pertain to broader environmental media. Continuing the

93 discourse analysis, a select sampling of activity on social media pages related to each film is

94 analyzed to understand the discourse surrounding each. Third, the paper provides an

95 environmental discourse analysis to extract the themes and narratives from both films with

96 the most impact. By using both an analysis of social media posts about the films and a direct

97 analysis of the films themselves, this study demonstrates how aspects of each film influenced

98 public discourse.

99 I use an environmental discourse analysis model drawn mainly from anthropologists

100 Peter Mühlhäusler's and Adrian Peace's scholarship. My narrative analysis also incorporates

101   spatiality as it shows how discourse may vary in different local, regional, and global contexts

102   even when they address the same environmental concerns. Furthermore, the narratives and

103   target audiences of both works incorporate some spatiality, with *Tomorrow* being squarely set

104   in the real world and particularly focused on Bangladesh, while *The Lorax* was a Hollywood

105   blockbuster aimed at the developed world with a fictional setting reminiscent at first glance

106   of global North suburbia. While discussing the methods of environmental discourse analysis,

107   Peace states that emphasis on keywords and select terminologies is vital to the

108   anthropological contribution to environmental discourse analysis (p. 415). As a part of the

109   environmental discourse analysis, I chose the selected words and phrases from the content

110   and comments of the two films. The study also deals with spatiality as both comments and

111   contents highlight local and global concerns about the environment.

112   I use social media as a platform to measure and understand public reactions. To

113   extract public comments about *The Lorax* on social media, I used the search term: "lorax" on

114   Twitter (currently in the process of being rebranded as X) using the Netlytic social networks

115   analyzer, which yielded exactly 1000 comments. This number of comments was chosen as it

116   is the default used by Netlytic and represents a reasonable sample for manual coding of

117   sentiments.[8] I confined the study to Twitter because Netlytic does not extract comments from

118   Facebook, and because *The Lorax* Facebook page has very few public comments from which

119   to glean data. Furthermore, *The Lorax* does not have a YouTube page. For *Tomorrow,* I

120   extracted comments from *Tomorrow's* YouTube page, as *Tomorrow* does not have either

121   Facebook or Twitter pages. I extracted comments by using a web scraping method written in

122   the Python programming language, using the search term: "tomorrow animated movie";

123   which yielded 1510 comments (Bengali and English) out of 4974 total, based on which

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[8] Based on the research objectives and available resources, it was determined that a sample size of 1000 comments would provide a sufficiently representative sample for manual coding of sentiments. It is also worth noting that the ability to conduct an updated analysis using Netlytic may have been affected by recent changes made by Elon Musk to the Twitter API, which can impact the availability of data.

124 comments received more "likes" (the remainder of comments were omitted for falling below

125 a threshold of likes). For *The Lorax*, the Twitter comments spanned a decade, as the film was

126 released in 2012. As *Tomorrow* is a relatively recent release, so are all its comments. After

127 transferring the data to a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, I manually examined it, developing

128 codes to analyze public reactions pertaining to different environmental discourses. I began

129 with a total of twenty-five codes, re-examined the data, and condensed them to seven major

130 codes. Using the statistical programming language R, I present a graphical text categorization

131 algorithm that generates skip-gram phrases selectively, by extracting and using phrases.

132 Commenter names and online handles have been excluded for anonymity.

133 **Film synopses**

134   The animated film *The Lorax* (2012) is loosely based on Dr. Seuss's children's book,

135 *The Lorax* (1971), although the plot of the film diverges from the source material. This

136 divergence primarily takes the form of additional plot points and characterization, such as the

137 focus on the history of the Once-ler, or newly invented characters such as Aloysious O'Hare.

138 Visual communication studies scholar Dylan Wolfe (2008) notes that environmentalism is a

139 key feature of the work.

140   Produced by Illumination Entertainment and released by Universal Pictures in 2012,

141 *The Lorax* had a budget of $70 million and grossed $348.8 million worldwide.[9] It showcases

142 the process of industrialization, portraying the cause and effect of the hypocritical nature of

143 "human progress" when externalities are not addressed, and the environment is not thought of

144 as worth protecting. It must be noted that environmental messaging in media adjacent to the

145 film was compromised, as noted by Caraway and Caraway (2020) in their article, while the

146 film railed against greenwashing, cross promotion in advertising with the film was used to

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[9] For comprehensive insights into the financial aspects of *The Lorax*, including budget and income details, please refer to Box Office Mojo's webpage dedicated to the film, accessible at https://www.boxofficemojo.com/title/tt1482459/.

147   showcase gas-powered automobiles. In her article, communication scholar Ellen Moore

148   (2016) also notes this as a flaw as it changes the focus from reducing consumption to

149   encouraging a nebulous "green" consumption.

150   Ted, the protagonist, wants a real tree, which is now so rare as to be mythical. The

151   tree is intended to impress a girl he likes named Audrey. Audrey personifies trees and is

152   described using words such as "softer than silk" and "smelled like butterfly." Because of

153   Audrey's love of nature, somewhat uncharacteristic of a Thneedville resident, her character

154   invokes a sense of conservation. Audrey shows Ted a painting of trees with a sense of loss

155   and lamentation. Unlike how the general population and especially the industrialists of their

156   town of Thneedville approach trees, Audrey's approach produces a renewal in environmental

157   consciousness. To investigate the disappearance of the real trees, Ted visits a hermit known

158   as the Once-ler and the Lorax who "speaks for the trees." Speaking for the trees (Earth) is

159   portrayed in a positive light.

160   The Once-ler represents industrialist society, which profited from development, but at

161   the cost of pollution and deforestation. The Once-ler employs subterfuge in his

162   industrialization, including "greenwashing." The Lorax's warnings were ignored by the

163   Once-ler when he became an industrialist, and the sky was filled up with smoke, the water

164   polluted with sludge, and the land was left barren. Greed and the illusion of progress

165   deafened the Once-ler to the words of the Lorax until one day the last Truffula tree was

166   chopped down, and the Once-ler discovers that he is condemned to grow old and waste away

167   in the wretched badlands of his own making. This very clear cause and effect is a cautionary

168   tale to viewers, showing how unethical profiteering can one day leave them worse off, with

169   gains that were fleeting. Because the Lorax disappeared when the last Truffula tree was

170   chopped down, the Once-ler relays to Ted the Lorax's cryptic last message, "Unless someone

171   like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better, it's not" (1:02:09). This is a

172   clear call to action to the audience, as Ted is the archetype of the everyman, a person who the

173   audience can relate to. Indeed, the Once-ler charges Ted, and by extension the audience, with

174   repairing the devastated environment. However, other industrialists in the movie, chief

175   among them a clean air tycoon named O'Hare, fight to keep the status quo by tricking the

176   populace, subconsciously warning the audience that pushback from people they know may in

177   fact be misdirection from real-life industrialists.

178   The 2019 film *Tomorrow* (budget: 10 million BDT,[10] converted roughly to ~119,000

179   USD; a reliable figure for gross income could not be found) similarly portrays a dire future in

180   the hopes that the present generation will find a way to avoid it. *Tomorrow* begins when

181   Ratul and his father, a nature lover, learn that sea levels are rising, which will make them and

182   their fellow villagers ecological refugees. Despite this knowledge, they and the villagers are

183   reluctant to take any actions to prevent the hazard. One of the villagers' comments, "why

184   would we ruin today thinking about tomorrow?" (4:10) is a refrain viewers may be familiar

185   with, a carelessness about their own future.

186   In a dream, Ratul learns that Bangladesh is going to face a disastrous fate because of

187   rising sea levels combined with the melting ice caps in the Himalayas. To answer Ratul's

188   questions, Batasher Buro, a shamanic figure known as "the Old Man of the Winds," takes

189   him to the future, in which most of southern Bangladesh is submerged, with almost 30

190   million homeless and destitute people taking shelter in the north. This reflects real life—for

191   some time now, residents of southern Bangladesh have been migrating to the capital city,

192   Dhaka, and other comparatively highland parts of the country. But there is still hope: the Old

193   Man of the Winds takes Ratul to another possible future, where solar panels and windmills

194   are commonplace and there is no usage of fossil fuels. This alternate future implies that

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[10] *The Daily Star*, a daily newspaper, provides insightful information about the budget of *Tomorrow*. Accessible at https://www.thedailystar.net/lifestyle/news/tomorrow-3d-film-bangladeshi-animators-2111009

195 mankind has a choice. Ratul wants to know how to build a future like this, but the Old Man

196 of the Winds leaves, saying this is Ratul's planet and he himself needs to seek an answer.

197 Similar to *The Lorax*, Ratul is an everyman, with the audience implicitly being told to

198 personally care about the environment themselves.

199   Ratul awakens concerned about the welfare of Earth. Inspired by his father's

200 motivational speech about saving the environment, Ratul starts a campaign on social media

201 focused on taxing fossil fuels, inspiring protests, which start taking place all over the world.

202 (Posting on social media and protesting are actions that viewers may be able to take on their

203 own; these easier actions are shown first, lowering the barrier for meaningful action by the

204 audience.) The film then leaps 25 years in the future to show a grownup Ratul delivering a

205 speech at the United Nations. By then, many parts of the world, including southern

206 Bangladesh, are submerged. But there is optimism that Bangladesh can rehabilitate its people

207 with money from a tax on fossil fuels; the other countries of the United Nations begin helping

208 to address the climate crisis, following in the footsteps of Bangladesh. Ratul hears the voice

209 of the Old Man of the Winds, who tells him that he has been successful in saving the world.

210 This is more than a narrative statement; it is a clear statement to the audience that their

211 actions have the potential to make a real impact.

212 **Environmental discourse analysis**

213   How film characters deal with environmentally catastrophic issues is part of what

214 viewers imitate and can be influenced by in a film. These two films exhibit several major

215 environmental themes, including the concept of unspoiled nature, the sense of place,

216 pollution, deforestation, and land erosion.

217   Environmental discourse analysis has been adapted and developed from several

218 branches of social sciences, primarily anthropology, and is therefore inherently multifaceted.

219 Adrian Peace (2018) explains that "academic disciplines go about their interrogation of

220 discourse in different ways" (p. 415), but in general describes discourse as "specific ways of

221 talking about particular environments and their futures" (Mühlhäusler and Peace, 2006, p.

222 458). A social anthropologist, for example, "become[s] familiar with the natural discourses

223 local people draw upon to describe environments of greatest significance to them" and in this

224 way contributes to environmental discourse analysis by highlighting environmental discourse

225 on a local level (Peace, 2018, p. 415). Peace (2018) is a social anthropologist, but there are

226 many historians, political scientists, or communication studies researchers who examine

227 power abuse, inequality, and other significant concerns within the social and political

228 environment. The many discourse analysis techniques cannot be summarized in this brief

229 space, but all approaches, at least to an extent, view language as a social practice and

230 discourse as pertinent to the broader social order. This research aims to complement the

231 broader discourse by providing valuable empirical insights. By examining the empirical

232 findings alongside the existing discourse, it contributes to a comprehensive understanding of

233 the reception and impact of climate-change media. Thus, this study recognizes the relevance

234 of the ideological debate while highlighting the unique perspective offered by the empirical

235 analysis.

236   Mühlhäusler and Peace (2006) underscore that "[m]uch environmental discourse

237 elaborates the theme that human actions are detrimental to the survival of humanity" (p 461).

238 My analysis correspondingly highlights the irreparable damage that humanity is contributing

239 to the environment which viewers witness within the selected films. Mühlhäusler and Peace

240 (2006) speculate that it is yet unknown how much the environmental discourses and

241 metadiscourses improve the condition of the environment (p. 457). Environmental discourse

242 analysis can show which narratives instil feelings of hopelessness, apathy, and inaction in

243 viewers. Conversely, environmental discourse analysis may highlight narratives about

244 environmental issues and matters of environmental justice that give the viewer a manageable

245   sense of alarm, spurring them to act before it is too late. In "Envisioning A Sustainable

246   World," sustainability scholar Donella Meadows (1994) regrets, "Whatever the reason,

247   hardly anyone envisions a sustainable world as one that would be wonderful to live in" (p 2).

248   She is hopeful nevertheless, "I have noticed, going around the world, that in different

249   disciplines, languages, nations, and cultures, our information may differ, our models disagree,

250   our preferred modes of implementation are widely diverse, but our visions, when we are

251   willing to admit them, are astonishingly alike" (1994, p. 4). Two different movies from two

252   different parts of the world with two different senses of place both demonstrate a singular

253   desire to save the world from environmental catastrophes.

254   **Analysis of public reactions to the films on Twitter and YouTube**

255   The films *The Lorax* and *Tomorrow* engendered the formation of publics, aligning with

256   Michael Warner's (2002) conceptualization. These publics emerged through self-organization

257   as individuals voluntarily congregated around a shared interest in the films' environmental

258   themes. Online discussions and interactions epitomized relations among strangers within the

259   public sphere, where personal and impersonal address intertwined. The collective attention

260   devoted to these films and the reflexive circulation of discourse on social media platforms

261   fostered a dynamic social space for the shaping of public opinion and reception. Valuable

262   insights into the dynamics of these publics and their role in the discourse surrounding *The*

263   *Lorax* and *Tomorrow* are possible by integrating Warner's conceptual framework.

264   In the context of the public who commented on social media platforms, Michael

265   Warner's (2002; p. 50) concept of a public as "a space of discourse organized by nothing

266   other than discourse itself" holds significant relevance. The individuals who engaged in

267   discussions and expressed their opinions on platforms such as YouTube and Twitter can be

268   seen as actively participating in the creation of a public space through their discourse. Their

269 comments, reactions, and interactions constitute the very fabric of this discursive space,

270 where ideas, perspectives, and sentiments are exchanged and circulated.

271   Warner's (2002) notion of a public being "autotelic," existing as the purpose and

272 outcome of the discursive activities it encompasses, aligns with the understanding of social

273 media platforms as spaces where public discourse takes place. The act of addressing and

274 responding to one another's comments on these platforms contributes to the formation and

275 sustenance of the public sphere. The comments made by individuals reflect their engagement

276 with the films and the issues they address, shaping the broader discourse surrounding climate

277 change and environmental themes. Public comments are not just isolated individual

278 expressions but collectively contribute to the discursive space of public reception.

279 Understanding and analyzing these comments provide insights into the perceptions,

280 interpretations, and responses of the public, shedding light on the dynamic nature of public

281 engagement with climate-change media.

282   The audience is a key part of the environmental discourse equation, and these two

283 films generated many positive reviews on the social media pages related to the films.

284 Audiences' reactions to media are important to understand so that artists, activists, and

285 academics may even more effectively contribute to environmental awareness. Despite this

286 clear need, some scholars caution that we lack sufficient knowledge regarding how audiences

287 react to environmental communication, calling for more such studies (Kluwick, 2014;

288 Garrard, 2014, p. 20). Solitary public comments on social media may be inconsequential on

289 their own, but together, they are important to understand public reception. Unlike formal

290 media, informal social media is often free from the traditional trappings of media criticism;

291 the opinions on social media are often that of laypeople who are concerned with different

292 aspects of the film than a professional critic would be. Furthermore, the opinion of a friend or

293 family member on social media may have more impact on someone than that of a distant

294 critic whom the reader does not know. Social media comments are not a perfect stand in for

295 an "average" opinion of the film, as social media posts come with their own biases, and there

296 are economic and geopolitical factors that affect who is able to access the internet, and by

297 extension social media platforms.

298   I manually examined each of the selected 1510 public comments about *Tomorrow*

299 (beginning with the comment with the most "likes" (1.4K), ending with those with just one).

300 The most-liked comment states that *Tomorrow* is a locally made film with a global

301 international standard that carries an environmental narrative. The most-liked comments after

302 that are about the quality of the film and that it deserves international accolades. The major

303 seven environmental discourses derived from such public comments are presented in Table 1.

304 **Table 1: Example of YouTube Comments from *Tomorrow***

305 ***(Arranged by total number of likes in sample)***

Discourse	Total number of likes of the combined comments	Total number of comments	Example of comments[11]
Environmental education	1541	131	"It should be premiere in every School in Bangladesh … It's the most Realistic animated short movie I ever seen!"
Climate change	1239	95	"This film … [shows] examples of how climate change can affect us environmentally and as a community"
Sense of place	142	116	"Local places are getting destroyed because of global places" (my translation)
Environmental activism	191	88	"It's our duty to save our world, to save our people to save the wildlife # stand Against fossil fuel 🤜 # Raise awareness among all the people✋"
Environmental storytelling	189	309	"Story is beautiful…I love this story…"
Sustainability	152	158	"If we plants tree more, one day we get a beautiful Bangladesh. Let's go we plants tree for a beautiful future"

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[11] These comments have been selected as fairly typical of the topic. Except for my translations, grammatical and spelling errors in comments have been left as is.

| Plastic/waste | 110 | 29 | "We should not destroy the environment by producing plastic" (my translation) |

306

307   Public reactions juxtapose positive reviews of the content of the film with negative

308 statements about the current local and global environmental conditions. Online commenters

309 urge showing *Tomorrow* in all primary and secondary schools across Bangladesh while

310 encouraging elected officials to watch and screen it as well. This commentary connects with

311 the film narrative as the protagonist of *Tomorrow* is a schoolchild, who goes on an abridged

312 hero's journey to affect global politics regarding environmental laws and policies.

313   The comments for *Tomorrow* demonstrate the power of locally produced media, an

314 aspect of the film which may prove valuable to other environmental communicators and

315 educators. Climate communication scholars Candice Howarth and Alison Anderson (2019)

316 highlighted that stronger collaborative bonds between local media and scientific research

317 helps form a more trusted relationship between local media and other local stakeholders and

318 increases engagement with climate change. Many comments express an emotional response

319 to seeing environmental destruction in their own localized area, for example, "Alas! My

320 home is in Hatia, the southern part of Bangladesh" (my translation). Since *Tomorrow* was

321 made in Bangladesh, it may create a greater local impact than if it had been produced in

322 Hollywood, or even Bollywood. Relatedly, Howarth and Anderson (2019) have noted that

323 climate change is often understood as "abstract and distant" (p. 718). *Tomorrow*, by contrast,

324 shows how climate change is an issue requiring both local and global action.

325   Earth's restoration is possible only if we can imagine it clearly. Stories occupy an

326 important role in that ability. For all of us, stories matter; if we know our local story,[12]

327 especially through local media, we can participate in a range of actions to restore our local

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[12] That is to say, how our local environment came to be, and how our actions alter it.

landscapes. However, the public of Bangladesh often do not believe that their elected

officials will reduce the use of fossil fuels on their own. Yet the movie instills civic hope in

some viewers—comments like "should the Prime Minister watch this movie, the country

would benefit greatly" (my translation) reinforce the position in the public discourse that the

ordinary people of Bangladesh do not trust the government to take adequate action.

Intriguingly, this mirrors the events of the film, where the government increases taxes on

fossil fuels following public outcry—showing that such a strategy is viable in the real world.

Public comments carry a sense of responsibility and an ethic of care. Commenters use

words and phrases such as "I cannot control my emotions," "my eyes were moistened while

watching the movies," "the Earth needs to be protected," "save Earth, save Bangladesh" and

many more, to explain their sense of empathy and responsibility with local and global places.

These are virtual comments, yet this sense of awareness is exhibited, nonetheless. This is

again demonstrated when commenters give attention to the occasional hypocrisy or at least

inconsistencies in the story. They appreciate the protest against fossil fuels, and critique

Ratul's flight on a fossil fuel–powered airplane; they appreciate the message about the

environment.

Regarding environmental activism, there were many comments such as "we each have

a responsibility to save the world," and "all mass media ought to disseminate this film

massively to create public awareness regarding climate change… the UN must force a new

policy plan over the globe for building green planet again as soon as possible, avoiding

further environmental degradation. Let's reduce fossil fuel usage, stop cutting trees by

planting more, ban the Rampal project, together heal the world, make it a better place."

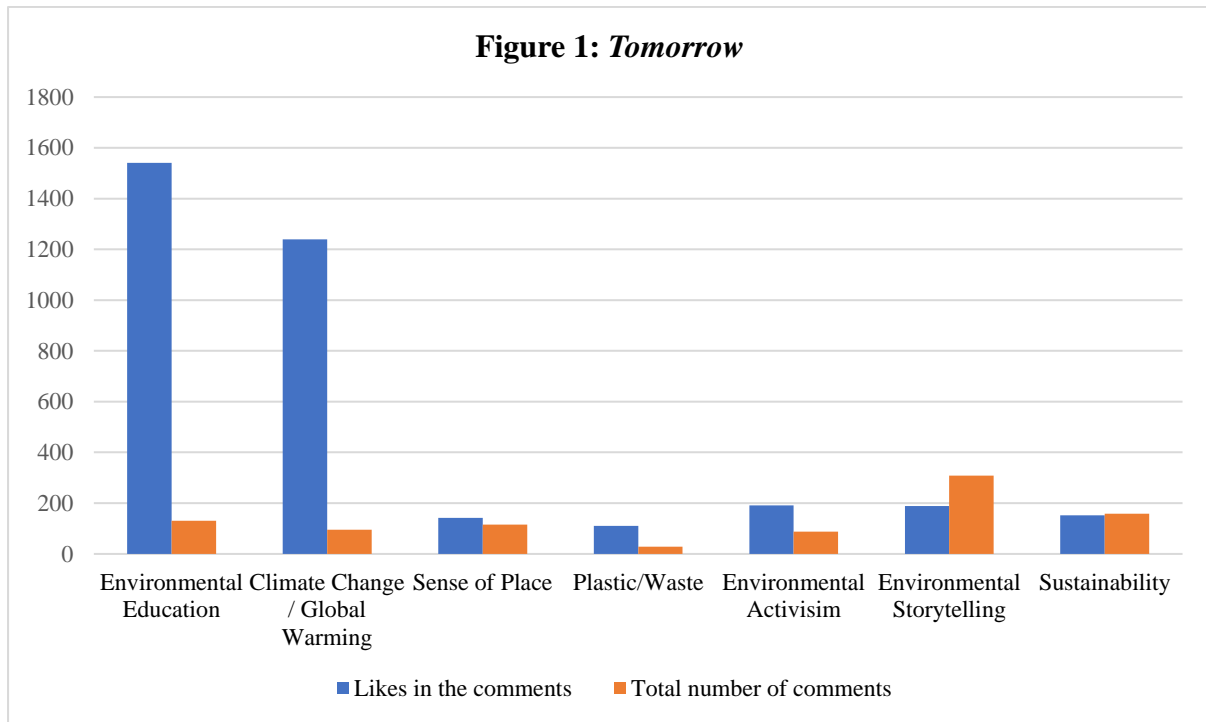
Comments emphasized the need to act locally, for instance, stopping the Rampal coal-based

power plant, located near the Sundarbans, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, which is causing

an adverse impact on the Sundarbans' biodiversity and ecological conditions. The current

353 administration built the power plant, ignoring feedback from both environmental experts and

354 the masses. There was a collective effort to stop the project, but it went forward anyway.

355

357   Figure 1 shows the relationship between the total number of comments by topic in the

358 sample alongside the total number of likes for that topic. A high like bar indicates many likes,

359 the easier of the two participatory actions. Total comment bars tend to be lower as

360 commenting is harder; the higher an orange bar, the greater the desire to perform deeper

361 participation. The ratio between the two shows how well comments are received.

Figure 2: Likes in the comments by topic for *Tomorrow*

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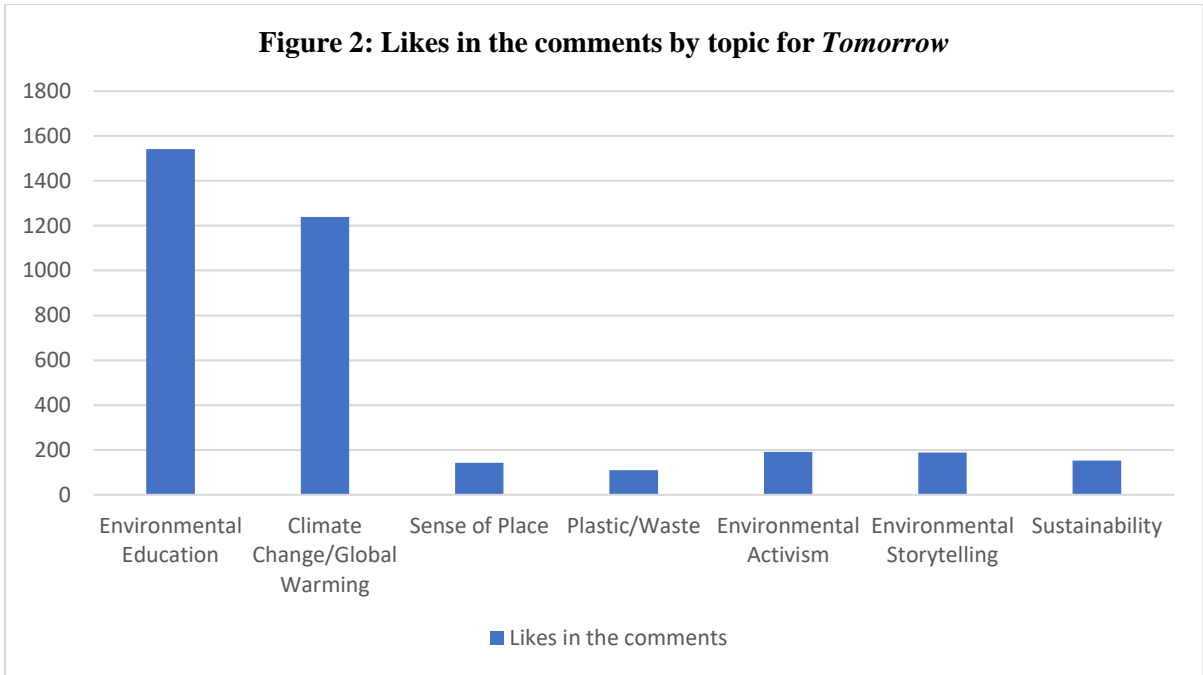
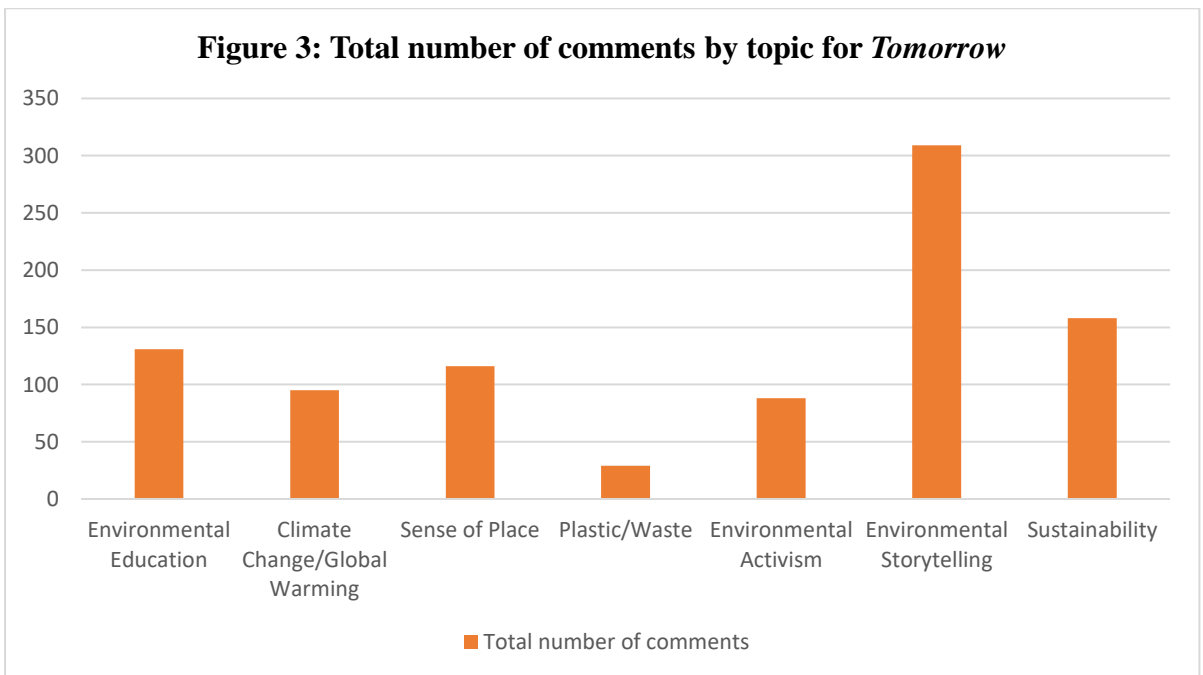

363   By focusing on the individual aspects covered in the above chart, we can better see

364   what engages online commenters. Of special significance is the generation of likes for

365   Environmental Education topics in comments, which is over 14 times higher than the lowest

366   topic measured, that being plastic/waste. Similarly, Climate Change / Global Warming

367   performed well as a topic for this movie in the comment topics.

Figure 3: Total number of comments by topic for *Tomorrow*

368

369 Figure 3 however shows that the comments that receive the most engagement with

370 likes is a minority, with the majority of comments focusing on topics related to

371 environmental storytelling. This provides some insight as to which topics are most likely to

372 incite a user to act, if we assume that writing and posting a comment is more effort than

373 liking a comment. It also potentially highlights a worrying disconnect between those who are

374 the most likely to get involves, and the broader online public.

375 Public comments demonstrate two major demands. First, this film should be

376 disseminated more widely, including being translated into English and other languages. (The

377 film was indeed later translated into other languages.) People from outside Bangladesh

378 should know that the Bangladeshi film industry can make a film that meets international

379 standards, and people from everywhere should be aware of climate change and become active

380 in civic discourse to hold their leaders to accountable. Second, common people should

381 engage in environmental activism and take peaceful civic action. The film suggests imposing

382 taxes on fossil fuels and investing in renewable energy, solutions echoed in the comments:

383 the public—individually and collectively, locally and globally—want to create and contribute

384 to a broad environmental movement.

385 The commenters exhibit a sense of urgency to create a sustainable planet Earth, as

386 well as their local environment. The tax solution to climate found in *Tomorrow* is also found

387 in comment analysis: online commenters want to create a movement to combat climate

388 change and plastic production. This shows that the calls to action given by the film in both its

389 visual and narrative storytelling were effective in at least inspiring viewers to comment on

390 their desire to act.

391 The public reactions to *The Lorax*, based on 1000 tweets, are similar to, yet distinct

392 from, those to *Tomorrow*. For example, "The Lorax is a cinematic masterpiece" and similar

393 comments show the widely shared opinion that the film had a high production value and was

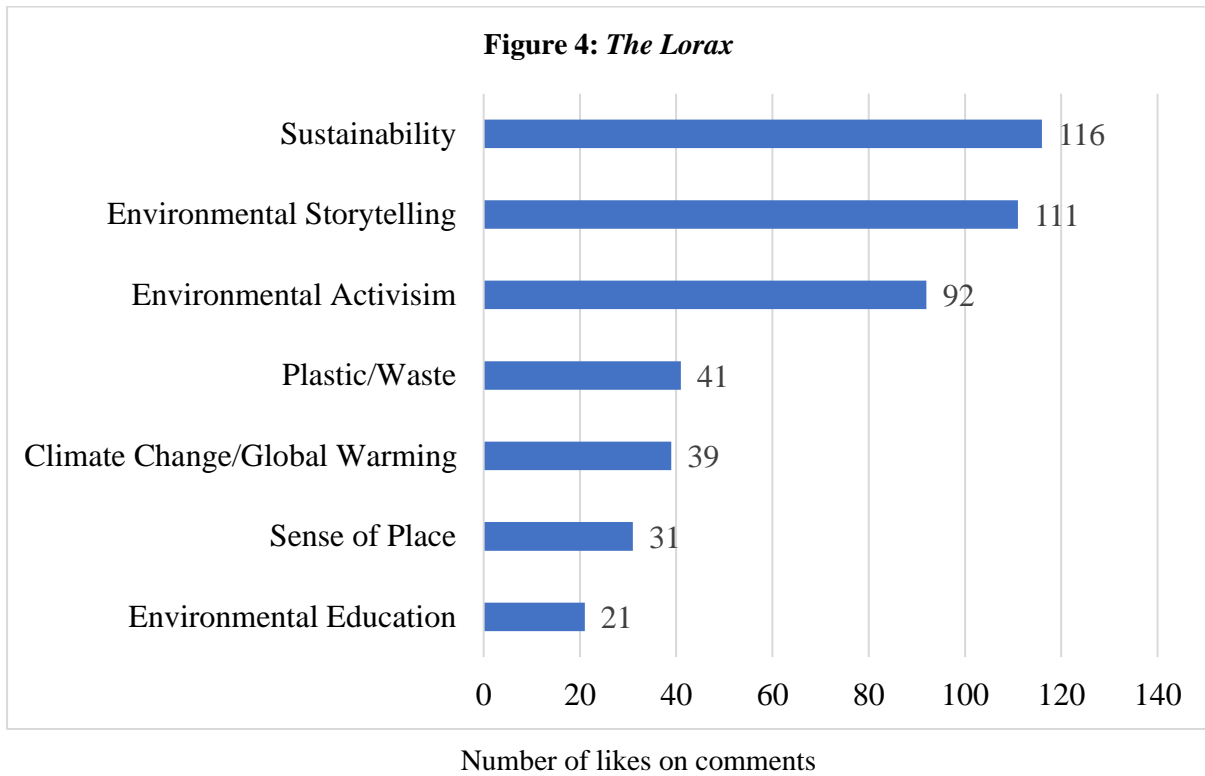
394   enjoyable. As was the case with *Tomorrow*, the public reaction was also emotional for *The*

395   *Lorax*—the public cannot tolerate injustices and environmental destruction, even in fiction.

396   Table 2 and Figure 4 demonstrate the major environmental discourses coded from the public

397   comments, and the counts of these comments.[13]

398

399   Number of likes on comments

400   Figure 4 illustrates that that *The Lorax* commentors responded with likes mostly to

401   sustainability and environmental storytelling, with environmental activism also performing

402   well. Notably, environmental education exhibited the lowest performance here, whereas in

403   *Tomorrow* it performed the best. Climate change/global warming also performed much worse

404   for *The Lorax*, although this may be more easily explained by *The Lorax* only showing

405   ecological collapse, and not the explicit threat of real-life climate change.

406

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[13] Netlytic derived Twitter comments excluded "likes," thus the exclusion compared to Table 1.

Table 2: Examples of Twitter Comments from *The Lorax*

(Arranged by total number of comments)

Discourse	Total number of comments	Examples of comments
Environmental education	21	"y'all are getting literal degrees and careers still not believing in climate change. my 2 year old sister understands climate change and all she did was watch the Lorax."
Sense of place	31	"I am the Lorax and I speak for the trees Save the Amazon, or I'll break your knees."
Climate change	39	"#Earth #water The biggest issue of our time #climatechange #unless 'Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, Nothing is going to get better. It's not.'
Plastic/waste	41	"i am the lorax and i speak for the trees litter again and i'll break your fucking knees 😁"
Environmental activism	92	"@JohnBrennan @tedcruz He read Green Eggs and Ham on the Senate floor. I read the book to my 3 children countless times. Can I be a Senator from Texas now? The Lorax is the finest Dr. Seuss book and when Senator I will read that on the Senate floor."
Environmental storytelling	111	"It is a very deep and inspirational movie … I truly think it should have won movie of the year in 2012. It has changed my life for the better. This post is not satire."
Sustainability	116	"The Lorax are we planting more trees — In sha Allah, many more ✨ ❤️ https://t.co/evJu2P0iIb."

The most frequent subject of public comments relates to the multifaceted issue of

sustainability. The audience knows that online activism can be an effective tool for creating

political pressure and social action. An example of a commenter calling for social action is as

follows:

> "As the wise Lorax once said "Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot,
>
> nothing is going to get better. It's not." On Saturdays, join us for a Self-Guided Beach
>
> Cleanup. Make a difference in as little as two minutes. https://t.co/lUpXKlmoy3
>
> #volunteer"

Perhaps the environmental storytelling used by the films is why commenters actively ask for

initiatives aimed at reducing the plastic impact.

420

Figure 5: Comparison between *The Lorax* and *Tomorrow*

421

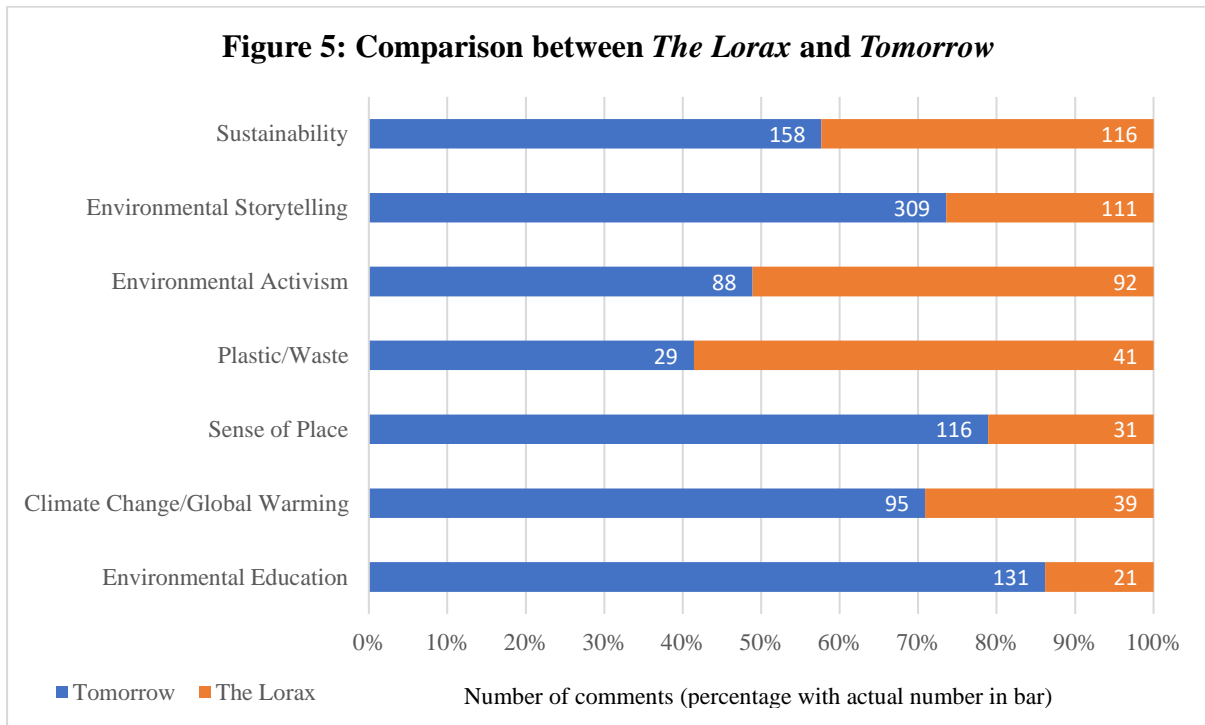
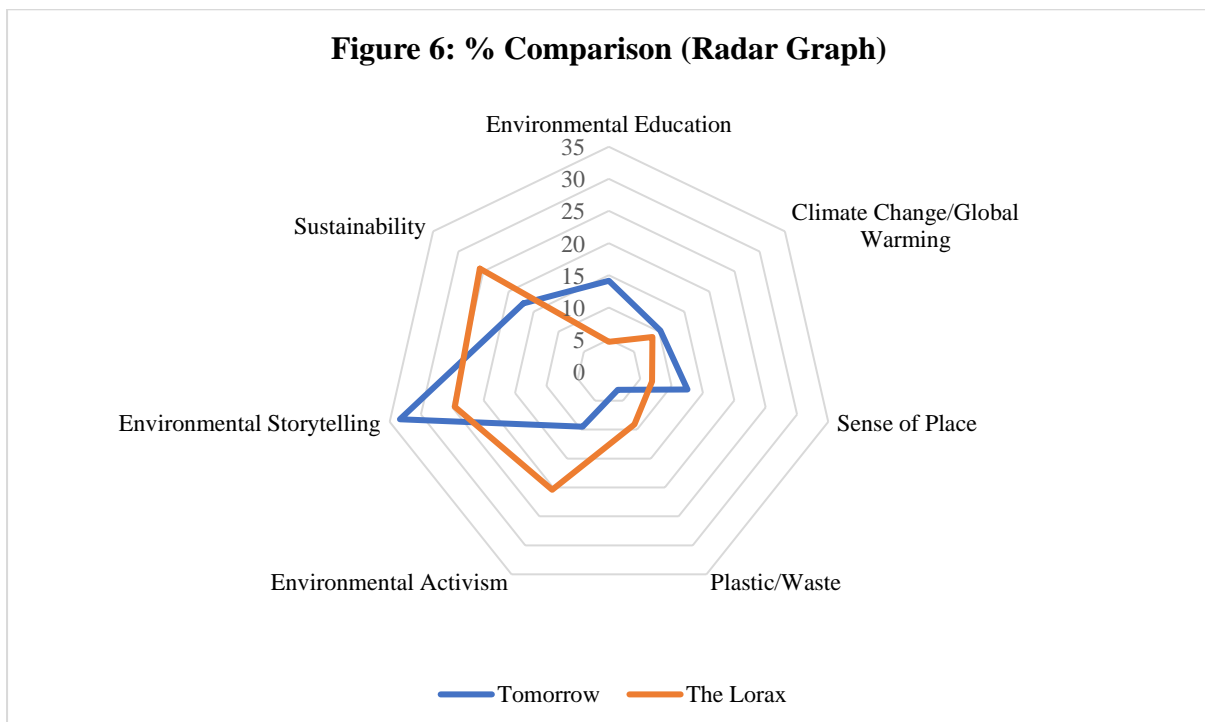



Figure 5 compares the terms found in the environmental discourse seen within the public comments. Since *Tomorrow* has more analyzed comments (1510), it appears higher than *The Lorax* (1000) in all discourses when directly comparing raw data. Figure 6 therefore compares the percentage of comments by coded subject.

Figure 6: % Comparison (Radar Graph)

426

427   Today's academic environmental activism draws inspiration from Thoreau, Muir,

428 Leopold, and Carson, among others, with this academic discourse indirectly influencing ideas

429 found in public activism through the broader environmental movement. *Walden* (1854) laid

430 the foundation of modern-day activism because Thoreau coexists with nature. Muir's

431 establishment of the Sierra Club and encouraging ordinary people to explore Yosemite

432 Mountain shows activism. Leopold (1986) considers the land as a teacher and emphasizes the

433 restoration of land is an enduring example of environmental activism. Leopold (1986)

434 remarks, "A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the

435 biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise." Carson's (1962) *Silent Spring* is

436 enduring because it shows women's activism contrary to men's, and it demonstrates her bold

437 statement against the patriarchy, which is responsible for pesticides and insecticides. In

438 addition, like *Silent Spring*, Wolfe (2008) argues that *The Lorax* warns of a present danger

439 and a rapidly approaching future. Comment activity demonstrates that the public also relates

440 race, ethnicity, and gender with environmental activism. Some comments contend that *The*

441 *Lorax* is racist and sexist because the Lorax speaks for only for certain trees, as exemplified

442 by the comment "Quick question: is the Lorax racist against certain trees? He just seems like

443 the type"[14] and some believe Audrey should have been the protagonist instead of Ted.

444 Despite the fact that online commenters presumably do not often have backgrounds in

445 academia, it is notable that a casual informal understanding of intersectionality is sometimes

446 seen within the comments. In the United States, campaigns about environmental justice have

447 been historically intertwined with race, class, and gender. For instance, environmental

448 historian Nancy Unger (2012) has written about how women often interact more closely with

449 their local environment than men do. Similar to the work of Unger, African American

450 cultural geographer Carolyn Finney (2015) addresses environmental justice in *Black Faces*

---

[14] Username expunged.

451   *White Spaces*. Finney reviews the history of African American engagement with the

452   mainstream environmental movement from the early 1900s to the present. Finney focuses on

453   how African Americans are excluded from the environmental justice movement, but she

454   espouses the human experience of the story. Public comments tend to deconstruct the

455   hegemonic racist elements, if informally.

456   When analyzing the discourse of any text, through skip-grams, bigrams, or n-grams, a

457   word association network prioritizes word-by-word analysis. Methodologically speaking, a

458   single analysis of just one of these graphs could be highly misleading – they must be

459   interpreted together, and with context of the films, to avoid making inferences which are not

460   based in reality. For example, methodologically, the value of "Lorax" appearing in a word

461   frequency table so much should be discounted, because the use of the word could plausibly

462   refer to the film, the book, the old television episode, or the character himself. However, by

463   viewing the other graphs, enough context can be gleaned to provide cautious insight.

464   For *The Lorax*, the word-frequency table demonstrates the top word counts of the

465   selected tweets, in which the word "Lorax" appears in nearly 800 tweets while "Once-ler,"

466   the least common term on the list, is in many fewer tweets. However, the count for the word

467   "Lorax" is included below to provide greater context for a later skip gram analysis. Because

468   of the discounting of the word "Lorax," the most significant term here is perhaps "like"

469   which while not a perfect indicator, generally indicates positive sentiment in conjunction with

470   the relatively high-ranking word "good." This is especially noteworthy when compared to the

471   lower ranked word "bad" (which may also be affected by its heavy use in the fan favorite

472   song "How bad can I be?"). The word "trees" appears to be relatively highly ranked,

473   indicating strong environmental sentiment in viewers.[15] Finally, the pair of words "watch"

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[15] The use of the Truffula tree as a movie plot point could contribute to this word being highly ranked, however since the Truffula Tree is a fictional proxy for the overall environment, this inference is appropriate.

474   and "watching", while individually ranked lower on the graph, would jointly rank higher, and

475   are often used in comments to indicate personal interaction with the film itself. One example

476   comment illustrating this as follows: "@[16] Hey lol, wanna watch the lorax together 👉👈"

477

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[16] Username expunged.

478

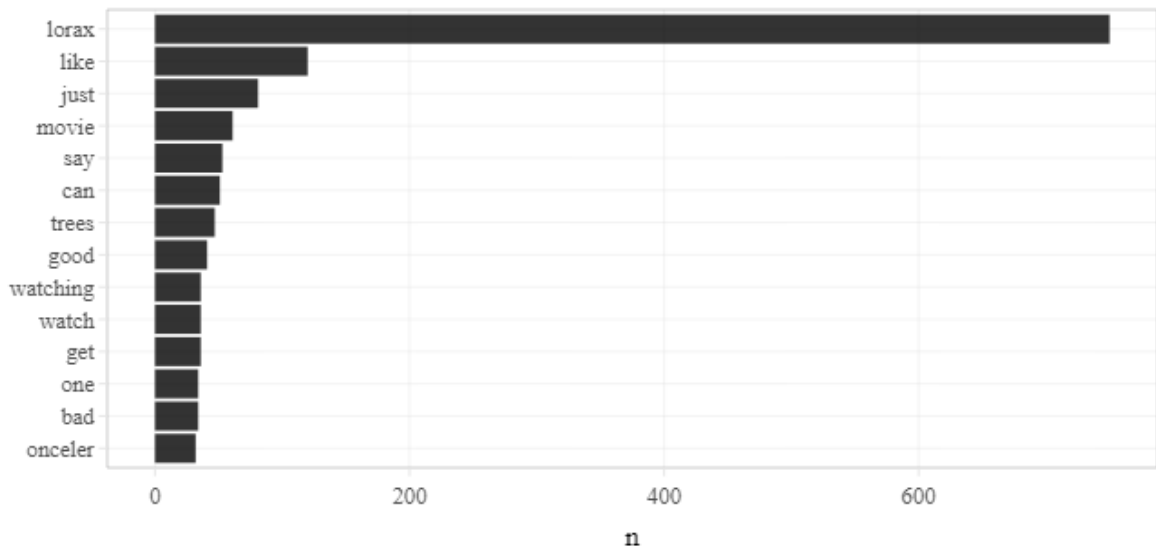
Figure 7: Top word count for *The Lorax*

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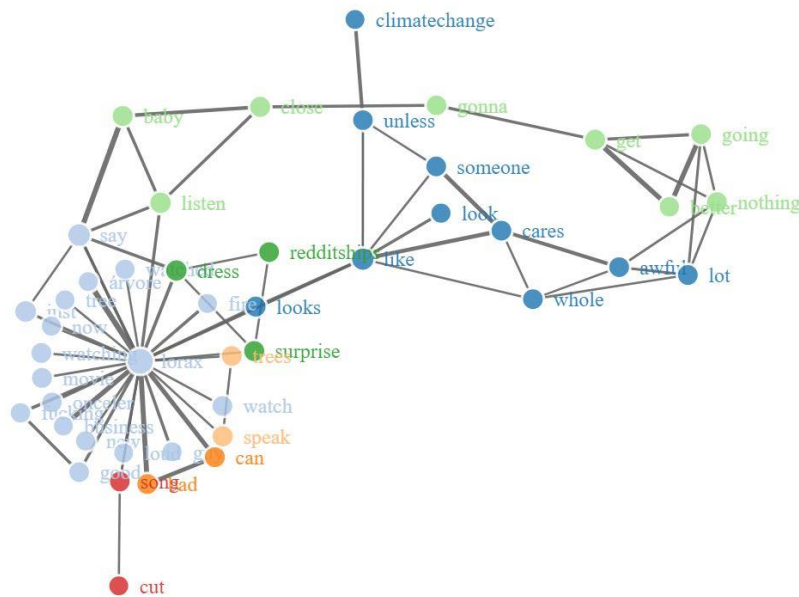
Figure 8: Skip-gram for *The Lorax*

486

For *The Lorax*, the skip-gram count network exhibits the following word chunks. This skip gram is centralized around "the Lorax" with a cluster influenced by the phrase "unless someone cares a whole awful lot." While in the previous example, the term "Lorax" should be discounted, here the related words show a roughly even split between discussion of the

491 movie itself or the character to these ideas, making it more useful within this context

492 compared to the previous figure. For the roughly half of instances which emphasize the

493 narrative of the film over the movie itself, this is linked with the environmental discourse

494 regarding climate change. Other notable words are revealed by the skip-gram word count,

495 including "redditships," referring to offsite discussion of non-canonical romantic relations

496 between characters, and "dress," which can perhaps be explained by the distinctive clothing

497 worn by the characters. In the skip-gram, the word "dress" is directly connected to the word

498 "redditships", indicating a close and significant attachment to characters within the narrative,

499 and is also located (albeit indirectly) in close proximity to the word "looks", which indicates

500 an emphasis on aesthetic value judgements. Perhaps factors such as fashion and the aspect of

501 potential romance between characters are also something to be considered when designing

502 new environmental media in order to improve audience engagement.

503 **Figure 9: Top Word Count for *Tomorrow***

504
505

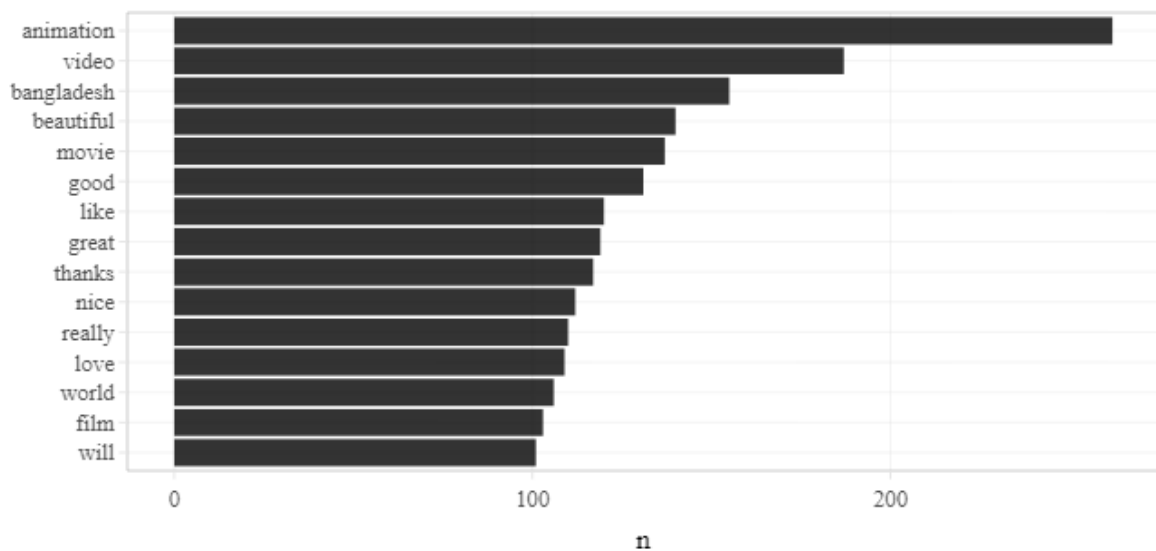
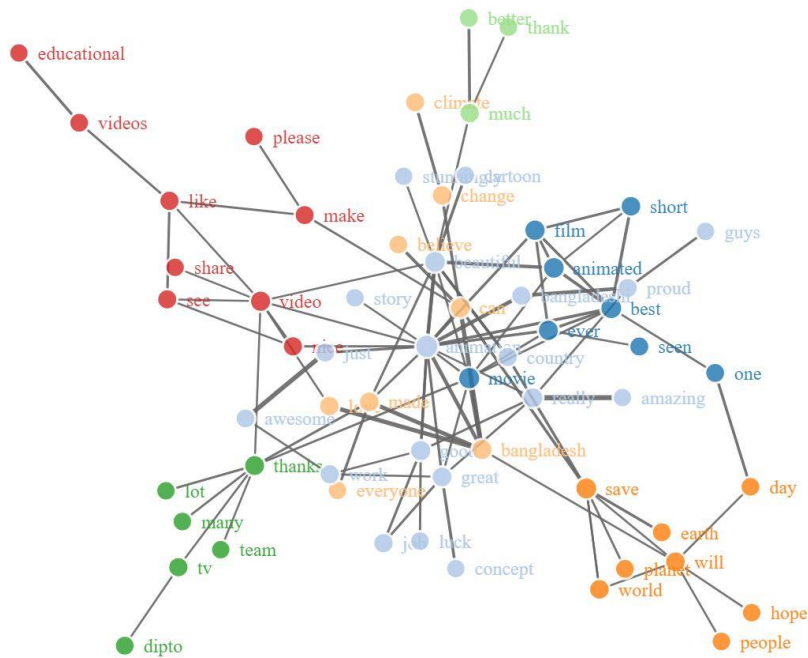



Figure 10: Skip-gram for *Tomorrow*

507
508
509   For *Tomorrow*, the word-frequency table shows that "animation" is the most frequent

510   word that appeared, though this is perhaps affected by the discussion of the film industry in

511   Bangladesh.[17] Many of the highly linked words in the skip-gram demonstrate the positive

512   sentiment of the film and its content generally, such as "awesome", good, "great", etc. It is

513   notable that even though the word "Bangladesh" is ranked so high in the top word count, the

514   word "world," while relatively low ranked among the top words, still demonstrates a global

515   consciousness among the online commenters. This is especially illustrated by the skip-gram,

516   where the word "world" is closely associated with the words "hope," "save," and "planet."

517   Further analysis of the skip-gram count network for *Tomorrow* reveals a more decentralized

518   network when compared to *The Lorax*. This is potentially influenced by the lack of a specific,

519   unifying catchphrase in *Tomorrow*, whereas the central "unless" catchphrase of *The Lorax*

520   comprises a significant wordchunk.

521

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[17] A number of online comments take nationalistic pride in a progressing film industry in Bangladesh, using *Tomorrow* to exemplify advancing standards in domestically produced computer animated films.

Environmental catastrophe

The Lorax takes a social constructionist view of nature as the film explains that the trees, the forests, have agency, but must act within a framework established by mankind—an anthropocentric view. The Lorax, the guardian of the forest, thus establishes a space to advocate for the rights of nature. The Lorax's proclamation in the opening scene, "I am the Lorax, I speak for the trees," (0:00:56) establishes the role of the Lorax in representing nature more broadly. The tone of the film is set by the deceptively bright city of Thneedville, set against a foreboding sickly purple dawn. This city is one of artificiality, in which every entity is made of artificial products: "a town without Nature, not one living tree" (0:01:24). In this city, trees are made of plastic and their colors can be changed by clicking remote buttons. Environmental pollution in the film is often implied through use of plastic, and the exclusive use of synthetic materials instead of those found in nature. The artificiality of Thneedville constitutes a major crisis in the film. Thneedville society takes capitalist pride in commodifying nature: O'Hare informs Ted, "I make a living selling fresh air to people" (00:31:19). Ted's search for an original tree is a business threat to O'Hare's company. Moore (2016) explains the intimate relationship that exists between children, consumer culture, and commercial media in the United States. Moore (2016) shows that both "the news and entertainment industries reveal that the way Hollywood treats a subject like the environment is not an exception to the rule; instead, the consistent subjugation of environmental concerns is part of a broader capitalist logic in a concentrated market" (p. 5). This also connects to real-life industrialists, as in when Frankfurt School critics Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno (2007) discuss capitalist social structures, arguing that material identities are assigned to nonmaterial cultures (perhaps also natural resources), commodifying them into the products from which capitalists could profit. These natural resources are manufactured, bought, and sold like a commodity. Environmental historian William Cronon (1996) has also

547   described the impact of nature as commodity not just in American culture and landscape but

548   in the entire planet Earth for centuries.

549   The excessive use of plastic and artificiality are symbols of late-stage capitalism. In

550   that regard, the opening song's lyrics stress the phrase "brand new" that references that we

551   live now in an advanced capitalist society which fetishizes consumerism: "If you put

552   something in a plastic bottle, people will buy it" (11:24). Commodification increases when

553   natural entities are treated without respect with some exceptions. The film implies that

554   Truffula trees are valuable and a positive, desirable asset, because by providing food, shelter,

555   and oxygen, Truffula trees help reduce environmental threats.

556   *Tomorrow* also presents the idea of nature, but it is not a socially constructed nature,

557   nor a nature that is soothing and tranquil. Rather, it emphasizes that reckless behavior from

558   humanity not only damages the environment, but also makes nature uninhabitable for

559   humans. Irresponsible human actions make the environment more vulnerable to future

560   damage. The village in *Tomorrow*, unlike Thneedville, is not artificial, yet its people lack a

561   sense of environmental consciousness just as in *The Lorax*, until Ratul's father joins the

562   conversation about the land erosion with the people. Their conversation and the conversation

563   between Ratul and the Old Man of the Winds change their attitude—they gain an

564   understanding of nature which make them proactive in slowing down the unfolding disaster

565   and envisioning—literally showing the audience—a future full of hope. Such a positive

566   narrative work against the idea that it is too late to act to prevent catastrophes.

567   Plastic waste is another environmental catastrophe on its own, which additionally is a

568   contributing factor to global warming, as plastic production and transportation require fossil

569   fuels. *The Lorax* shows the audience the impact of waste and wanton consumption on the

570   environment. The Lorax demonstrates that the process of wanton cutting down trees and

571   making clothes (fantastical knitting) out of it as a wasteful practice. But the Once-ler,

572   considers the result of this tree-cutting and knitting process "revolutionary." The product has

573   a multitude of uses, and the audience may be inclined to agree at first, enhancing the impact

574   of this cautionary tale. "Whoa," is Ted's reaction when he steps out of the walled Thneedville

575   and sees the industrial waste. Thneedville produces a lot of waste but has no policy regarding

576   waste management beyond hiding it from public view; this is a reminder that the whole world

577   suffers from waste management policies that are effectively wishful thinking and likely

578   encourages the viewer to consider the impact of the industrial society fuelled by their own

579   wanton consumption. Industrial waste is also a critical theme in *Tomorrow*. In the dream,

580   when the Old Man of the Winds takes Ratul on a tour of the world, Ratul notices chimneys

581   spewing greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. The Old Man of the Winds instructs Ratul that

582   coal needs to be replaced as a source of energy.

583   Both *The Lorax* and *Tomorrow* encourage the viewer to foster a desire to protect

584   nature, albeit in different ways. *The Lorax* fosters a protective desire through Audrey's and

585   Ted's quest for Truffula trees, Grammy's Indigenous sense of conservation, and the Lorax's

586   mission to speak for trees. Although Wolfe (2008) focuses on Dr. Seuss's book, Wolfe's

587   observation that, "[. . .] nature is elevated from inferiority to a form of divinity" is germane in

588   the context of film (p. 14). *Tomorrow* fosters love for nature by creating an awareness about

589   climate change and biodiversity.

590

591   **Environmental storytelling: sense of place**

592   These films deal with both place and displacement, important concepts in

593   environmental education. "The integration of place into education is important," writes

594   sustainability scholar David Orr, as "knowledge of place where you are and where come from

595   is intertwined with knowledge of who you are. Landscape, in other words, shape mindscape"

596   (2013, p. 93). These films use storytelling show how human beings and animals are

597   displaced.

598   Storytelling is an important element in combatting large-scale problems such as

599   climate change. Stories lead to greater emotional attachment than raw data does. In looking at

600   the impact of stories, I return to Jonathan Gottschall's (2012) statement, "we are, as a species,

601   addicted to story. Even when the body goes to sleep, the mind stays up all night telling itself

602   stories" (12). Cherokee author Thomas King's (2003) statement, "The truth about stories is

603   that that's all we are" (2) or environmental historian William Cronon's (1992) statement

604   inspired by Graham Swift that human beings are "storytelling creatures" underscore the

605   importance of storytelling. But humans are not the only storytelling creatures; other animals,

606   plants, spirit beings are the storytelling creatures too. The tree, the land, the other non-human

607   entities have agency, and they are storytelling creatures too, as demonstrated in the films. In

608   *The Lorax,* although of course somebody else has to speak for those trees, they nonetheless

609   have agency, and in *Tomorrow*, the Old Man of the Wind is not human but rather a spiritual

610   entity. By incorporating non-humans into storytelling, these movies help combat human

611   supremacist attitudes, by showing that man cannot stand alone against environmental

612   collapse.

613   Movies cover important environmental features in the form of storytelling discourse,

614   which also encompasses the field of storytelling discourse aimed at children. Dolores Subia

615   BigFoot and Megan Dunlap (2006) note that "[s]tories give reason to the overall scheme of

616   things" (p. 134). *The Lorax* and *Tomorrow* carry an environmental storytelling tradition to

617   teach children a sense of place through stories (animated films are often aimed at children,

618   and teach both children and the parents; if children miss out anything, the parents can pick it

619   up). BigFoot and Dunlap (2006) suggest that "Parents, grandparents, and other relatives used

620   stories to help children understand their place in the world and how they could show their

621 gratitude for their existence" (p. 135). This is evidenced in the social media analysis, where

622 one commenter stated "my 2 year old sister understands climate change and all she did was

623 watch the Lorax"

624   Both films have a simple environmental storytelling trajectory, but that simplicity is

625 grounded within the place of each respective culture. *Tomorrow* focuses on a specific place

626 along the coastline of Bangladesh; *The Lorax* is a fantasy place that could be anywhere and

627 nowhere. If places are ecological and cultural, I would argue that the sense of place is linked

628 to the art of storytelling, ultimately linked to education and pedagogy. Orr (2013), for

629 instance, demonstrates the nexus between place and pedagogy. Orr's understanding of place

630 as an educational tool emerges from Thoreau's *Walden* (1854) (to be exact, "*Walden* is a

631 model of the possible unity between personhood, pedagogy, and place") and conservationist

632 Leopold's (1986) philosophy of "man as a biotic citizen." Although non-human entities are

633 appropriated for our use, *Walden* (1854) emphasizes natural entities in a way that could help

634 contemporary culture be more sustainable, such as in issues like bottled water compared to

635 tap water. A similar perspective can be seen from Leopold, who draws us across time and

636 space by introducing ideas like the "land ethic" and asking human beings to think "like a

637 mountain." These philosophies should be highlighted with a greater emphasis in popular

638 culture. By and large, these philosophies demonstrate how place plays a role in our moral and

639 psychic transformation. In *Tomorrow*, although commoners lack an academic or formal

640 understanding of place consciousness, they eventually show the unity and a sense of

641 belongingness needed to protect and preserve their local place. In *The Lorax*, the not-real

642 place still demonstrates influences from its Californian creators of 2012, such as general

643 heightened concern over environmental catastrophes like the 2011 Fukushima disaster in

644 areas on the Pacific. In the film, a child begins glowing a radioactive green as he sings "I just

645 went swimming, and now I glow!" (0:03:03). Stories with connections to place are important

as "[s]tories can give children a sense of belonging to their family, community, and tribe, and this can instil a sense of purpose, identity, and hope. Stories could be an extremely positive force in the life of children" (BigFoot and Dunlap, 2006, p. 5). *The Lorax* and *Tomorrow* share the spectrum of life stories: as evidenced by online comments such as "local places are getting destroyed because of global places," these stories can create a compelling connection between the storyteller and listener/spectators. These two films are similar in that common people within the films are engaged to love their local places. Initially, the Once-ler's family is not respectful of the local place and environment, but when the Once-ler gives Ted a seed to make the local place abundant with trees, the local place matters. People rally around Ted for planting the seed, although they had almost been convinced otherwise by O'Hare's deceptive speech. In the same way, the common people start a movement to save their village from climate crisis in *Tomorrow*. These are both ways of showing place and action. In this way the audience learns from example how they may avert their own climate catastrophes.

Storytellers can create a sense of connectedness with the stories. The Once-ler and Ted's grandmother serve as the role of storyteller. Granny initiates the storytelling session, but she sends Ted to the Once-ler for firsthand experience. The Once-ler starts sharing the story with "it all started a long time ago" (00:16:45). The Once-ler's starting cue gives us a sense of hearing a "once upon a time" story. He later uses the phrase "a long time ago," at least three times, hinting that the environmental destruction on Earth started a long time before. As a storyteller, the Old Man of the Winds, in *Tomorrow*, appears in Ratul's dream and blames him for the deplorable condition of the planet. He takes Ratul away with him to show the cruelty of people on nature: factories are emitting fumes and the use of fossil fuels are resulting in air pollution, the greenhouse effect, and related human eco-sicknesses.

Environmental education: sustainability

Today, many animated films are incorporated into educational curricula because of the impact they can have. *The Lorax* and *Tomorrow* are ideal candidates to be educational tools for children as these films visually show (rather than just tell) fundamental environmental problems and potential solutions. Both films can also be a platform to teach children about preserving nature.

The Lorax and *Tomorrow* promote a world where sustainability and environmental consciousness are prioritized over reckless economic and technological development. Both films critique capitalism for setting society down a path of self-destruction. When Ted leaves the town in search of the Once-ler, Ted is being watched on his way out by the corporate enforcers of O'Hare, who report on anything that threatens their industrial progress. Progress is the main goal for Thneedville's people. The Once-ler's mother rebukes him for not being "successful." The Once-ler thus starts changing the world, but the spell of capitalism does not fool the Once-ler forever, as he eventually recognizes the monstrous effects of unchecked capitalism. In *Tomorrow*, Ratul learns about the impact of capitalism when he travels with the Old Man of the Winds who shows him the advanced capitalist societies which are least sustainable (even though some pretend to be). Ratul becomes conscious of the negative aspects of the socio-political-economic nexus of capitalism, but he cannot remain free from it. The films show the audience through visual storytelling what the consequences of life in a capitalist society that reveres progress and success, and, later, how the lives of the people within that society improve when environmental consciousness triumphs over the commodities market.

The films both suggest that the destruction caused by unrestrained capitalism may be averted through action. In *The Lorax*, Ted brings meaningful change by helping begin to restore the environment. *Tomorrow* also offers solutions, such as imposing taxes on fossil

696   fuels and implementing green energy around the world. *Tomorrow* asks its audience "Are you

697   with us?" (20:55) and tries to create a sense of urgency to get its audience to act.

698   These films can help instill the idea that sustainability is more about actions rather

699   than just caring about nature. *Tomorrow* suggests an alternative to the present world by

700   showing a world occupied with environmentally responsible inhabitants; *The Lorax* suggests

701   a return to a more natural environment as an alternative to an artificially lavish life. These

702   alternatives are designed to preserve nature. It is important to note that these films do not

703   reject societal progress outright, but they oppose development rooted in industrial toxic

704   consumerism which can cause the displacement of millions of people and the extinction of

705   species.

706   Perhaps the most important characteristic for any educational tool is to leave a

707   discursive space. These films question their surroundings, the human interference with our

708   environment, the inevitable consequences of such interference, and they provide examples of

709   a remedy. *The Lorax* suggests it is "not too late"; that is, if people give up their

710   anthropocentric attitudes and seek harmony between nature and human, their doom can be

711   prevented. *Tomorrow* shows the need to be prepared for a calamity that cannot be evaded, but

712   also shows a glimmer of hope. It endows the audience with agency, when it tells Ratul, the

713   audience surrogate, "This is your planet, you have to find out the answer" (21:54). These

714   films leave unfinished tasks to be comprehended and finished by the audience.

715   These films also offer pedagogical opportunities because they convey their messages

716   through non-traditional formats such as social media, humor, song/rhyme, satire, etc. For

717   example, the song "How Bad Can I Be?" in *The Lorax* provides insight into the greed-driven

718   soul who avoids caring for a few trees in the desire to make money. In *Tomorrow*, there is the

719   presence of social media. Ratul starts campaigning on Facebook about fossil fuels from a

720   local place, and he receives global responses, as people from around the entire world protest.

Conclusion

Using environmental discourse analysis to understand how discourses about climate change and sustainability, to list a few, are changing, is an important task. This is acknowledged in the literature—Elliott and Cullis (2017) have written, "the humanities should be more confident and vocal in addressing climate change" (p. 15). Although the number of creative works on climate change is increasing, their growth is not as substantial as the increase in risks we are encountering. Heise (2008) argues that "climate change poses a challenge for narrative and lyrical forms that have conventionally focused above all on individuals, families, or nations, since [climate change] requires the articulation of connections between events at vastly different scales" (p. 205). Although it is challenging, the most powerful environmentally driven artwork and films focus on local, regional, and global riskscapes. The combination of these different scales described by Heise can be tricky, but these films show it can be done. In *Tomorrow*, local action leads to global change, and in *The Lorax,* action within Thneedville leads to improvements in the lands outside the city.

In *The Lorax*, as time passes, new trees begin sprouting, animals return, and the repentant Once-ler joins the Lorax, everything in its proper place. The film ends with the note that unless someone comprehends the awful consequences that awaits us and takes prompt action, "nothing is going to get better." *The Lorax* seeks to promote ecological awareness among people showing the repercussions of their deeds "unless" they start taking care of the environment. Film critics say that *The Lorax* is too political or scares children from the environment by giving them "ecophobia" (Potts, 2019). Yet some are more hopeful, such as critic Deidre Pike (2012), who deems *The Lorax* a "'dialogic enviro-toon' not presenting a subject merely for entertainment but creating a safe zone for exploration of environmental facts, ideas, images, and perspectives" (p. 13). Public commenters generally seem to agree with Pike, and do not seem hindered by the message of *The Lorax*. Rather than them being

746 too political and ecophobia-inducing, I would argue *The Lorax* and *Tomorrow* have the

747 power to inspire the next Greta Thunberg in households around the world.

748   The uncertainty with which *Tomorrow* starts is a recurring theme throughout its entire

749 runtime. The film ends with a note of hope which environmentalist McKibben (2019) praises

750 in his tweet saying, "it never blinks at the horrors in store, but refuses to give up hope."

751 Human beings are driving the great sixth mass extinction, but there is still time to take

752 initiative—a sentiment demonstrated in both the environmental discourses in the content of

753 these films and the public reactions. We need creativity, imagination and hope to face the

754 environmental crisis. The environmental discourse analysis of these films and the public

755 comments symmetrically convey the message: nature is on the brink of disaster in both films,

756 nevertheless both give the audience hope for the future.

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