# Audio file

[Cinema and social justice mp3\_01.mp3](https://yorksj-my.sharepoint.com/personal/harriett_dalby_yorksj_ac_uk/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/Cinema%20and%20social%20justice%20mp3_01.mp3)

# Transcript

**Dr Steve Rawle**

Hi there, listeners. Welcome to this edition of the Institute for Social Justice Podcast here at Yorks, and John, my name is Steve Rawle. I'm an associate professor in media production here at Yorks. And John. And I'm going to be talking with one of my colleagues on the cinema and social justice project this afternoon. And I'm here with Martin Hall. So Martin, would you like to introduce yourself?

**Dr Martin Hall**

Hi, yes, I'm Martin hall. I'm a senior lecturer and I'm the course leader for film studies here at YSJ.

And with Lauren Stephenson and other senior lecturer in the film studies programme, we set up the cinema and Social justice project. One of the things we did was made a film and Steve, that's where you come in. We made it together.

**Dr Steve Rawle**

We did, yes. So we're going to have a bit of a chat about the cinema and social justice project. We're going to talk about cinema and social justice.

Filmmaking is a little bit of a mouthful, but. It's a sort of spin-off part of the project that has brought the film into it and. The film's very exciting it's very exciting in terms of it's ending, and we'll talk a bit about how we're going to get that out audio. So I'm going to throw over to you now, Martin. So let's talk first about the project itself, because you and Lauren, Lauren Stephenson conceived the project first before I came on board. So do you want to talk a bit about how the project was conceived that came about? What the triggers, you know, what was what was your thinking about getting? This going, yeah.

**Dr Martin Hall**

Definitely. I think one of the funny things really is that it came about as a sort of rationalising what we do for a living because I think a lot of the things we do come.

From that spirit, so Lauren and I were talking about films itchy level, so we looked. There's a study, the humanities report, and forgive me for not getting the numbers absolutely accurate, but people studying the humanities at university level has gone down from almost 30% to about 8 to 10% these days. Since I think the 1960s, so we were looking at that thinking well, why is that happened? What's? On there and as film studies is part of the humanities, we were sort of concerned and interested in trying to bolster that.

So our cinema and social justice project came out of that kind of concern, I guess. And we, Lauren and I, in a kind of jest, asked ourselves what can film do because evidently, you know, we're quite biased, we think film can do a bit of everything and anything. And it's really good for study and everything else. But so we said could film solve the big problems in the world. You know, that's kind of silly question really, but it set us off on this. Journey to see it, but what problems can film solve? Or really, what is the power of film in, say, solving those problems.

And social justice or social injustice really was the first thing that we started to discuss. We were talking about homelessness in the cinema. We were talking about class divide. We were talking about gender representation. We were talking about Trans Lives Matter. We were talking about Black Lives Matter.

And if you want to teach those lessons, trans lives matter, how do we get involved in that is we'll, you know, one of the best ways in is to watch films that engage with those men. Images so you know we had this ‘What can film do’ and then how do we share our message that film can do a bit of everything. And so we started a blog which we'll talk more about. We've got some time we're spending with FE, with colleges discussing the significance of film as a kind of educational discipline. We also made a film and I should say we keep saying made a film, but we commissioned a film I suppose is the right word with our partners at the YFA and the NFA, The Yorkshire Film Archive and the NE Film Archive. They made the film, we commissioned it and we're using that film as an educational tool. We're using it on the festival circuit. We're looking at addressing. Students, non-specialist audiences, specialist audiences in a sense, like festival going audiences. There's a sense there that we're sort of preaching to the choir people at festivals generally I would presume get the sense that film is effective as a tool for education, so really it's quite a very tall order. It's a very broad project that with which we're trying to kind of do a bit of everything.

Thing and then obviously Steve, with you being a media production person associate professor thereof, we came to you thinking, OK, let's try and produce some film and put into it one of the messages we want to engage with. And for us, that was the cost of living. It just felt so pressing and so timely. So that's kind of where we are now with the blogs on the go, the films. On the GO, education is on the go and there's a few. Of the bits and bobs as well.

**Dr Steve Rawle**

Quite a lot to unpack. There isn't there, and I suppose it's worth thinking. You've kind of mentioned that.

**Dr Martin Hall**

Oh, too much. Yeah, sorry.

**Dr Steve Rawle**

At the first point, it's sort of a sense of justifying what we do of the defence of our discipline. That as much as I'm teaching, we're teaching in different departments across, across media and media production. We are still part of the same discipline. We're part of the same subject centres, we're part of the same research Excellence framework submission. That there is no distinction about that. So we feel this sense. Of being under attack and having to justify what we do, the government with Gavin Williamson as Education Secretary, cuts funding to media studies courses.

There's a cultural prejudice against those kind of courses that are inherently classist, that nobody would ever ask us to defend studying 400-year-old books that potentially I'm sure people would have real issues with me saying this, don't really say anything about the way people live their lives now.

But there would never be a question, we would never feel that we had to, and although colleagues at other universities would also feel this this way, that they have to feel that that defend their disciplines in similar ways. But on a classless level, we're continually in this argument to defend film studies or media studies or something so central to our everyday moment by moment, lives, Listeners, be aware media is everywhere and so much is mediated, but we always have to defend our discipline.

**Dr Martin Hall**

And I think the major shock for me came what you refer to Gavin Williamson's government when he was educational secretary, Secretary, cutting funding by, I think around 50% as well. So it's a fair a fair cut. It came right after the major lockdown that we had here in the UK. And I just kind of thought the irony in that is bizarre because what did everybody do during locked down but turned to media. I mean, you know, streaming platforms went through the roof.

You know, people using social gaming as the only socialising aspect of their lives. Zoom teams for education for communication. This is all a big part. That kind of screen studies that we both work in. It was such an important period for those media, those artefacts, in a sense, and then to come straight back out of that and hear people saying it's not significant enough, was a real shock.

**Dr Steve Rawle**

Low quality, particularly in scenarios where teaching somewhere like York St. John, where students come in from lower quartile socioeconomic groups. There is demand to study media, but somehow the course is low quality because students from lower social economic backgrounds are not able to access the kind of higher salaries that justify high quality teaching, even though nobody has any idea what happens in any classroom looks at, there's no there's no Ofsted for universities in that regard, it's a very different kind of assessment, but we are determined to be low quality, just purely determined on our subject matter.

**Dr Martin Hall**

Yeah and it is in response to that then we we're saying then, OK, let's champion film studies for us in particular, you know, and the cost leader for film studies here and media communication as a media study. But we were just looking at film studies in particular saying, well, you know, if that's the perception politically, generally, objectively, why is that the case and how can we dare I say fix that or address that and so we go OK film studies is important. Let's share that message. And this is where cinema and social justice. Came from social justice is so important. Let's use cinema to explore that.

**Dr Steve Rawle**

And how is how is social justice embedded in in your research?

**Dr Martin Hall**

Personally, in my own research, I'm really interested at the minute in transnational cinemas. It's something I'm doing a fair bit of work with and I'm also working on European languages, in particular the polyglot film makers, and this idea of justice.

It comes in in a big way with work on people like Agnes Varda and the Belgian film makers, the Dardenne brothers. One of the things I'm working on at the moment for a conference paper in particular is film makers, who began or certainly didn't, just begin but work as documentarians and film feature film makers.

The idea that the documentary filmmaking language is more suited to social justice messages, I think, is well accepted. But getting social justice messages through feature cinema is something that we see, not that we see less often, but people are sort of less ready to accept or believe or kind of receive. So the work I'm doing at the minute with Agnes Varda and the Ridenbaugh, this looks at. It starts from the position of why is it that?

Because if I ask an audience, oh, you want to learn, let's say translates matter, let's learn ecological justice. Something like that. Could you think of a film that might engage with that? Everybody goes to documentary generally and there's this great, you know, inconvenient truth or what have you that deals with notions of justice. So the question then for me was well, you know, why don't we immediately think of feature cinema? Is it because I think it's partly this kind of it's positioned as just entertainment and that just entertainment devalues it in a sense or people perceive it's devalued in terms of its potentially radical messages.

So, you know, back to the question of my own research at the minute I'm looking at how documentary film makers who make feature films embed that documentary filmmaking language style, approach, understanding into feature cinema and are perhaps more adept at. Sharing social justice messages. I don't know how true it is. You know, I would like to champion the fact that all films have some kind of message for sure, and social justice doesn't just come through documentary, but it does also come through in feature cinema as well.

**Dr Steve Rawle**

But this is something that it's kind of the point you start saying isn't it that? There's a certain sense of not quite justifying what we do, but making something that we do, whenever we research and whenever we publish work, that is implicit there, which is the social justice aspect that I suppose for, for, Lauren and I, Lauren's a horror film scholar I'm a currently a scholar of transnational monsters, that feels a long way away from social justice. But Lauren would obviously argue that Horror Scholarship is absolutely central to social justice issues in terms of gender equality, recognition for. differences of LGBT Q plus practitioners and representation and for me monstrosity is part of that, but also the films I look at are deeply embedded with messages of peaceful coexistence, anti nuclear proliferation and at the moment, ecological justice.

**Dr Martin Hall**

Yeah, absolutely. And you know, you make the point about Lauren's research, and I think we often give the example of attack the block, which for Lauren, you know, it's a supernatural horror movie. But her point has always been that it's. Really a message of class.

And it's about the tower block and this stratified hierarchy of society, and one of the things we discussed is yes, if documentary is the one that's more readily accepted as the site of social justice message. But we certainly believe it's feature film, which type of cinema is more likely to attract the larger audience? And for shame, it is certainly feature film, so, you know, are people more likely going to watch a documentary about class structures in high rise flats and whatnot, or would they rather watch this kind of supernatural horror thriller with that message involved as well?

So if. You can in terms of education, give people the toolkit to see films like that and read the social justice message as well, the power would technically, I guess, be more augmented in that kind of film work, like you saying about Godzilla, you know, watching Godzilla is a really great Kaiju monster movie, but also it's about nuclear proliferation. We need people to be able to pick up on both sides of that coin, I think.

**Dr Steve Rawle**

I think that's huge and it's there and it's making these kind of things explicit rather than implicit in in terms of that. And of course, there's a suggestion and in terms of social justice, of not just social justice messaging, but social justice activity. Do you want to talk a bit about the blog in the project that you have a number of scholars contributing to at the moment?

**Dr Martin Hall**

Yeah, absolutely. The blog's fun. I think it started as a blog, but the idea that Lauren and I had conceived of it was that it would be a resource. Blog seems the most straightforward way to approach that and achieve that at the moment, and there's something a little bit exclusionary about academic writing. You know, we thought about doing an edited volume or something and we certainly consider that at some point. But at this stage we want it to be quite accessible material, so we launched this blog, which is just on the cinema justice.org website. A little plug there.

And so we've got scholars from universities in all over the world at the moment who are lined up to do work with us. We've had people from YSJ, Matthew Payton, who's the intern for the Institute for Social Justice, has been involved with us. Carolina Oliviera has done some really great stuff about third cinema. We had Charlotte Carl, a PhD student and doing some work on promising young women and basically about gender-based violence in the cinema.

We've got some stuff coming about Miles Davis as a film scorer and three or four other articles lined up at the moment, so it's in its early stages, but the idea was we're going to go out to FE with the film we're going to discuss in a minute or two and we really wanted to discuss the potential of embedding film study more, readily into the curriculum, so there's that kind of discussion of policy and trying to open access in a sense to these things, because there's plenty of, well, not plenty, but there's some academic work on this kind of world of social justice messages in the cinema, but you know they're behind journal peer walls and things like that.

And I think there's something about the spirit of blogging. Yes, you know it. Might not be thoroughly. Fully peer reviewed and all that kind of academic ref stuff, but the idea of it being readily accessible. And just there. And it's a blog, so it's written in that in that way, you know, so it's more accessible in terms of what's written as well. Not literally. It's easy to get to because it's just on the web, but also the way it's read.

So we see this this kind of work as accessible for FE level students, FE level teachers. HE level non specialist audiences, public audiences as well, but the point was we wanted a website where if we are trying to sell people that you should be using cinema to teach social justice issues. Here's a link, here you can find a bunch of articles about different films and different types of social justice issue.

It's a partnership project where we've got a research assistant as part of the cinema and Social justice project at the moment, working on a resource of more academic literature. So we're making a, in essence, a reading list of the books that engage with these ideas and we're categorising it in a series of different ways like these books are about black lives, these books are about, you know, socioeconomically disadvantaged people in the cinema, you know, this kind of idea.

And then we want it to be again, like a resource that you can filter through by filmmaker, by decade, by genre, by issue as well and as part of that, we want to produce some of our own work on the blog that will be kind of partnered with that resource. And we want to get that out into education and say, if we're going to get you teaching social justice, here's some great resources. You can choose this film, we've got a wonderful article about it by, you know, Doctor Oliviera. Here's a source, a secondary of source, a textbook where somebody engages with third cinema. There's your Lesson plan. You know that to make it easy for people to embed this stuff.

**Dr Steve Rawle**

Yeah. And hopefully, since that these filter into curricula that there is, I think one of the things we've spoken about, right, the inception of the project is how an apologies to fellow film teachers out there, how crushingly unimaginative our curricula can often be Hitchcock again.

**Dr Martin Hall**

Oh yeah.

**Dr Steve Rawle**

Scorsese again. David Lean again, just these kind of same men over and over and over and over again. I think that did the stats say the one the one filmmaker of colour was Spike Lee, the one female filmmaker, was Lenny Riefenstahl, with his problematic and it's.

**Dr Martin Hall**

Yeah, it's true. Yeah, there's two, two female film makers in the top 51 of which is Lenny Riefenstahl, who's problematic for other reasons, and Jane Campion was there, too. But two women, one person of colour, mostly men and then so there's this organisation in the US called Open syllabus, where they collect this information and you can do this kind of filtering exercise and like Hitchcock, as you say he is the most set filmmaker in film studies generally and that phrase, film studies goes across lots of different disciplines.

Really courses at FE level on a global scale. It's so they get information from university level syllabi. I'm going syllabi from across the world, and the they collate it so you can filter it. And what the thing that's interesting, I think to me is not just that Hitchcock's the most set, but Hitchcock also has the largest number of films on those syllabi also. So Spike Lee is on there. But guess which film's the one that gets set all the time? You set and do the right thing and maybe a little bit of black Klansman, whereas Hitchcock's on there and there's like 30 different films that are being set. Lenny Riefenstahl's on that list, but it's triumph of the will. Yeah. You know, during champions on that list and it's piano.

So what's interesting is not just the lack of diversity in that list, but also in terms of what's being said. So rightly so. As you say, our database, our resource, hopefully we'll, I mean it's a slow game, but it's a game that needs to start filter through that and start to diversify those lists.

**Dr Steve Rawle**

And we've seen some movement haven't we that that that critics list for the sight and sound poll this year that puts Jean Dillman by Chantal Akerman at #1 ahead of Vertigo still #2. And then what I think both Travis and Denise are at the top 10

**Dr Martin Hall**

Yeah. Claire Denise up there. But I mean.

**Dr Steve Rawle**

And only 5 to 7 is in the top 15 so.

**Dr Martin Hall**

Yeah. Agnes Varda. I mean, Silencia Amours at #30 with portrait of a lady on fire, which such a recent film as well. And it's not just a film by a woman. It's a film about a queer relationship between two women. So it's so much more than that. And it's really great to see films like that in such a big, I mean the sight and sound polls every 10 years. It's a big deal, Paul. They ask quite a lot of critics to give their top 10's and they come up with this list. And it's really interesting to see that shift.

**Dr Steve Rawle**

Yeah. And I, I saw a lot of activism by scholars, particularly who were publishing their lists and aiming to, to challenge some of the accepted Canon around which films we were setting, how are we approaching those films? Who are we celebrating there? Because while we're celebrating those female film makers in the list, somebody like Roman Polanski has dropped off it. So we're revising what that is and making choices, you know, because, of course the poll is something on of its own, an act of self of, of social justice. To recognise those film makers that previously we've in some sense as well been complicit in making those choices that marginalised those film makers, marginalise those voices and marginalised those messages.

**Dr Martin Hall**

Yeah. So one of the things that I was thinking about on a really basic level for us as educators at universities is our graduate outcomes. You know, we want students to spend three years with us and come out of this university with a certain list of attributes and abilities and skills and knowledges. And if we're producing students who come out giving it all, you know, Hitchcock's amazing, he's the best. Let's you know champion this filmmaker, this one. You know, we have a responsibility to make sure that the toolkit of film makers and films is as diverse as it can be, so you're right. That's why that curriculum needs that, because this sample has shifted because people are coming out. I mean, it's not all people with them to these degrees. Let's not be blind. Obviously it's film critics and people who could vote have to just be a registered critic and well written, you know, people were invited.

**Dr Steve Rawle**

It's worth mentioning as well. The filmmaker poll is a separate poll and it does not have a female filmmaker.

It's still, it's still Hitchcock, wells, Kubrick. There's not much movement there.

**Dr Martin Hall**

Yeah, yeah. Down the end there took a story. Yeah, that doesn't really change. So you know who is, whose perceptions are changing, who has the power to influence that? You know, should we be exercising that power? That certainly think so. I don't like the kind of notion of it as kind of exercising a power, but really more of a responsibility we have to do well by our students.

**Dr Steve Rawle**

We play an important role as curators to help bring, we don't try to shape our students' tastes, but we do want to make sure our students are exposed to a broader range of cinema than is available on Netflix, Disney plus and the streamers who are doing much more algorithmically, to keep students within and audiences in general, within a small bubble of their own tastes and keep them hooked in in terms of time and those broader films and many of those films on the site and sound list you can't watch on those mainstream streaming sites.

**Dr Martin Hall**

Yeah, there's an accessibility question. I mean, the BFI player, of course, have a big portion of the list on there, but the BFI, who will also run the second sound pole, you know, naturally they're going to champion that. But you're right, you know, watch, try and watch a Chantelle Lackman film on Netflix. You're going to be upset. I mean, I don't think there's any Vader on there. Is there any Silencia on there? She's much more kind of, I don't know to say populist, but much more accessible. You've got your movies, you've got your BFI players, there's the Criterion channel, but not in the UK, but then in addition, the thing that fascinates me and I talk about it. Our students, quite a lot, is how expensive it is to have all of those platforms and in and of itself, that's a kind of an access issue, isn't it?

You know, it's particularly classist to say if you want a complete knowledge not complete, but a rounded knowledge of cinema you need to spend this much money. So and who can't spend that much money? People who don't have it, you know, this kind of big social justice issue is such a foundational issue with things like cinema and what messages are they missing out on? How amazing is Jean Dielman? How amazing is that film for students to see? I would love for more people to watch it, you know, language, accessibility but beside, you know, if you can't even see it, you know what messages are these people missing out on? You know, if film has this enormous power that I think it has to tell us trans lives matter, Black lives matter. All this really interesting and important stuff, if you can't access that message, you're not going to receive it, so access is another thing. So if we get onto the film, actually one of the things I'm quite excited to talk about is, is this programme called Inter film plus, which is an educational it's geo-locked, which is a phrase I had to look up. I don't know about you, which means you can only.

**Dr Steve Rawle**

Which means we can only watch it in certain locations. Yeah, IP addresses matter.

**Dr Martin Hall**

Yeah, which I really liked. It's a really great idea, but it's geoducks to educational settings, which is amazing, and they're putting our film on that platform and some of the stuff on there is phenomenal, but platforms like that are doing such great work to give access to students, cause it's free to students to watch in an educational environment so, you know, I'd love for it to be not geo-locked, but then this is a big problem, isn't it? And they're all charity funded. And what these people are doing, they do such great work and it feels like we're swimming against that, Gavin Williamson current still in that sense, even though he's no longer the educational secretary at the moment.

**Dr Steve Rawle**

Although if we are swimming upstream, we're just very quickly to go back to Netflix is Netflix are helping create conditions where many audiences are now much more used to subtitles. Netflix are very good at curating global material. It's a bit kind of generalised for international audiences, but you know you can watch really strong Indian horror films, say on there or South Korean content. So the ground work is being laid for a generation, particularly young people who are much more used to subtitles.

**Dr Martin Hall**

Yeah. Oh, yeah. Let's plug something like Luther. As well, sorry, not Luther. What am I thinking of here? Lupan on Netflix, which is the Omar side show. And Family Business and Call My Agent. There's great French stuff on their Korean stuff on there. You did some amazing stuff on Netflix. Now don't get me wrong but and the problem is, what's the answer to the question? And I don't know what the answer is. The answer really, you know, in this kind of idealistic world, is a platform that has everything on it. But there's a kind of full circle feeling for me. Like, isn't that what cable television was? Isn't that what Sky Television wanted to be a couple decades ago? But now you know we are. Are we going to get some kind of amalgamated streaming package deal where you can spend some inordinate amount of money and have a bit of everything? You know, it's what the answer is, I don't know, but it's certainly a problem.

**Dr Steve Rawle**

It's still not going to have any Usman, some Benny films on there. So let's start talk about the film that the projects commissioned from the film Archive, which is called Cost of Living, I think we can we can take a listen to the trailer.

**Trailer Audio**

High unemployment, poor housing and rising crime mean that frustration and anger are never far below the surface.

I'm fed up with the lot of them, none of the parties seem to do anything for people like me.

It's 15 people after one job, so it's not worth looking for one now is it? If I can't get one?

And when you look at the conditions down here, they're not fit for animals, never mind human.

The government seemed to produce this consultative document but saying well, sorry, you know, we're not going to implement it now.

We went through every item on which we could economise and decided that this was one of them.

I think a lot of the problems that we have to face at the moment are to do with the breakdown that we've seen in community life.

Because the price is going to be just, you just can't go. I can't budget anymore than I'm doing.

Having no home means sacrificing relationships. In fact, a loss of identity.

You presumably see this as a victory for the for the ordinary man and woman against bureaucracy.

Justice, I think is a better word.

**Dr Steve Rawle**

So that's the trailer for cost of living. That's a film that's been commissioned by the cinema and Social Justice project and made by the Yorkshire Film Archive and Northeast Film Archive, produced by Graham Routon and edited by Andy Burns. So this is something this is sort of the point where I really came to the cinema and social justice project, which is where it becomes cinema and social justice film. So you were already talking to Graham about the film when I got involved, so. How did the discussion start about making a film?

**Dr Martin Hall**

The discussion started because we work with the YFA on campus. I like to embed their archival work into education because it's so important they've made a lot of films and that they made a couple in particular that really resonated with my students, Born a Rebel and Lost Connections, which were both just phenomenal films and in essence I saw those films. Well. Graham showed them to us. And I said, what a powerful medium. What a great way to employ that kind of visual storytelling language to take archival footage from an archive that have wide-ranging material from amateur footage, you know, people move into a house and find a suitcase full of 16 millimetre film and donate it to the archive. They keep it, they restore it. They look after it, they digitise it to, you know, TV adverts from local businesses there is a lot of Nestle stuff, news footage and things like that. And to what they do, what Andy Burns and Graham have done together. Is to use that information and curate a message through this kind of diverse material and their message for, you know, Born a Rebel was about the centenary of the women's vote and then lost Connections was the best kind of not really a COVID film so much as a kind of distance social distance film, and it was the Lost Connections film that resonated with me on a social justice level. I said to Graham, what a great way to share this message. We should do something in this social justice vein. I spoke to you about it and you were aware of the sign network or the sign people. Do you want to talk about sign?

**Dr Steve Rawle**

Yeah. So sign the screen Industries Growth network. There are a coalition of universities, screen Yorkshire, the local industry kind of board. I mean, they're a private company, but they used to be a publicly owned kind of cultural industries board. Industries across the region and they're remit is really it's quite simple, it's about making sure that we have sustainable employment in film, television, games, journalism throughout our region, as somebody who educates and has been doing for a long time. Film and TV production, students and journalists, most of the jobs for those still remain in London. So part of the regionalization of film and television industries and screen industries more generally is about bringing jobs up here, making sure that our best and brightest stay in the region that we bring investment to the region, you know, and that in itself is a social justice agenda about decentralisation from London.

Which is still the big pull. And Screen Yorkshire do an amazing job of bringing the universities together. Sign has led from University of York kind of an aside to their XR stories projects but one of the streams there is equality and diversity. Film and television for all some of the things we're talking about is, is, is an astoundingly diverse industry. Class is a big barrier for people, which of course disenfranchises many social groups. Representation has for a long time been very non-diverse, but is further along than employment and Sign have shared many upsetting and surprising stories of people's experience within the industry, so Sign is looking at how those industries can be diversified regionally but also diversified in terms of the makeup of the workforce, which we trust as well as film studies practitioners. We know there's a relationship between really representation behind the camera and what's in front of camera.

So sign have pots of money available for projects across the region, and we had the possibility to bid for up to about £30,000 to develop the project, which is where we started thinking about the remit for filmmaking within this.

**Dr Martin Hall**

What do you tell us a little bit about the competition we're going to do using. The film at FE.

**Dr Steve Rawle**

Yeah. So this is the longer trajectory of it, isn't it? I suppose maybe we're going to talk about how we want to get the film out to schools first as a kind of educational project because we've now that we've made the film and the film is. I think we can say the film's really good. Graham and Andy did an amazing job of putting this film together and they put it together pretty quickly as well, and we had lots of meetings to talk about how we might improve it, but I don't think we came up with any significant ways of actually improving the film. It was such a good job and I think once we started talking about improving it. The materials to improve it in those ways actually didn't exist, so we're working with a finite resource. We're not like, it's not like a different kind of film project. We can go out and shoot more material if the material is not the archive. We can't work with it. We might talk a little bit about that as we go.

So now we want to get the films, the film into schools. And we are, we're working with schools at the moment, aren't we, to set up a series of workshops to go in as a kind of critical intervention. We want to look at how film makes a difference. This is the sort of targeted response, isn't it? I guess the BLOB response is resource is, is maybe a little less distinct than this, so here it's about targeted interventions about the power of film and film as a way of making a difference to people's lives.

And out of those workshops as well, we want to run, which is the longer kind of phase of the sign funding. We want to inspire people to make films. Not just to listen and watch the story that we've curated. Or the other stories that exist in features or short films or documentaries or television series, but start to tell their own stories because those voices, particularly in in something like the Yorkshire Film Archive, which is full of mid, mid to late 20th century footage shot by. Lots of straight white, middle class men, but to actually start to diversify the archive with those stories from now and the social justice issues that that really mean something to the students that we are talking to as part of the project.

**Dr Martin Hall**

Yeah, I think that's really important as well. And obviously the archive has these. You know we could call them gaps but not through fault of anybody's and we want to identify those. One of the things you we had a discussion about was the genre of the film or the category of the film, because we was is it documentary? Is it an experimental film? Is it a piece of poetic cinema? It's definitely not feature for sure, and we've been talking just a moment ago about the difference between documentaries and features and the power the power of features.

So one of the things we talked about doing in terms of getting this out is showing it alongside a feature, not literally at the same time as a feature that would be quite experimental with it. But before we watch a feature film and really curate that feature film something like. Rocks. Something like fish tank, maybe something even that I, Daniel Blake, that deals with it basically because it's dealing with similar socioeconomic disadvantage and there's similar issues. So cost of living, of course. You pick up from the trailer and a little bit from what we've said is about various issues of the cost of living crisis or crises over time, from as early as I think the 40s and the 50s, right up until as recent as the 90s in that footage, and then certainly a very powerful resonance for today. In the film, you see the price of petrol increasing. You see the price of groceries being too expensive. You see the cost of heating homes on the increase, making it difficult for people to live. You know, lots of things we've seen before, homelessness difficulties for leisure and young people.

**Dr Steve Rawle**

Patronising government representatives telling you how you can buy new light bulbs.

**Dr Martin Hall**

Yeah, absolutely happens.

**Dr Steve Rawle**

Not quite kettle. Light bulbs this time.

**Dr Martin Hall**

But yeah, and you know this sense of. What is the film? What can it do? I think that's why it goes in so neatly into filmmaking and saying if we're going to go around saying, you know, film is one of the best ways to learn these great messages, what better than to have there be more films that deal with these messages? You know, so if we can inspire people to get into the industry where? Income in that screen industry growth network, if we can help the industry grow, everybody wins.

**Dr Steve Rawle**

Completely one of the difficulties you mentioned, the genre of film. Graham's quite clear about, is that it's not a documentary. It's also not completely an experimental film, but I think one of the things that we've started to understand from the screenings we've had already is that, firstly, the story is incredibly resonant, that we're starting, as we've been working on this film, I think we have the sort of reticence that have we done something that could potentially be exploitative. But we we're not looking at commercial gain here we want to talk about the issues in the film and how film can help us access. So I guess access the past in in some regards, but when the past looks so much like now and now looks so much like the past, like I'm coming into work today. And I'm. I'm past the RMT workers at the station. You know we've got those images in the film that I'm hearing the same things from people on the television every night that are in the film that, as we've shown it, shown it to some audiences as well. They've recognised places in the film they've recognised voices, they've recognised campaigns. This footage of the take back the night marches in there as well.

**Dr Martin Hall**

Things like St. John's script in in their leads for homelessness. Lots of the North East as well, and Bladen and places like that. That kind of council housing development where they were knocking down terraces and putting up the flats and the effect of loneliness on the people who were moved into those the isolation, the removal from society, being part of it. This is interesting.

**Dr Steve Rawle**

Yeah, it's sort of it's, it's depressing and it's circularity. But those are conversations we want to have around the film and the ways that film accesses those memories and hopefully stimulates further activity on the part of viewers. Further discussion, further thinking. And one of the things that I think is has become. Unintended about the film, I think is something is that I don't think we anticipated and it's part of you know having such a good production team on the film and the film coming out as good as it has is that I don't think we anticipated the amount of interest there is in the film being screened.

**Dr Martin Hall**

Yeah, absolutely. When you said like it's a really great film, I do think we can say that. I really think we ought to say that because it's true, but I wasn't surprised that it was a good film. But what I was surprised is how well received it was. So we had a big premiere launch at the York St. John campus, but we also. Were picked up by a couple of film festivals just based on a few conversations. So we were showing that Manchester Keino, which is we were shown in the made-up North Panel there. So obviously there's a regionality to it, but we've got a special mentioned in the audience awards, which is the sort of 2nd place award for films made in well made-up north and whatever that means. It's quite colloquial, and it certainly includes quite a lot, and we were also shown at the Bristol Radical Film Festival because the film really is a potentially quite radical piece of, quite politicised message, you know, quite deliberately, but that's another discussion really well.

I'm quite interested in, you know, certainly the festival circuit, it's been something we're looking at the moment. So we've submitted it to quite a few festivals. We did a follow-on bid for funding because there was such a hunger for the film. Unbeknownst to us, that's the surprise of it, that hunger. So we've, we've gone. OK, well, let's put it in some places. And so we've got some festivals lined up and be really great to see that kind of public. Response coming through.

**Dr Steve Rawle**

And this is the sort of underlying research thing we haven't really talked about research, but this is a research project that the film is a means to access.

**Dr Martin Hall**

Of course.

**Dr Steve Rawle**

Data about the impact of this particular piece of work and the impact it's having on different audiences that we have an educational audience. We potentially have a student audience in higher education. We have more general and more specialist audiences that that we're able to access through the film. So part of having a festival run for it isn't for us about laurels and awards, it's about accessing audiences who can help us understand the impact of film to discuss or raise, it's a horrible phrase, raise awareness of social justice issues and potentially out into action and having a festival run across 2023. I mean, fingers crossed, yeah. Harrogate Film Festival, which is the first one that's going to.

Tell us whether we're in or not, is a way of us developing the data around the project and the research that underlies this.

**Dr Martin Hall**

We were really lucky to be able to work with Theresa Heath as well from London. She's working on some, she's done a lot of festival research work in her academic past, and so she's a research assistant, a postdoctoral research assistant on the project now. And as you say, with the festival circuit, one of the things we're going to do is survey the audience in some way and then do some data analysis of that and discuss how, you know whether the film, our film, our little film that has come out of nowhere and done so well, has that power and ability to affect change raise awareness? In your words, you know how aware are people of these issues? How affected are they by them both before and after watching the film? Does the film encourage people to be more active? To seek change are? You know, because one of the things we really hope with this stuff is that these films not just ours, but all of the ones in the blog and elsewhere, really are catalysts. Whilst you know that funny question we started with is you know can film solve the problems in the world, right? Well, no, but. If it can make us aware of the problems, it can be catalytic and create a drive for action. And in so doing, be by proxy quite effective, so we do hope it has that knock on effect. So there is a research work going in, can this film our film affect audiences around cost of living crises? And what can we say about that? We've got some research ongoing, we're going to do some journal articles dealing with that audience data for sure.

**Dr Steve Rawle**

Yeah. What was we were just talking before we came on the about the hardest thing about making this film and what difficulties we've kind of encountered in in putting it together.

**Dr Martin Hall**

Yeah, I mean. There's been a few difficulties, of course. I think really one of the hardest things was looking at the YFA and saying, oh God, we've got this tonne of footage, how do we build it? But Andy and Graham have done that for us in such an effective way. It could have been really difficult, but it wasn't. But I really think the hardest thing has been that political message because clearly for Lauren yourself and me, we have a pretty clear political bent towards what we wanted with this film, and it's not damning in any way. It's not. This is your fault. This is their fault. This is our fault. What have you? It's more look at what's happened and I think we did discuss the Churchill quote about ‘if we don't learn from our past, we're doomed to repeat it.’ And that for the three of us at least, was a bit of a driver saying that's what we want the film to do. But certainly the film does, it looks at both governments, as it were, not that there are only two, but it's got a Labour government and a Conservative government throughout because it's covered footage over so many years. So it doesn't point the finger at one, but, trying to do it in a way that isn't preachy nor too politicised, and obviously our external partners have vested interests as well. Do you want to speak a bit more about what we kind of came across?

**Dr Steve Rawle**

Well, yeah. Well. It's the opening of the film, isn't I don't want to. I don't give spoilers away for anybody because we do want them to, to see the film, hopefully the Film Festival over the next couple of years. Do fill in our survey. I'm it's the opening of the film, isn't it? That it's a bit sort of class bias.

There's certain kind of RP accents that a little bit patronising. This certainly comes back later in the film. Of course, doesn't it that you can save money by simply changing your light bulbs and somehow you'll be wealthy?

**Dr fMartin Hall**

It's not our fault it resonates so much with the recent government because, you know, we didn't ask them to tell us to buy a kettle that was more energy efficient.

**Dr Steve Rawle**

Of course, it's been made in that it's been made in, in a sort of, I guess, kind of zeitgeist that just picks up on those things and you can't help but see the resonances between now and the footage that was in the archive that's now in the film, because that's part of filmmaking that you want it, we're not really making a film about the 1970s or 1980s or any of the periods that are reflected in the film. We're making a film about now. Making a film about. What's happening now? What's impacting people in their lives? And I think what is strongest in the film for me is that the voices that come through the film are the voices screaming for change, and we keep hearing those voices at the moment.

**Dr Martin Hall**

Absolutely. And let's not forget there once was a question mark the end of the title.

**Dr Steve Rawle**

That was, I mean, we had a very long decision discussion about the title, didn't we before settling on cost of living with not the cost of living or cost of living question mark, you know what was going to be too leading is the cost of living. You know the sense that this is just the cost of living, it's what we. Put up with, but cost of living has that that relationship with now and Doomed to Repeat, was a was a proposed title as well. We had all kinds of revolting conditions because there's a there's a cameo in the film from Doctor Martin Luther King Junior talking about those kind of things so.

That was a tricky discussion. But there is a political perspective in there, but I think, for those who would watch the film, you know the sort of true protagonist of the film or the individuals in there.

**Dr Martin Hall**

Yeah. Well, that that's it, isn't it? I mean, the film is a question. It was for us, it should be, is this the cost of living? Was this the cost of living? Should this be the cost of living? So cost of living, encapsulates and encompasses all of those things. And we want the film to. Not ask questions, but catalyse audiences to ask questions, and so you know it needs to be polemic, it needs to be, I don't know, spiky. It needs to have that kind of bumpy road feeling and I know there is no answer in the film, like I've already said I wish I did have the answer, but the film says this is what's happened before and the unspoken statement is, and it never stopped happening. So what do we do about it?

And I don't think the answer is let's just watch more films because whilst it's fun, it's not necessarily powerful. But those people calling for change, we've got footage of processed hit back the night. We've got students protesting the student fees and the loans. We've got families protesting the closure of nurseries and the closure of parks and the closure of libraries. We've got people on widows' pensions protesting the cost of groceries and stuff, but that protest was a big pub kind of part of the film for us that demand change.

**Dr Steve Rawle**

And every day those protests get stronger and signed here that make the film more resonant. The film is hopefully going to be playing regional festivals. We've looked at, particularly industrial cities. We want to get it out across. Across England and Wales initially, and we might look at some festivals more internationally, we're really interested in regional distinctions and responses to the film. We're interested in cross-sectional intersectional responses to the film to understand how different audiences are responding. To it and I think one of the things that we are also interested in is the way that the film portrays the gaps that have come from the archive.

We had long conversations about how certain voices are louder, but the footage led us to certain kinds of characters and how we made that work. So we're really interested in how those things come back from audiences and how they feel and how those aspects resonate that maybe we could have heard from other people. Maybe we could have heard from different people maybe. You could have heard from a wider cross section. I hope it makes some people angry. I don't. I heard they're already angry and the film taps into. That anger.

**Dr Martin Hall**

Yeah. What's really interesting, you mentioned regionality and I think maybe we'll call this one of the final points, but I'm really interested in it's geographical spirit. In a sense, because certainly the sign funding that we got the screen issue growth networks particularly interested in Yorkshire and the region. And the Yorkshire Film Archive, no surprise, interested in Yorkshire and region and the NE Film Archives too. Yorkshire and the northeast. But obviously one of the things we've seen when we have shown its people is people talking about how they see themselves in the film. Oh, that's like my family. That's where I grew up. I know that place. I know those people. I know that spirit. I'm interested in this outside of Yorkshire, in the North East. It showed in Manchester and it went down really well, but as you say it's the North, it's very close.

**Dr Steve Rawle**

Yeah, northern industrial pain.

**Dr Martin Hall**

Industrial. Yeah. So there's a there's a kind of real similarity there. I'd love to see how it plays in, in the South. I'd love to see it plays internationally. One of the things I looked at recently was the festival Dinard in France, which is. Festival of British cinema culture and they give off the award is the Hitchcock door, the Golden Hitchcock Award. Don't think it's not funny.

Not that we'd win, but the idea that they celebrate British culture, I wonder how that would work. And then finally, with our kind of educational bent on things as well, looking at it as an educational tool, does it play the same in France, as it does in the UK, it is a tool for education, or do we need to look for places that are socioeconomically similar to our country? How geo-locked almost is it to our region and that's going to be a part of the research as well, because the kind of universality or lack thereof is going to be an interesting question.

**Dr Steve Rawle**

Yeah, as well as there's always sort of the kind of growing up North stereotype that is there in the film it's northern and the conditions are revolting as Martin Luther King describes them, so let's wrap up then. So how is this project going to grow? How are we going to determine how it has Impact?

**Dr Martin Hall**

It's going to be data analysis, which is not particularly all that exciting, I don't think so. There's going to be some academic output, but really I mean it's going to have so many more outcomes, then, that one of the outcomes is can film have impact? I don't think we're really going to be able to definitively say, oh, look yes it can, I mean we can say that in a sense, but it's not going to be we've answered the question, we've fixed it, but we're going to find out how our film can have impact.

I think one of the important things is going to be pairing it with the feature and one of the questions we're going to ask academically in our research work is populist texts - how do they fit here? So there's an important thing about yes, it's a 1615 and bit mini. Experimental not quite documentary, not quite poetry, short film archive curation thing. Who's going to watch that kind of stuff? Wear it on the television. Would people click it on? Wear it showing at the cinema? Would people like to view it? Perhaps not. So where does this bump into feature cinema? Where does it bump into a rocks or a fish tank, or a Daniel Black? That kind of stuff. Can it affect change in that sense?

We like the idea, therefore, in exploring this kind of approach to a longer piece of film, something where we could film stuff that's missing, as it were, you mentioned. You know, it'd be great if we had a bit for the film about X. Oh, wait. Well, there's nothing like that in the archives, so it's not going in. Well, if we did something more creative. Not that this isn't creative, but I mean creative fiction. We could write something in there, collaborating with film makers, that kind of thing is going to be in a kind of a big growth stage. But it's quite long term I think really. And I think in terms of education, it's going to grow through resource. Our film will become one of those resources that people can use as an educational. Our film is going is being picked up by the into film people to be put on that into film plus educational platform. They do a spring screening series where they show films to students and we're going to be putting that showcase they want to show our film. And they've also said we can show it alongside features and we can curate that ourselves and we can discuss it. So that's going to be a next kind of step for us as well. And at the minute, I think we're really interested in trying to find some answers to those questions. Let's get people to see it. What do you think, Steve?

**Dr Steve Rawle**

Well, I mean, it started with a, A fairly simple thing is let's get kids into film, yeah. Interfilm in a different sense because we live in a video saturated culture. Young people are watching a lot of video. Awful lot of YouTube, TikTok, that kind of thing. And while those have their place in terms of thinking about media and social justice. This this is more specifically about cinema film, so if it's a step to exploring film, understanding film, studying film making film, that's really the initial impact we thought about, wasn't it that either of those kids might go on study film at university might study other things, but continue to make things that point towards a kind of cultural industries career, because while we are talking about maligned academic disciplines we in some sense feed one of the most vibrant economic sectors of Britain, that is, that is booming and it's. It's not just about Big Marvel Productions coming here, it's about all kinds of production coming into the country or, originating from people in our culture.

So I think that's a big step if we can, whether we can capture that as part of research that's possibly trickier cause it's a long term tracking thing, but if we can inspire that, that would be great. And if we can, I don't think we need to get people talking about the cost of living. But if we can understand how film can trigger or stimulate different kinds of thoughts and different responses to that and how we remember it, how we refer back to the past to talk about today, I don't think we'll come up with any solutions and how we break cycles of boom and bust. I think that's baked into our capitalist economy until we tear the whole thing down, I don't think we're in the death rows of capitalism quite yet. You know, fingers crossed.

But you know those. Those are the things we want to stimulate from the film. And given it's a 15 minute sort of quick injection of those issues rather than the longer kind of emotional trajectory of feature. Yeah, I think is kind of more on the nose in terms of capturing that. So that's it for me. You know, we started with a relatively limited goal in terms of engagement. I think you know, props to Graham and Andy. Again, the film is so good. So thought provoking, so infuriating, I mean infuriating in a very positive and negative sense. You know, the film makes me angry because the film shouldn't. Exist, but here we are again. So why and we're, you know.

**Dr Martin Hall**

Yeah, shouldn't have to.

**Dr Steve Rawle**

Some of the people in the film, you know, will still be alive, will be the adults now experiencing this government and this this crisis, so that's a really interesting, but also infuriating aspect of it for me. But with the film getting the film out to audiences will be really exciting in terms of the impact that it's ale to have.

**Dr Martin Hall**

I think it's a call to arms, isn't it in the sense that he said people demanding change. Let's hope more people do that.

**Dr Steve Rawle**

But these people demanded change and look where we are.

**Dr Martin Hall**

Well, maybe. Yeah. Well, but.

**Dr Steve Rawle**

How does change become change? Yeah, and not just a prolonged system in which somebody can destroy the economy, but still take away 10s of thousands of pounds to heat as stables. Not thinking of anybody in particular. Certainly not. No, not at all. So I think that that brings us to close now. I think that's a moment for us to go with.

**Dr Martin Hall**

Such positive message to end with.

**Dr Steve Rawle**

This is a really exciting project. This is a really exciting moment for the film. We're kind of waiting for those festivals to come back to us and see whether we're accepted or not. That's generally exciting from a kind of film perspective, but really ultimately in terms of cinema and social justice, it's whether we can get the film out to audiences to try to stimulate the thought that might stimulate future activities they might be on a small level, but small things build up to big things.

**Dr Martin Hall**

They that that they do. Well, thanks for having us on the podcast. I really appreciate it.

**Dr Steve Rawle**

Yeah, and thanks to everybody out there for listening. Should say, you know, again big thanks to Graham Relton who produced Cost of Living and Andy Burns, who did such an amazing job editing it. And also finally let's mention Lauren Stephenson, Doctor Lauren Stephenson, who unfortunately is ill today and could join us so she'll be she'll probably be home on the sofa watching horror films. So thank you to the ISJ for having us. Thank you to Professor Matthew Reason for inviting us to do this. Thank you to Lily, our producer and to John Brown for producing the podcast. I'm Steve Rawle. I've been with Martin Hall. Thank you.