



**THROUGH FILM,  
WE EDUCATE,  
INSPIRE, AND  
MAKE CHANGE**

*Sembradoras de Vida (Mothers of the Land) Directed by Álvaro & Diego Sarmiento*

v Spaces of Education Film Festival

# **Stories of Transformation, Resistance, and Resilience**

**OPEN SOCIETY  
FOUNDATIONS**



# **vCIES 2020**

## **“Education Beyond the Human”**

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**Films will be available online through the CIES Conference password protected site and can be viewed at any time for free from March 23rd until April 30th, 2020. We will feature live Q & A discussions with directors and special guests when available, please check the Conference website for updates.**

**A selection of last year’s Festivalette films will also be available.**

**Curated by Adriana Cepeda, MobilizArte,  
and Jorge Baxter, Universidad de los Andes.**

Write to us: **films@cies.us**

Facebook: **@ciesfilm**

Twitter: **@ciesfilm**

**In its sixth edition, the CIES 2020 Education Film Festivalette, created and funded by the Open Society Foundations Education Support Program, explores critical themes related to education beyond the human. This year's festival highlights narratives that challenge our anthropocentric relationship to nature and bring to the forefront the paradoxical conditions confronting Homo sapiens on an endangered planet.**

*The Teachers' Protest* suggests the political linkages between social and planetary change and the critical importance of individual and collective resistance. *Sembradoras de Vida* (Mothers of the Land) and *Our Atoll Speaks: Ko Talatal Mai to Matou Wenua* highlight ancestral wisdom for reconnecting with natural cycles and the source of our food in a real-world context of global warming. Both *Symbiotic Earth* and *The Serengeti Rules* explore the power of narratives and metaphor to shape scientific inquiry and collective assumptions about nature, evolution, and human and nonhuman learning. *Symbiotic Earth* and *Sembradoras de Vida* illustrate the power of feminist perspectives to generate new narratives that can inspire restorative practices and new ethics based on caring. *Tokyo Waka* highlights the ability of animals to learn, adapt, and even disrupt our humancentered cities, while *Lo and Behold* explores the implications of machine learning (the internet and AI) to reconfigure our sense of what's human and what's possible, foreshadowing the ethical, political, and educational challenges of our inventions. Reminding us that nature is our ultimate teacher, *Biomimicry* provides design principles to solve pressing human problems. In sum, the program highlights stories of resistance, transformation, and resilience.

While the program reflects a broad understanding of education as an undertaking that goes beyond formal schooling, these films raise questions relevant to teaching and learning in the 21st century, including: What ethical and political issues related to sustainability must teachers address both within and outside their classrooms? How can we better listen to and learn from nature to redesign schools and learning? What kinds of knowledge are prioritized in our traditional academic system and what are the implications for ecological literacy?

Reflecting our global perspective, the 2020 festivalette includes selections or content from Africa, Asia, Oceania, Europe, North America, and South America. The program features six feature-length documentaries and two documentary shorts.

# Festivalette program

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**“A GIFT TO THE  
TEACHING  
PROFESSION.”**

**Steffen Handle,**  
leader of Norwegian  
Teachers Union

## ***The Teachers' Protest, 2019***

**Feature Film: Documentary, UK, Norwegian & English, with  
English Subtitles, Directed by Jon Seal [78 minutes]**

A former teacher himself, British filmmaker Jon Seal brings an insider's perspective to this unique documentary, in which he recreates an astonishing Norwegian teachers' battle against Nazi education in 1942. Animation of teacher and prisoner Herlov Amland's poignant drawings dramatizes first-hand accounts complemented with archive footage, allowing audiences to travel back in time to an unknown inspirational tale of unity and peaceful resistance. Under duress and in the face of threats, 8,000 teachers refuse to sign allegiance to the fascist regime. Even after 1,000 teachers are sent to prison camps, this heroic cohort remains true to humane education, with the sentiment, *“It's not about being a teacher, or a hero, but facing up to what you really believe.”* This film provides a compelling example of the power of education system actors to stem the tide of destructive sociopolitical change. Don't miss it!

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**Jon Seal** is from the United Kingdom and has lived in Norway. *The Teachers' Protest* is his first feature length documentary.



# Teaching Ancestral Wisdom

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**“A POLITICAL  
CRY FOR HELP.”**

**Pollywood Film Festival**

## ***Our Atoll Speaks: Ko Talatal Mai to Matou Wenua, 2019***

**Short Film: Documentary, USA, English & Pukapuka, with English Subtitles, Directed by Gemma Cubero del Barrio [14 minutes]**

Spanish filmmaker Gemma Cubero constructs this short documentary as a mesmerizing audiovisual poem from dozens of interviews that become one collective voice of the native peoples of Pukapuka/Nassau, Cook Islands, asking, “*How long can we call Pukapuka the island home?*” Grappling with fears that their small islands will be overtaken by rising sea levels caused by climate change, they hope to teach us conservation practices developed over thousands of years that have kept their hard-to-reach islands sustainable.

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**Gemma Cubero del Barrio** has been making documentary films for 20 years and created the award-winning POV documentary *Ella Es El Matador* about female bullfighters. She is working to expand *Our Atoll Speaks* into a feature film entitled *Homecoming* and teaches at the University of Hawaii.

# Teaching Ancestral Wisdom

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## *Sembradoras de Vida (Mothers of the Land),* 2019

**Feature Film: Documentary, Peru, Spanish & Quechua, with English Subtitles, Directed by Álvaro & Diego Sarmiento [74 minutes]**

The environmentally conscious Sarmiento brothers transport us to the everyday life of five Andean women farmers living in communities that still practice the millenary traditions of the Incas. Teaching these traditions to their children, these women see themselves as protectors of the land, which, like them, can bring forth life. Though these ancient rituals are threatened by climate change, pesticides, and genetically modified seeds, these women stay true to their wisdom. They wonder, however, *“What will happen if we stop growing corn? Will we cease to exist?”* This documentary is a beautiful tribute to these indigenous people’s spiritual connection to the earth.

## “A SONG TO LIFE.”

Cartagena Film Festival

Official selection,  
**Berlin International  
Film Festival**

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**Álvaro and Diego Sarmiento** are brothers and filmmaking partners, born in Peru. Their debut feature, *Green River. The Time of the Yakurunas*, premiered at the Berlin International Film Festival.

# Connection and Disconnection

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**“FULL OF WONDER,  
WISDOM AND WIT”**

**London Times**

**Official selection,  
Sundance Film Festival**

## ***Lo and Behold: Reveries of the Connected World,* 2016**

**Feature Film: Documentary, USA, English, Directed by Werner Herzog  
[98 minutes]**

Do we remember a time without the internet? Renowned filmmaker Werner Herzog grew up in a remote valley in Germany. In *Lo and Behold*, he takes us to where it all started (UCLA) and uses fascinating interviews to chart the unexpected evolution and current omnipotence of the internet, exploring related dangers as wide-ranging as addiction, anonymity, and radiation. Divided into 10 chapters, the film ultimately leads us into the budding age of artificial intelligence, introducing the work of innovators at the helm of this emergent revolution and warning us about the future. *“In the future, you won’t know if you’re communicating with dogs or robots or people and it won’t matter.”* What will education’s role be? This is a frightening but necessary exploration of technologies we now deem indispensable that introduces audiences to some of the individuals operationalizing ideas behind the scenes.

**Note: *Lo and Behold* unfortunately will not be available online through our Festivalette due to online screening rights issues.**

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### **Werner Herzog**

has made over 60 films, including *Cave of Forgotten Dreams* (2010), *Encounters at the End of the World* (2007) and *Aguirre, the Wrath of God* (1972).



# Challenging Ecological and Evolutionary Narratives

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**“THIS IS A MOVIE  
ABOUT A HERO  
AND ROLE MODEL  
FOR US ALL...”**

**Center for Ecological  
Economic and  
Ethical Education**

## ***Symbiotic Earth: How Lynn Margulis Rocked the Boat and Started a Scientific Revolution, 2017***

**Feature Film: Documentary, USA, English. Directed by John Feldman.  
[147 minutes]**

*Symbiotic Earth* explores the fascinating life of brilliant scientist and professor Lynn Margulis, a woman who challenged theories of male-dominated science for decades, beginning in the 1960s. One of the main proponents of symbiosis, a theory of evolution that stresses collaboration (not competition) between species, Margulis also theorized that bacteria evolved to form all other organisms. These theories provided new tools for viewing and understanding nature that had numerous implications beyond science: *“The waste of one is the food of the other and that’s how the ecosystem goes around. These communities of bacteria are recycling everything. So, if we were to understand what they were doing we would understand that you can never throw anything out .... People are ruining their environment. These bacteria are producing an environment that’s livable. So I think we have lots to learn from them.”* The film presents an intimate portrait of one of the most engaging and dynamic scientists of our era.

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Spanning over 40 years, American biologist **John Feldman**’s filmmaking career highlights include *EVO: Ten Questions Everyone Should Ask about Evolution* (2011) and *Energy and You: Renewable Resources and Innovative Solutions* (2009).



# Challenging Ecological and Evolutionary Narratives

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**“IT DIRECTS THE VIEWER TO SEE BEAUTY IN THE WAY AN ECOLOGIST MIGHT.”**

**New York Times,  
Critic’s Pick**

**Official selection,  
Tribeca Film Festival**

## *The Serengeti Rules, 2018*

**Feature Film: Documentary, USA, English, Directed by Nicolas Brown, [84 minutes]**

Using interviews and actor re-enactments, British filmmaker Nicolas Brown takes us on a journey of ecological revelation as five scientific pioneers guide us through discoveries made during lifetimes immersed in the natural world. As these scientists guide us through spectacularly photographed places such as the Amazon jungle and Arctic Ocean, the narrative reconstructs the origins and evolution of keystone species unique to each ecosystem, showing how these species are central to system-level equilibrium. “*Why should humans interfere? This has been going on in the Serengeti for millions of years ....*” Based on the book by Sean B. Carroll (interviewed in the film), this awe-inspiring documentary connects audiences with the inner workings of nature, where humans tend to be unnecessary – except to restore conditions we have undone.

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**Nicolas Brown’s** *Global Warming: What You Need to Know* won an Emmy for Best Long Form Documentary. Brown has also directed two episodes of BAFTA-winning *Human Planet*, as well as *Climate Chaos* for the BBC.

# Learning In and From Nature

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**Official selection,  
South by Southwest Eco**

## ***Biomimicry, 2015***

**Short Film: Documentary, Documentary Short. USA, English. Directed by Leila Conners. [21 minutes]**

*“The best ideas might not be ours. There are no better models than the species that have preceded us for billions of years.”* Produced by Leonardo DiCaprio and featuring interviews with pioneering scientist Janine Benyus, founder of the Biomimicry Institute, this short documentary shows us how mimicking nature could solve pressing sustainability issues such as reducing carbon emissions and saving water. These surprising revelations are coupled with stunning photography.

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Director **Leila Conners**, founder of Tree Media, is directing *Ice on Fire* for HBO. She recently finished feature-length documentaries *The Arrow of Time* and *We the People 2.0*. Her first feature documentary, *The 11th Hour*, was co-created with Leonardo DiCaprio.

# Learning In and From Nature

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## *Tokyo Waka: A Poem about a City, its People, and 20,000 crows, 2013*

**Documentary, USA and Japan. Japanese, with English Subtitles,  
Directed by John Haptas and Kristine Samuelson. [63 minutes]**

This is a documentary film about the evolving relationship between humans and crows in the city of Tokyo, where crows adapt to the urban metropolis and display signs of advanced learning, creativity, and cunning. *“There are many animals we cannot control. Humans are only one of many living things.”* Tokyo citizens, of all walks of life, reflect on how they have learned to coexist with crows, as well as these creatures’ symbolic and metaphorical meaning. Beautifully shot, quirky, and revealing, this film is a window into urban Japanese culture and the complexities of animal-human co-existence.

**“VISUALLY  
ARRESTING  
AND POETIC...  
A MASTERWORK.”**

**Tobias Wolff**

**Grand Prize**

**Green Film Festival in Seoul**

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In their lifelong careers as filmmakers, directors **John Haptas** and **Kristine Samuelson** have often worked together to create documentary essays that defy conventional narrative. Their most recent film, *Life Overtakes Me*, is a Netflix original that was nominated for an Academy Award. Haptas and Samuelson are Stylo Films co-founders.



