

## **Film for Education in Sustainable Development: Using the Intellectual Montage as a useful Editing Tool**

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An essential step in the post-production procedure for developing a narrative flow is video editing. The director of a film has a vision for the movie before it is even shot. Post-production, however, is where that vision is put together and given life. The principles and techniques used in video editing vary. In this paper, the usage of Sergei Eisenstein's intellectual montage theory will be highlighted. This theory illustrates the use of separate shots to imply a different meaning. This notion is effectively illustrated by the Kuleshov effect. It was quite important for comprehending how certain shot sequences influence an audience psychologically. In light of this, the Kuleshov effect can be used to effectively convey the proper message when the intellectual montage theory serves as a solid foundation. In educating an audience about sustainable development, it should go beyond just creating an informative piece. While making a visually appealing motion picture, it is imperative to keep the viewer engaged. The audience will then be able to assimilate these hard-hitting topics. Montages allow the director to maintain the flow while focusing just on the necessary elements that are to be emphasised.

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**Word Count:** 232 Words

### **Introduction**

Communication about various sustainable development issues such as climate change for instance seems like a complex web that considers various subthemes. It has to take into consideration 'understanding how people are mobilized into action (or not). Film, as a form of communication is important in passing across this message as it enables the complex dynamics in communicating sustainable development. (Laura & Mcgreavy, 2015).

As humanity is developing, we see the world around us moving as well towards both favourable and unfavourable situations. Our actions have impacted our world. This has given rise to the need for more positive behaviours in order to ensure that we still have an earth to live in for future generations to come. According to (Klarin, 2018), sustainable development is 'responsible

behaviour that will ensure the long-term exploitation of resources, without jeopardizing future generations.' This is considered within the concept of sustainable development which began to evolve in the 70s and 80s. Hence, in thinking about the future, it is imperative to use a communication media that is used to show the realities of human beings. This is where film for sustainable development come in.

There is a growing amount of literature that enlightens people about sustainable development issues. These views are portrayed through traditional media such a Television and Newspaper. It is imperative to note the importance that film has in shaping our perception of self and society. However, this medium is rarely implored in education the masses about sustainable development issues. This paper we look at how proper entertainment can be used for educational purposes but used in a creative way, paying attention to the principles of editing specifically the intellectual montage with the Kuleshov effect as the bane of perceptive editing.

## **Literature review**

### **Sustainable Development**

Sustainable development is the way in which humans organize themselves in order to meet basic needs as well as guarantee a future. The world we live in has numerous resources available for us to cater for our wellbeing for a long time and create a future for the generations to come. This cycle is to enable the human race organize themselves for a sustained future. Putting it succinctly, the Brundtland Commission defines it as the “ability to make development sustainable—to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. (Kates, Parris, & Leiserowitz, 2005)

The concept of sustainable development is not a novel one and have been followed by many cultures through-out history. We have to live in our world with the mind of not leaving it the same but better. It is concerned with the use of resources in a way that it would be sufficient, progressive, reuseable and help improve the quality of life of human beings.

Another way to look at sustainable development is to understand what it intends to achieve. To understand this, Kate, Parris and Leiserowitz (2005) used three timebound goals to illustrate what it is set to achieve. These are the short-term (2015) goals of the Millennium Declaration of the United Nations; the two-generation goals (2050) of the Sustainability Transition of the Board on Sustainable Development; and the long-term (beyond 2050) goals of the Great Transition of the Global Scenario Group.

### **Film Editing**

Film editing is a post-production process where the editor is tasked with combining separate shots to make a whole movie. The role of the editor goes beyond combining shots and cuts but they not

only focus on the mechanics of making a cinematic movie but a sense of what meaning the audience is expected to take away.

Reichsman (2017) describes film editing as 'the invisible art'. The editor needs to aim at creating a seamless finished product without the audience realizing that there has been some sort of tampering. The actors, producers, directors and other crew member play an important role in the actual production the footage. However, it is up to the editor to 'cut and join' these pieces in order to create a story. Before the existence of the digital editing, the film editor would literally cut and join actual film strips. This had to be done precisely with no room for error. Nowadays this is done with the help of a computer and editing softwares such Adobe Premiere Pro, Avid and Final Cut. In understanding the world of post-production today, it is important to look at the historical players in film editing such as D.W. Griffith, Porter and Eisenstein amongst others.

#### **D. W. Griffith: Dramatic Emphasis**

In 1918, Griffith and his editing breakthroughs were the most influential on filmmakers all around the world. He evolved from Edwin S. Porter's concept of developing a "simple method of action continuity." (Reisz, 1966). Griffith realized that a sequence is made up of incomplete shots, the order and selection of which are dictated by dramatic necessity. This enabled the audience to comprehend the role of the camera in telling the story. This was accomplished by dividing the scene into shorter sections filmed at various distances from the subject. As the story progressed, this action produced a dramatic tension.

Griffith also recognized early on the constraints of filming a whole scene from a distance as a hindrance to showing the characters' feelings and thoughts. He realized he could convey emotions by moving his camera closer to the character and recording his reaction in greater detail. When editing, he will simply cut from the broader to the tighter view if the character's reaction is required as a focus point. This allowed the audience to engage on a more emotional level.

#### **Vsevolod I. Pudovkin: Constructive Editing and Heightened Realism**

Although all of the Soviet filmmakers were deeply influenced by Griffith, they were also concerned about the role of their films in the revolutionary struggle.

*“Where Griffith was content to tell his stories by means of the kind of editing construction we have already seen in the excerpt from The Birth of a Nation, the young Russian directors felt that they could take the film director's control over his material a stage further. They planned, by means of new editing methods, not only to tell stories but to interpret and draw intellectual conclusions from them.” (Reisz, 1966)*

Pudovkin attempted to formulate an editing theory that would allow filmmakers to move beyond Griffith's intuitive structural editing to a more defined technique that would provide more success in converting ideas into narratives and directing the emotions of your audience. He was more interested in politics than Griffith.

Pudovkin first immerses us in his personal experience and narrative before delivering the political message. Although he was chastised for employing bourgeois narrative conventions, Pudovkin took them further than Griffith, but not as far as his contemporary Sergei Eisenstein. There are some rules that can be utilized to guide the film editing process in order to ensure that the viewer understands the message being conveyed in the film.

These five principles are basically the foundation of modern editing.

1. Contrast
2. Parallelism
3. Symbolism
4. Simultaneity
5. Lay Motif

## **Theoretical framework**

### **Montage Theory**

This technique was born out of necessity by the soviet filmmakers and is still used in filmmaking till today. Montage originates from the French word 'Monter' which means “to mount or “to assemble” (Xiang, Perumal, & Neo, 2022). Li (2014) in (Xiang, Perumal, & Neo, 2022) defines it as a “combining scenes together according to the original idea to make it produce comparison, association and foil back the scenes to complete works of film and television”.

Sergei Eisenstein considered montage as a dynamic editing “used to expose and explore the dialectics or oppositional conflict of a given situation and create in the mind of the viewer a revolutionary synthesis”. He put his theory into practice in his filmmaking. However, they are explained using these five components as shown in Dancyger (2007) *The Technique of Film and Video Editing*.

1. **Metric Montage:** The Metric Montage is inspired by the pacing of a musical score, AKA the meter. This is used to create a visual pace within a film scene by cutting to the next shot after a finite number of frames no matter what is happening on screen.
2. **Rhythmic Montage:** If the Metric Montage is used to establish a visual pace, then the rhythmic Montage is used to keep to the pace, in both a visual and auditory sense.
3. **Tonal Montage:** The tonal montage is the use of two or more shots that support one another and build a theme.

4. Intellectual Montage: This is the introduction of shots and ideas that will spark the intellect of the audience.
5. Overtone montage: This is a combination of the metric, rhythmic, tonal and overtone montages. It is an interplay of pace, rhythm, idea and emotions.

The component of focus of this paper is the intellectual montage. With the intellectual montage, Eisenstein believed that conflict between two shots can be resolved by a higher truth and this can help create a new meaning i.e. “a conflict- juxtaposition of accompanying intellectual affects. Therefore, this soviet - style of montage is created through conflicts of opposing ideas because separate objects are combined to become one concept. His examples are: A dog + A mouth = To bark

A mouth + A child = To scream

A mouth + A bird = To sing

A knife + A heart = Sorrow

(Eisenstein, 1977).

### **The Kuleshov Effect Experiment**

Since the Soviet-style montage as explained by Eisenstein is dynamic and imaginative, film director Lev Kuleshov performed an experiment on that basis. To emphasise the importance of the film editor in evoking the right kind of emotion and influencing the audience perception, he spliced together shots of an emotionless man's face with shots of food, a young girl in a coffin and a beautiful woman.



*Figure 1: Man + food + Man = Hunger*



**Figure 2:** *Man + child in coffin + Man = sadness*



**Figure 3:** *Man + beautiful woman + Man = Desire*

With every shot sequence, the audience believe that the man was expressing a different emotion each time. First was hunger when he sees the food, sadness for the girl in the coffin and lastly desire for the beautiful woman. This is even more intriguing as each shot of the man was identical. The meaning only changed with the following shots within the sequence, creating an illusion of emotion.

(Reichsman, 2017)

### **Films on sustainable Development**

Sustainability as a concept is a broad one that includes a lot of ideas and initiatives. However, it can be divided into these areas: Human, social, economic and environmental. Many movies fiction and nonfiction, represent these aspects of our lives. The idea of making a movie is to show the life of human being or what life we might strive for. A lot of films fall under human development and most emphasis is placed on pre-production and production.

Sustainable development topics are seen as hard hitting and as such there is a greater need to entertain the audience than to educate. For example, the Hollywood movie, *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004) shows the dangers of global warming. However, the lesson is lost in the action thrills and sequences. Few audiences leave the cinema with the take away of doing better to help the environment. This is where intellectual montages can come in. Like the Kuleshov effect, with each sequence, drama can be heightened juxtaposed with a conflicting idea.



The intellectual montage is simply one way to make the most of "weighty" issues. People want to be entertained, but with the correct editing tools, they might change their minds on some topics. This is not a one-size-fits-all solution, but other principles, like the intellectual montage, can be tested to assure appropriate usage. Laura and Mcgreavy (2015) investigated cinema patterns and discovered how film might promote or undermine basic objectives of sustainable development. Because communication is our shared job in creating a sustainable future, films that use specific principles efficiently are a smart method to generate the proper ideas.

### **Possible Intellectual Montage film**

In the future, here are a few possibilities that can be using the intellectual montage; juxtaposition of conflicting shots

**Figure 1**



Time + barren + Sadness

**Figure 2**



Vegetation + Freedom+ Happiness

**Figure 3**



Joy + Bird in Nature + girl watching

With each Figure above, what would seem like unrelated circumstances, evokes some thought or emotion about the event occurring. For example, in Figure 1, time passing by and the world is becoming a desert, uninhabitable. This can cause some kind of sadness or dejection. Each image evokes an emotion and a thought. This is how different editing tools and principles can be maximised to reach the target audience.

### **Summary**

Communication is a vital component of our life since it allows us to comprehend the world around us. One of these realities is the need to create a world that is sustainable in which to live. Realities are communicated in several ways, one of which is through filmmaking. Films help to entertain and engage a target audience. Issues such as sustainable development are viewed as sensitive, thus most films about it focus on one area of filmmaking. It's either about entertaining the audience or overwhelming them with material that they don't remember. As a result, considerable attention can be placed on the post-production process. The editor can help to emphasize dramatic elements while also exciting the viewers. The intellectual montage, which was realized in the Kuleshov Effect experiment, is a useful tool that can help with this goal. This might be one of the approaches used to educate the public about sustainable development.

### **Conclusion**

In applying the intellectual montage to sustainable development, there needs to be a new perspective in creating films that educate about sustainable development. These issues are seen as boring and as such can be addressed from the point of view of intellectual cinema. These films should have physiological and intellectual overtones. In this way we can try at “building a completely new form of cinematography-the realization of revolution in the general history of culture; building a synthesis of science, art, and class militancy”. (Eisenstein, 1977).

### **Recommendation**

- i. Communication through films can be used as a way to better understand and influence our everyday lives and choices.
- ii. We can entertain ourselves but this can also be used as a mean shape our understanding of the world we live in
- iii. The film editor has an importance role through choices made in this post production process to evoke the right kind of emotions on certain topics.
- iv. More experiments can be done on the various principles of editing with specific attention for the right result
- v. The intellectual montage can be put into local examples as well to make it more understandable within our Nigerian context.



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