Community Creativity from School to Society

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MAKING FILMS TO COMMUNICATE ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR BEGINNERS

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Introduction

Making films can seem daunting when you're first starting out and many questions can come to mind: how do you write a script (assuming you know what that means)? How to organise the set design? Or how to design a good shot and set up the camera? What about editing? What techniques and software should I use? When you think of filmmaking, you might imagine big Hollywood productions, with lots of people working on every aspect of the film. However, as we will see, expensive equipment and a crew full of experts are not that important. Instead of asking yourself "what do I need to make my perfect film?", you should instead ask "what kind of film can I make in a *sustainable* way to convey my thoughts using the resources I can afford"? In other words, what matters is having a good idea and message to convey and being able to turn it into a film using the resources available to you. This guide aims to help you get the practical skills you need!

The filmmaking process can be summarised in the following steps:

1) **Have an idea and turn it into a story**
   What is the film about? What message do you want to convey through your film?

2) **Realise the scenario**
   How can a simple sequence of words be transformed into a coherent sequence of images and sounds?
3) **Organise the filming process**
   What, when and where are you filming? What equipment, techniques and how many people do you need?

4) **Record shots (audio and video tracks)**
   Make sure you have a clear idea of what to shoot and how to shoot it (angles, light, camera positions, sounds, etc.) and don't leave the set/outdoors until you have all the shots you need.

5) **Assemble the material**
   Choose and juxtapose shots thoughtfully to create your film.

6) **Share your video**
   Once the film is completed, publish it online (blogs, social media, websites, etc.) or organise screenings and distribution.

Let's get started!

1.
The language of film and its relevance to environmental messages

1.1 One grammar for many languages

What do film, TV series and even video have in common with TikTok? They all operate according to the rules of cinematic language. Such audiovisual products use certain common conventions to convey meaning through specific techniques used in scripting, camerawork and editing. Of course, each medium has its own peculiarities: making a film is different from making a video on TikTok, Youtube or a TV series. Nevertheless, all audiovisual media rely, to a greater or lesser extent, on the same set of linguistic conventions, which are modifications of the language of film. Every film or video is based on the same visual grammar, and the directors use this grammar to create a particular linguistic style with which they tell the story. So, if you know the basic grammar of the language, you can create your own films and use them to tell a story, give specific meanings and communicate your point of view on a subject.

Before we move on to practising this language, a few general comments on the specifics of the language of film may be useful:

1) Audiovisual language tries to mimic the way people perceive reality through their senses (sight and hearing). Because it has a low degree of conventionality, it is immediate, universal and easily understood by people from different cultures.
2) Audiovisual language constructs reality, rather than simply reflecting it, and through the process of filming and editing images it conveys a particular point of view.
3) Audiovisual language is based on a process of selection and synthesis of narrative and visual material. Both of these operations are performed by the author(s) (director, scriptwriter, cinematographer, etc.) who use/apply this grammar to convey the message.
4) Audiovisual language is based on a common grammar that is open to interpretation and linguistic choices.

These general considerations apply whether we are talking about a short film (lasting up to 30 minutes) or a feature-length film (longer than 60 minutes).

In its long history, which began more than 120 years ago, the art and practice of film has undergone stylistic and technological innovations that have shaped and complicated its language and poetics. Today, it exists in styles and forms that vary considerably from genre to genre and form to form. Broadly speaking, we can divide film forms into two main branches: A) documentary film and B) feature film.

A) **A documentary** film is a film, video or television programme that aims to 'document' reality. The documentary film genre does not rely on a fictional script, but on real-life sources, such as interviews and archival footage, to inform - or even educate, in the case of instructional films -

people about specific topics concerning culture, the arts, travel and geography, social and political issues, history, natural subjects, etc. While documentary has traditionally been pitted against fiction, recognising an implicitly authentic, unfiltered perspective of reality, this polarity has recently been challenged. Each documentary offers a specific 'point of view' on a given subject, which is based on the close relationship between the objects filmed and the perspective and communicative goals of the filmmaker.

B) Documentary films come in many forms, formats and genres. According to American film theorist Bill Nichols (2001), documentaries can be divided and grouped based on the specific characteristics and conventions they exhibit. Nichols identifies six 'documentary modes' that, even when overlapping, can help us distinguish between different technical forms and purposes:

Poetic mode: in this type of documentary there is little or no narrative content in favour of the mood, tone and associations of the images. The filmmaker's point of view is often expressed through editing, which favours figurative and/or thematic associations over continuity and legibility.
E.g: *Olympia,* Leni Riefenstahl, 1938.

Exponential mode: in this mode, the author's specific point of view on a topic is directly expressed by a voiceover commenting on the footage to support or reinforce the film's argument. E.g.: *Bowling for Columbine*, Michael Moore, 2001.

Reflective mode: here the emphasis is on the relationship between the filmmaker and the audience. Therefore, the subject of this type of documentary is the process of making the documentary itself, with the filmmakers often standing in front of the camera and explaining what is happening.
E.g.: the documentary series *When Louis Met* ..., Louis Theroux, 2000-2002.

Observational mode: adopting a fly-on-the-wall shooting perspective, this type of documentary attempts to 'observe' its subject without any form of interaction with it. It reduces or even eliminates all narrative and stylistic devices, such as music, interview arrangements and narrative material.
E.g: *Primary*, Robert Drew, 1960.

Performative mode: concerns the filmmaker's personal involvement with the subject being filmed and focuses on his or her direct participation in the events being told. Documentary film often presents intimate footage, expressing an intimate bond between the documentarian and the subject. The aim is to emphasise the construction of subjective truths that matter to the author and his or her point of view.
E.g: *Super Size Me*, Morgan Spurlock, 2004.

Participatory mode: similar to the performative mode, it involves the personal participation of the filmmaker who interacts directly with the subject. Although the participatory mode involves the author in the story, it seeks to provide objective truth. Footage, interviews and interactions between the subjects involved and the filmmaker are recorded and organised to support the filmmaker's vision or maintain the film's purpose.
E.g.: *Sicko*, Michael Moore, 2007.

C) A similar classification also exists when reflecting on the **feature** film. Firstly, a useful distinction concerns the register of the text, that is, the overall tone and style of the work. On the one hand, we have **comedy,** which uses humour as a driving force, with characters and plots designed to make the audience laugh. On the other hand, we have **tragedy**, focused on a kind of human suffering embodied in the trials and tribulations of the main character, which ultimately leads to catharsis, even among the audience.

Things become more complicated when we consider the concept of **film genre**. While we, as film fans, already know about film genres, understanding 'genre theory' can be quite complicated. Given the definition of the word, genre is the term used to describe any category of literature or other forms of art or entertainment based on a certain set of stylistic criteria. Although combining genres is very common, we can identify some macro-genres that can help us distinguish certain types of films from others:

- ***Adventure***: audiences expect to feel emotions such as anxiety and curiosity, perhaps find themselves in an exotic setting and take part in the adrenaline-fuelled exploits of an intrepid hero. This macro-genre has close links to classic narratives of struggle and strife. It includes *westerns*, *action films*, *cloak-and-dagger* films, *epic films*, *superhero films*, *fantasy films*, *sci-fi films* and *biographies*.
  When the adventure involves horrific events that arouse emotions such as fear, disgust and anxiety in the viewer, we are dealing with horror films.

- ***Crime fiction:*** focuses on crime as a central element of the plot. Crime narratives focus on the presence of criminal events and the operations surrounding them, such as criminal investigations, chases, uncovering the truth, etc. usually conducted by more or less institutional detectives. They include *crime films*, *thrillers*, *detective films*, *film noir, courtroom films* and *gangster films*.

- ***Romance***: at the core of this macro-genre are relational conflicts. These films build their plots on sentimental predicaments, generational conflicts and social themes such as friendship, love, the search for happiness, resilience to hardship, emotionality, etc. This includes *romantic comedies*, *musicals*, *melodramas*, *teen films*, etc.

We must remember that these explicit definitions are operational tools: in fact, you can hybridise formats, conventions and genres to create a film that fits your vision!

With its ability to reach a wide audience and convey meaning in a universal language, film and other audiovisual media capture our attention disproportionately more than any other means of communication. Given this potential for wide access to diverse audiences, the inclusion of media production as an educational activity can play a key role in innovative and transformative education, especially as an active learning tool to promote sustainability.

1.2 Introduce film into the classroom: Film as an educational tool

> The image - whether film, photographic, digital or analogue - is not only materially and economically inseparable from the biophysical environment, but is the main pedagogical and propaganda tool of the environmental movement (Bozak, 2012, p. 3).

As well as being a process in which new ideas are made available to students, education must also be a tool that reflects their experience of the world. In this respect, films and audiovisual materials do a great job. As Samina Mishra summed it up beautifully,

> Films can bring the world into the classroom. They can carry stories, voices and images that can be far from us in real life, whether as documentary or fiction. Films tell stories about inner lives and outer worlds. They help us affirm our own identities and feel connected to others, and show us the magic of exploring the unseen and unheard (2018, p. 112).

Today's students are part of a visually educated generation, raised surrounded by images and icons, who have developed a natural understanding of visual and cinematic language. On the one hand, the power of film as a pedagogical tool is based on its ability to be a clear, playful way of delivering knowledge: students may not know what a close-up shot is or what it entails as a cinematic practice, but they instinctively understand that it means "look closely, it's relevant!". On the other hand, the versatility of film language and its enormous potential as a pedagogical tool allow students and teachers to 'speak the same language' and engage in active dialogues on a range of topics, including environmental issues. Film language, as we shall see, has its own vocabulary and grammar, and its message can be understood by everyone. At the same time, cinema as a subjective medium can also encourage self-expression in students, who can use it to convey personal thoughts and emotions.
How does this affect pedagogical practice? To quote Mishra again,

> By introducing films into the classroom, teachers can work with students to understand, appreciate and critique, thus building on both learning and analysis. The subjective emphasis means that the film acts as a resource that aligns relationships in the classroom and allows knowledge to be built together. The teacher's point of view is no greater than the student's (ibid, p. 115).

Treating film as a medium that helps students (as well as teachers) connect with society and apply theoretical and abstract concepts to the real world means developing their skills to contribute to building a better community. In both teaching-by-learning and learning-by-doing modes, **cinema literacy can enable both students and teachers to play a constructive role in sustainable development,** and ultimately cultivate a more inspiring concept of citizenship in promoting socio-environmental governance.

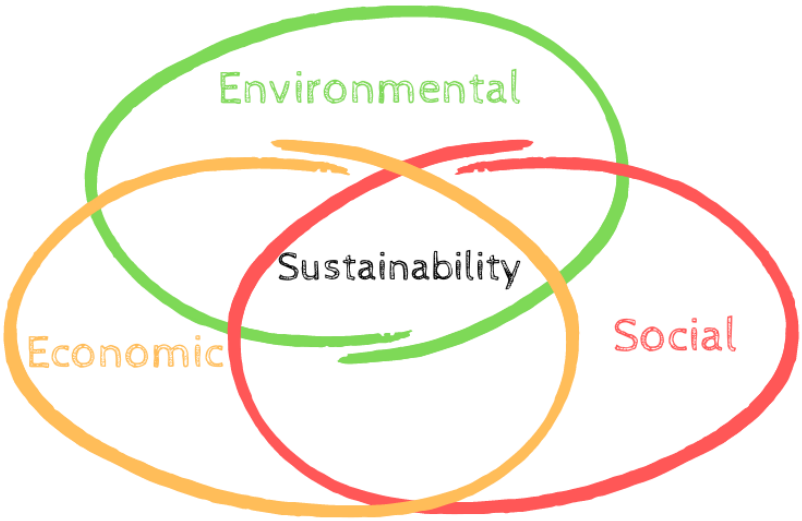
1.2.1 The concept of sustainable development

With the advent of social media, there has been a shift in media content from younger generations in recent years, aimed at shaping public opinion and promoting sustainable lifestyles in response to largely man-made environmental crises. However, even the most sincere efforts often 'miss the mark' by being unprepared, sporadic and chaotic attempts that do not have the desired impact. Therefore, in designing an effective knowledge transfer module, we consolidated past and present theories and practices into

two achievable strategic goals: 1) education for sustainability and 2) communication for sustainability in the context of the current sustainability discourse.

But what exactly do we mean by '**sustainable development**'? The Bruntland Commission Report, published in 1987 by the World Commission on Environment and Development (UN), described sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". In its preamble, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development commits to eradicating poverty while healing and securing our planet through the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (henceforth CZR). However, while bold and ambitious as declarations, the 17 established Sustainable Development Goals remain deliberately vague and unclear to cover all populations and ensure their applicability to all national circumstances. Over time and through the lens of different disciplines, a number of model typologies have been proposed for the representation and study of sustainable development. The most widely used is the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) model. Within this approach, sustainability is positioned at the intersection of three dimensions: economy, society and environment.

In this respect, sustainability is a model for thinking about the future in which environmental, social and economic considerations are aligned in the pursuit of a better quality of life.



The combined and equal recognition of these three dimensions visually emphasises that health, social equity, economic prosperity and environmental protection are not separate, competing or symptomatic issues, but rather systemic and interdependent.

1.2.2 Education for sustainable development

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is recognised as an integral component of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4 'Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all'). Widely regarded as "an inclusive framework that has the potential to create alliances between different adjectival educations" (Newig 2013), the EZR facilitates learning by fulfilling the dual role of providing quality basic education and then gaining knowledge

about sustainable development. In an educational setting, this involves a concern for the development of interpersonal and environmental relationships in the context of the three-pillar model:

- *Society*: Understanding of social institutions and their role in change and development, as well as of democratic and participatory systems that enable expression, the election of governments, consensus building and dispute resolution.

- *Environment*: An awareness of the resources and fragility of the physical environment and how people affect it through their actions and decisions, and a commitment to integrating environmental issues into economic and social policy.

- *Economy*: Sensitivity to the limits and potential of economic growth and its social and environmental impact, with a commitment to assessing individual and societal levels of consumption, taking into account the environment and social justice.

Furthermore, as part of a quality educational experience, the integration of EZR into the curriculum must model the values of sustainable development itself. According to the United Nations (2005), EZR should strive to demonstrate the following characteristics:

- Interdisciplinarity and holism: learning for sustainability embedded across the curriculum rather than as a separate subject.
- Values-based: it is crucial that the standards adopted - the common values and principles underlying sustainability - are clearly defined so that they can be studied, discussed, tested and applied.
- Critical thinking and problem solving: leading to confidence in dealing with sustainability dilemmas and challenges.
- Many methods: word, art, drama, debate, experience - different pedagogies that model processes. Teaching that is only oriented towards the transmission of knowledge should be transformed into an approach in which teachers and students work together to gain knowledge and play a role in shaping the environment of their educational institutions.
- Participatory decision-making: students are involved in decisions about how they are to learn.
- Application: the learning experiences offered are integrated into daily personal and professional life.
- Local relevance: addressing both local and global issues and using the languages most used by students. Sustainability concepts need to be carefully expressed in other languages - languages and cultures say different things, and each language has creative ways of expressing new concepts.

To date, due to the lack of integration in institutionalised settings such as policies, curricula and binding legal resolutions to ensure their application, ESD has been implemented mainly through the work of grassroots initiatives, NGOs and committed groups of individuals and organisations. Thus, from a practical point of view, the sustainability campaign needs to expand its sphere of committed (cluster) actors to include scientific forums, researchers, activist coalitions, environmental NGOs, but also trade unions, social enterprises, fair trade, circular economy initiatives and community interest companies. In other words, those seeking to provide scientific credibility to a project or campaign (i.e. data, statistics), provide resources (i.e. fundraising), exchange information and ideas, and share best practices for effective, fair and sustainable communication. Such assistance will prove crucial in implementing elements of environmentally sustainable education, regardless of its integration into the curriculum.

Along with the theoretical approach offered by the 'Education for Sustainable Development' framework, we need a more concrete and practical tool, **'Communication for Sustainable Development'**, which focuses on 'impact through awareness raising'. Three key factors explain the fundamental importance of communication processes in sustainable development: first, communication is essential to ensure the legitimacy of ESD. Secondly, sustainability and environmental issues are inherently characterised by high levels of complexity and uncertainty (Flint 2013). Therefore, the necessary contextual orientations can be further clarified through the means of communication. Thirdly, the mass media is the main source of information on sustainability issues that people have at their disposal.

Within Sustainability Communication, various sub-fields have emerged, focusing on different aspects of sustainability. One of the most interesting sub-fields is **Environmental Communication (henceforth referred to as EC in the guide** - *translator's note***)** in which communication processes and media products are used strategically to support effective policy-making, public participation and project implementation. Central to EC theory are the following assumptions: 1) the ways in which we communicate about the environment influence our perceptions of the natural world because they reflect, but also construct, produce and naturalise, certain human-environment relationships (Littlejohn and Foss, 2009). In contrast, 2) a critical understanding of environmental communication encompasses not only communication that is directly related to environmental issues, but also communication that is not directly related to the environment but nevertheless indirectly influences it, such as neoliberal discourses in films and advertising.

1.2.3 Narratives and communication channels

Given the many existing environmental narratives, a practical way to structure such a discussion is to organise the analysis of environmental directions on a spectrum representing how people relate to and value the natural world.

In understanding our predisposed attitudes towards the environment and the ideas and motives that underpin these attitudes, Barton and Gagnon-Thompson (1994) highlight the distinction between ***ecocentric*** and ***anthropocentric*** values. Put simply, the ecocentric viewpoint values nature for nature's sake, assuming that nature is worth protecting because of its intrinsic and inherent value. In contrast, the anthropocentric viewpoint assumes that the environment should be protected because of its importance in maintaining or improving the quality of human life, essentially fulfilling a utilitarian role. Identifying these different viewpoints along a continuum spanning the ecocentric-anthropocentric spectrum, we can distinguish five further ideological paradigms:

1. *Unlimited instrumentalism*: all natural resources are available exclusively for human use and their use is not limited or constrained in any way.
2 *Conservationism*: using natural resources wisely and for as many people as possible. The value of non-human entities is utilitarian, meaning that they are only valuable as resources for human use.
3 *Preservationism*: preserving resources for human use and enjoyment in a way that goes beyond their mere instrumental value, such as their scientific, ecological, aesthetic and religious significance.

4 *Value-based ethics and ideologies*: Non-human beings have an intrinsic value beyond utilitarian, scientific, aesthetic or religious value. By coexisting as part of the same biotic community, humanity views itself with more humility and less hierarchy.
5 *Transformational ideologies*: Such ideologies seek to radically transform anthropocentric relationships into more ecocentric ones by understanding the root causes of anti-environmental attitudes and behaviour. A logical step in this direction would be a massive overhaul of social institutions and an understanding of the impact of the power and dominance we have over the natural world.

Once the environmental status quo of target audiences has been determined, and which directions are feasible and desirable, the next step would require the selection of a strategic approach. Mefalopulos (2008) neatly grouped some of the more common development-oriented communication approaches into eight groups:

- *Social marketing* is a form of marketing that applies marketing principles to social objectives. Various health programmes such as vaccination campaigns, hygiene campaigns and others have been implemented through it.
- *Advocacy* is used at the national level to promote a particular agenda or issue. It often aims to change or improve policy by directly engaging decision-makers or to change proportions by gaining public support.
- *Information dissemination and campaigns* aim *to* fill specific knowledge gaps.
- *Information, Education and Communication (IEK)* is a broader set of strategies aimed at disseminating information and educating large audiences.
- *Education and training* is an approach used in programmes that require instructional design that is interactive and interpersonal in nature.
- *Institutional objectives aim to* improve the internal capacity of the institution (for example, through training) and to position and improve its image among external audiences.
- *Community mobilisation* means a systematic approach to engaging communities in addressing issues that affect their wellbeing.
- *Non-directive participatory communication* is based on dialogue that seeks consensus on social changes that are considered significant and relevant by all local partners.

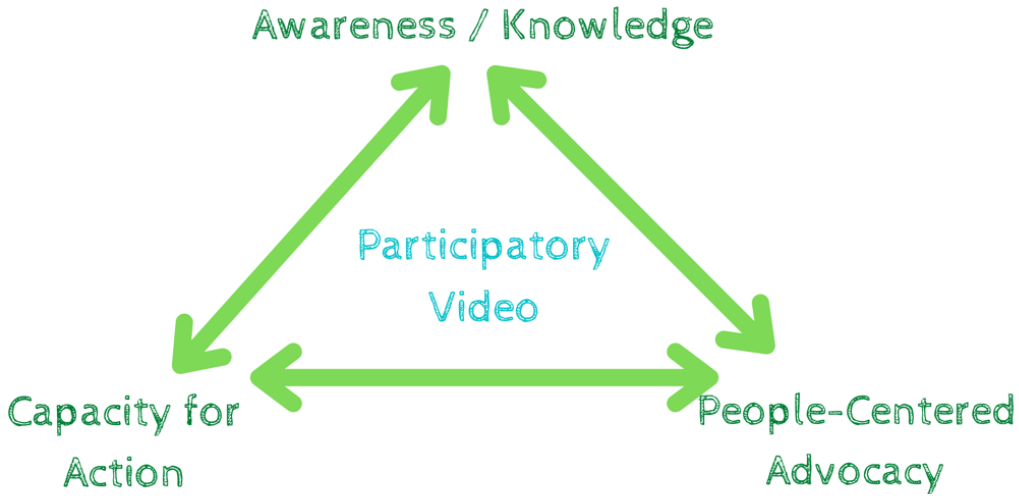
It is clear from the above that each approach is intended to serve a different purpose. Although there is often overlap in practice, the choice of the most appropriate strategy can guide subsequent steps, including message design, media selection (film, radio, television, web and print) and other important elements of the communication strategy.

1.3 Participatory films and guidelines for activating film practice

A good way to achieve these outcomes and design effective environmental communication is through the production of **participatory videos,** which have become one of the most powerful tools for students to explore social, political and theoretical issues and take collective action. Participatory video can be defined as the involvement of a group or community in shaping and creating a video using a set of filmmaking techniques. Participatory videos can be a very powerful tool to engage and mobilise people, helping them to shape in a concrete form their ideas and thoughts on a range of topics and issues based on local needs and opportunities (technical and technological).

Participatory video has the potential to educate, persuade and promote in ways that can bring about positive change. The theoretical framework of participatory videos (Plush 2013) includes three interrelated axes:

a) *awareness and knowledge*: the participatory video process can be developed and amplify the voices, thoughts and opinions of those involved in the creation of the videos (students and teachers), raising awareness of environmental issues.
(b) *actionability*: includes not only the technical skill set for filmmaking, but also a long-term vision that integrates filmmaking, film design and overall planning.
(c) *people-centred advocacy*: the ability of people to speak for themselves, using the language of cinema as an intelligible, highly communicative way of conveying their messages and ideas.



To build on and put into practice the previous sections, we will now approach them strategically, placing Sustainability Communication and filmmaking in an educational context.

Step 1 **Carry out the research**:
Identify local objectives, requirements and tasks in the context of the EZR. An objective refers to a broad and long-term outcome, while a task indicates the steps needed to achieve that objective. Requirements are proposed solutions to problems identified during the study. All three should be specific, *measurable*, achievable, realistic, and timely (*Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely - translator's note*): in a word, SMART!

Develop them further by linking your stories to a broader context that connects the local to the global and links to the existing work of others committed to the same goals as you (civil society, personal experiences of the public and others). In doing so, make sure that the process remains fruitfully participatory for all involved. Also consider those whose stories are missing from the debate: is there anyone under-represented or neglected whose participation will benefit the project?

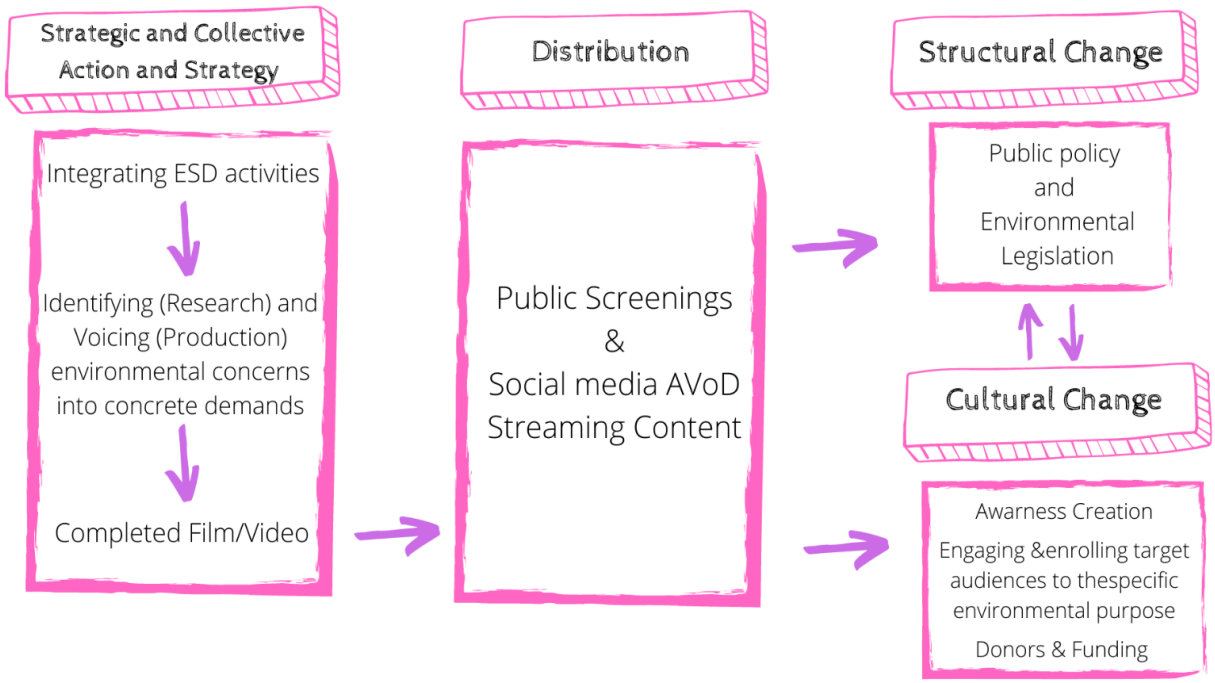
Identify key audiences (i.e. policy makers; general public) and the type of campaign (i.e. advocacy) accordingly. Consider the environmental narrative prevalent in your target audience and adapt your message accordingly.

Step 2. **Production**
See all other relevant sections in this eBook.

Step 3 **Distribution**
When planning the final production, different forms of distribution should be considered in advance:

- Social media and AVoD (advertised video on demand): Consider using them to build awareness of your initiative and raise crowdfunding, but do it the right way. Generally speaking, social media posts (including videos and movies) compete for our attention in a sea of other content, and a person spends an average of just two seconds on any website or post before moving on to the next one. So try to keep them short but effective and remember to consistently engage your audience, fostering a spirit of interaction among potential followers.
- Festivals: despite their more formal and exclusive nature, film festivals remain central to green transformation: whether as community hubs connecting decidedly activist audiences, filmmakers and organisations, or as a sustainable distribution platform, inspiring and challenging audiences through agenda-setting.

Step 4 **Expected impact**:
A strategically successful environmental communication campaign is contagious. It motivates and engages a wider audience to engage with the specific issue being communicated. For example, to take action and normalise commitment to a new set of environmentally friendly practices (Oepen et al., 1999), which in turn will mobilise the general public (cultural change) and secure the cooperation of decision-makers (structural change).



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2.
Storytelling

2.1 Light a light bulb: the importance of an idea

When you think of the plot development phase of a film, in most cases you probably imagine writing a fully finished script. In reality, however, the script is the end result of a long process of thinking, rewriting and refining. During filmmaking, much more time is spent on the conception, treatment and storyboarding phases than on writing the script itself. The road leading to the finished script starts much earlier, with a smaller (but significant) spark: the **idea**.

This is particularly important if you want to create short films or videos for certain social networks (TikTok, Youtube, etc.) instead of a full-length film or TV series. Short films and feature-length films differ in format, of course, and for this very reason they operate according to a different logic. In a short film, due to its short duration, the viewer's attention is very focused and every element will be of great importance. This has two main consequences:

- On the one hand, very few elements can be used to evoke the whole story.
- On the other hand, you have to be very careful in the design of each element, as the viewer will tend to give it meaning.

Why is it all about the idea? Because while in a feature-length film or TV series the idea may not be the most important thing (because it makes a good dramatic promise and pitch for the film), in a short film the idea is everything, it embodies the strength of the whole film. If the idea is strong and precise, it will be more suitable for a short film. If, on the other hand, the strength is the plot, the depth or transformation of the characters, or the strength of the narrative world, it may be better to devote more space to these elements, developing them in a feature-length film.

It is difficult to recognise the spark that generates an idea. It may not yet be in the form of a story, but may simply be an image (or a sequence of images), an atmosphere, a taste, an impression, a situation or a belief. Consequently, finding an idea out of nowhere can be a very difficult task. Fortunately, as is well known, nothing is created from nothing, and the ideas for the film you are planning to make are no exception. Indeed, ideas come from the stories around us:

- From the stories you experience yourself.
- From the stories of the people around you.
- From stories found in newspaper articles, online and on social media.
- From stories you experience in books or other films.

Good ideas can come from anywhere and from anything. What is important about an idea is that it should resonate with you in some way, 'striking a chord' inside you. Of course, identifying the 'chord' of an idea can be a daunting task, but fortunately there are several starting points to consider. Some of these are more practical, such as the budget available (i.e. how much can I spend on producing my film?) and the competencies required to make the film. Others are more intangible and relate to the

ultimate goal of the film (to educate, entertain, etc.) and the initial guidelines. Once these important parameters have been considered, we can begin to develop ideas related to the goal. At this stage, the writing process is about organising ideas and reducing the chaos of the various inputs and possibilities you probably have in mind. There are many methods of collecting and organising ideas, and you are free to combine them in the way that works best for you.

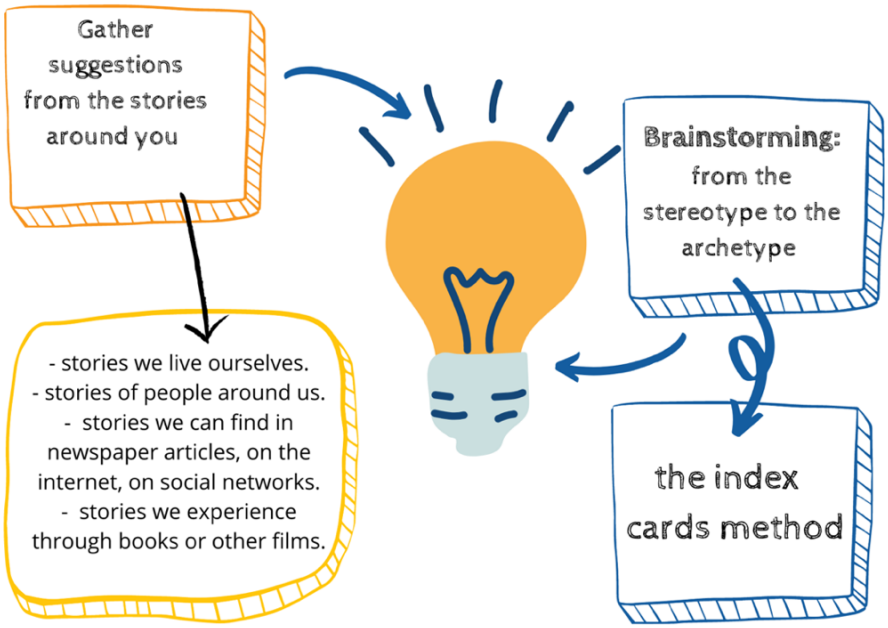
You can start by organising **a 'brainstorming' session.** This is usually a group activity, but you can also do it on your own. All you have to do is start considering all the mental associations associated with the idea: real experiences, fictional stories and, of course, stereotypes and common habits. Indeed, when creating an idea for a film, you should always take into account what others have said about the same subject. In this respect, narrative, thematic and socio-cultural clichés should not be avoided, but evoked and sometimes used as a springboard to create something new and original: stereotypes are useful starting points, although they should never be considered the ultimate goal. Moreover, they can be useful as a way of uncovering archetypes, that is, universally valid human experiences that, when embodied in characters and events, make a film capable of appealing to people from all over the world.

Once the ideas from the brainstorming have been collected, they can be visualised and concretised using the **index card method.**

Index cards, also known as note cards or fiches, provide a colourful, fluid way to organise thoughts and help ideas emerge and connect with each other. The notes on each card can be short or more extensive and include all sorts of information about ideas, stories, scenes, characters and so on. It doesn't matter if it seems chaotic: the whole writing process is a way of moving from chaos (lots of ideas) to order (deciding on one story). Laying the cards out on a table or sticking them to a board and moving them around will help the mind to establish associations more easily, thus clearing the path for building the script and imagining the film.

→ Practical tip: the index card method can also be used at other stages of the writing process, not just to develop initial ideas. For example, it can be used when you need to place certain scenes in a sequence or refine the identity of a character.

Once certain key elements are found (for example, a theme, character or situation), the story begins to take shape.



2.2 Down the rabbit hole: getting into the plot of the film

Once the idea is established, the second step is to transform it into something more structured and detailed: a story. In this phase, we are like Alice who, after seeing the White Rabbit (our initial idea), decides to follow him in his burrow, entering a wonderland that ends in a scenario. But first we need to reflect on our half-baked idea and think about how to 'cook' it to turn it into a story.

This phase can vary in duration, depending on the specific project. In the case of a feature film or TV series, it can take months or even years. However, in the case of short films, because the idea is usually more precise and concise, this phase can be shorter. What matters in both cases is that we need to take the time to build a well-constructed story, a narrative that works and fits our communication goals.

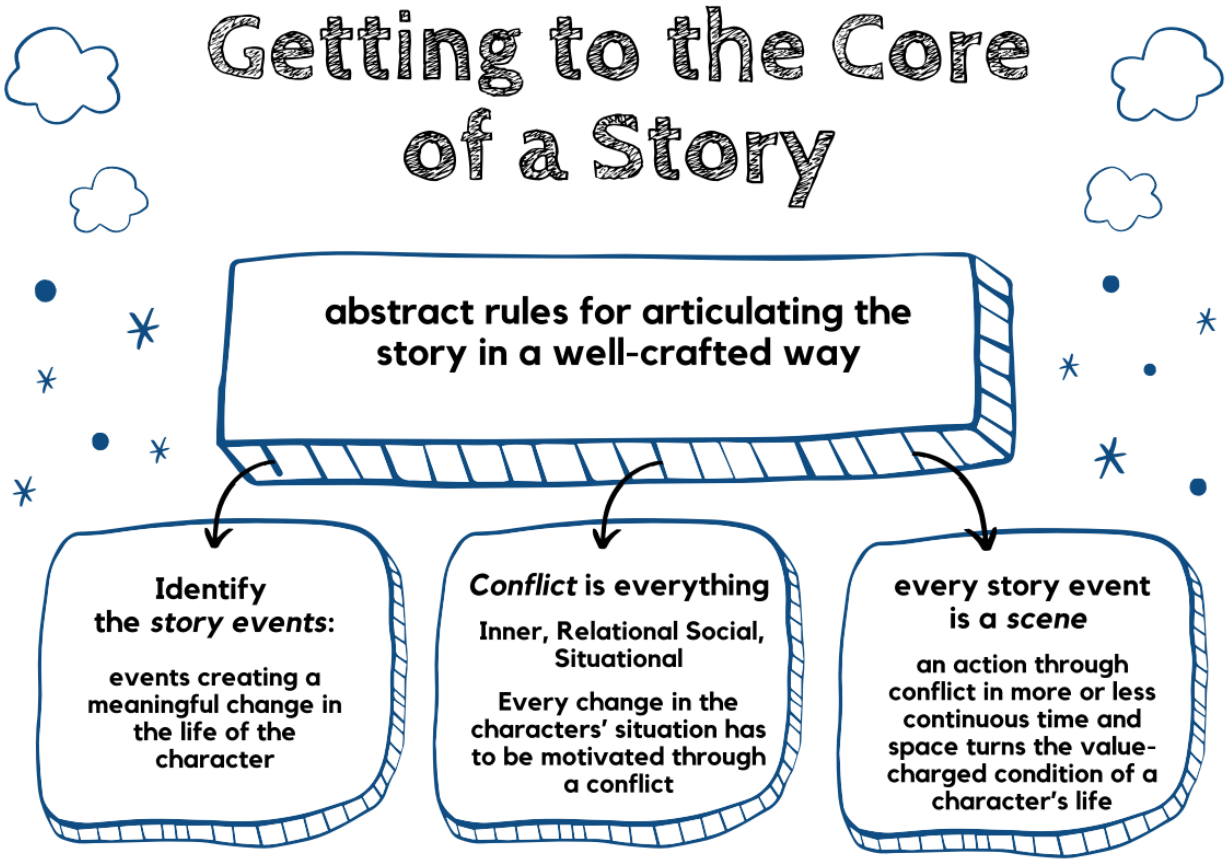
Of course, building a compelling story is not that easy, mainly because we may not have a clear idea of what our story is about and what its constitutive elements should be. You can start by writing a ***logline***, which is a one- or two-sentence summary of the whole story you have decided to tell. You should then develop this narrative core into a narrative structure. But how do you turn your idea into a whole story, how do you go from a logline to a well-defined script? Well, that can be difficult. As Robert McKee (1997) wrote, 'the idea for a story is like the idea for music. We have heard melodies all our lives. We can dance and sing along with them. We think we understand music until we try to compose it, and what comes out of the piano scares the cat." Fortunately, you can rely on a few tips and formulas to create and manage a story. To be fair, it is important to remember that all the suggestions, prescriptions and procedures we find in screenwriting textbooks (even this one!) are *a posteriori* models; prescriptions derived from the analysis of many successful examples. However, the abstract rules and principles they contain can provide a solid basis for building the knowledge needed to express one's story and weave a tale. And perhaps, in a well-crafted way, a story in which all its elements (characters, development, events, setting, narrative genre and idea) meld into a harmonious unity.

1) The first principle of story structuring is to **identify events**. Generally speaking, an event means a change (happened to someone or something). Fictional events are not trivial but significant changes. As Mckee stated, "A FABULAR EVENT creates a significant change in a character's life situation" (1997, p. 33), which concerns certain values, i.e. universal features of human experience (love, hate, rage, fear, etc.).

2) To achieve story events, you must create CONFLICT. Indeed, the second principle you need to learn when transforming your idea into a beautifully told story is: "**conflict is everything**"! Conflict is a necessary (though not always sufficient) condition for creating a story. You cannot have a story without conflict. A story event is created as a result of conflict, which can occur on many levels:
   - **Internal**: the conflict takes place within the character, between conflicting psychological traits. In this case, the protagonist is also his own antagonist.
   - **Relational**: the classic conflict between a protagonist and one or more other characters. This is a common and flexible type of conflict, and is a staple of love stories as well as detective stories or thrillers. In this case, the conflict can also be the opposing character, the antagonist.
   - **Social**: conflicts in which a character clashes with a larger social, moral and/or legal system or institution.
   - **Situational**: extreme situations in which the conflict is a struggle for survival (e.g. all disaster films).

   It is not important to classify the type of conflict, but it is important that it is present. If your story seems weak, the reason may be that the conflict is not well defined or even missing. Any change in the situation of the characters has to be motivated by the conflict that drives the story.

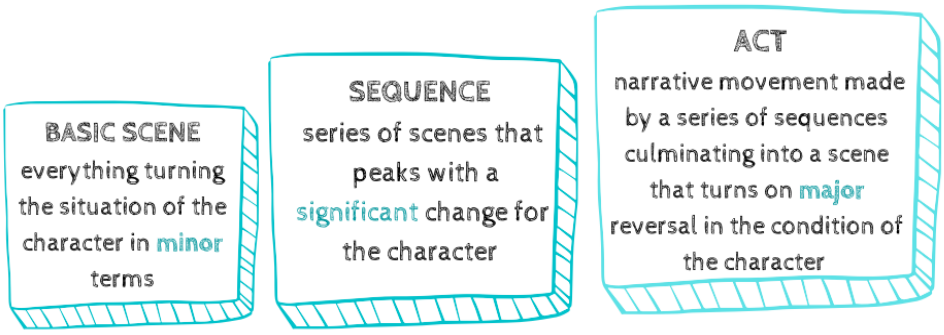
3) Every time there is a conflict that changes the situation of the characters and their values, we are dealing with a SCENE. The third principle regarding the structure of our story **is** that **every plot event is a scene**. We can define a scene as "an action through conflict in more or less continuous time and space that changes the value-charged state of a character's life" (Mckee 1997, 36). If a character's state or values do not change from one scene to another, if nothing significant has happened to that character, then it is the absence of an event, and then we cannot have a scene. How do we identify a significant event? The simplest answer is: by the fact that it cannot be moved. Random and unnecessary events are those that can be consistently moved from one point to another in the story. A good story is one in which events cannot be moved: each scene has a structural function.



A scene is the first unit in a story design. Each scene changes the situation of a character in some way. While some scenes make minor or insignificant modifications, others are more powerful and the change they bring about has a greater impact on the story. The scene that introduces a powerful change to the story is the one that forms the climax of the sequence.

A SEQUENCE is a series of scenes culminating in a significant change. It forms a distinct narrative unit, which is usually linked by unity of place or unity of time. Sequences, taken together, represent the stages of the journey that the protagonist embarks on to achieve his or her goal. This journey is the basic configuration of the story and is conventionally divided into three main parts or, better put, three acts.

An ACT is a narrative movement performed through a series of sequences, culminating in a scene that changes the state of the characters and their values. **The difference between the basic scene, the scene that ends the sequence and the scene that ends the act is the degree of impact that the change has on the character** (on their inner life, on their relationship with other characters and the world, etc.).



2.2.1 Structure of the three acts

Since the time of Aristotle, the conventional way of constructing history has been to create three distinct moments. As Linda Seger beautifully summarises:

> "Dramatic composition, almost from the beginning of drama, has tended towards a three-act structure. Whether it is a Greek tragedy, a five-act Shakespeare play, a four-act dramatic television series, or a seven-act film of the week, we still see the basic three-act structure: beginning, middle and end - or the setting of the story in act one, the development of the story in act two, and then building to a climax and resolution in act three' (2010, p. 62).

Put simply, the three-act structure consists of three phases: preparation, development (sometimes called confrontation) and resolution. Each pursues a specific goal: the first is to provide direction, the second momentum and the last clarification.

The first act corresponds to an introduction to the story. In this part you have to create and explain the basic coordinates of the story: who is the protagonist? Who are the main characters? What is the context? Where does the action take place? When does it take place? What is the genre of the film (comedy, drama, sci-fi, horror, adventure, thriller or a combination of these)? In most films, the audience needs to see a few minutes of context before anything happens so that they have a chance to enter the story world and get their bearings. Information is essential for the audience to become familiar with the story and its characters and their lives before the point at which the story begins.

A good story, in order to be interesting from start to finish, resorts to exciting and unpredictable twists and TURNING POINTS that:

- pushes the action in new directions
- require the decisions and efforts of the protagonist
- raise the rate
- attract the attention of the public

In a plot, there are two turning points that must take place to keep the action moving. One of these two points is located between the first and second acts and is called the INITIATING INCIDENT: it is the event that sets the main character or characters on their journey throughout the narrative. It is needed to move from context to story and set the narrative in motion. For example, in The *Lord of the Rings (2001),* Frodo finds the ring and leaves his home in the Shire to carry out his mission (to cast the

ring into Mount Doom): it is a liberating incident, a catalytic event that sets up the main conflict and drives the story.

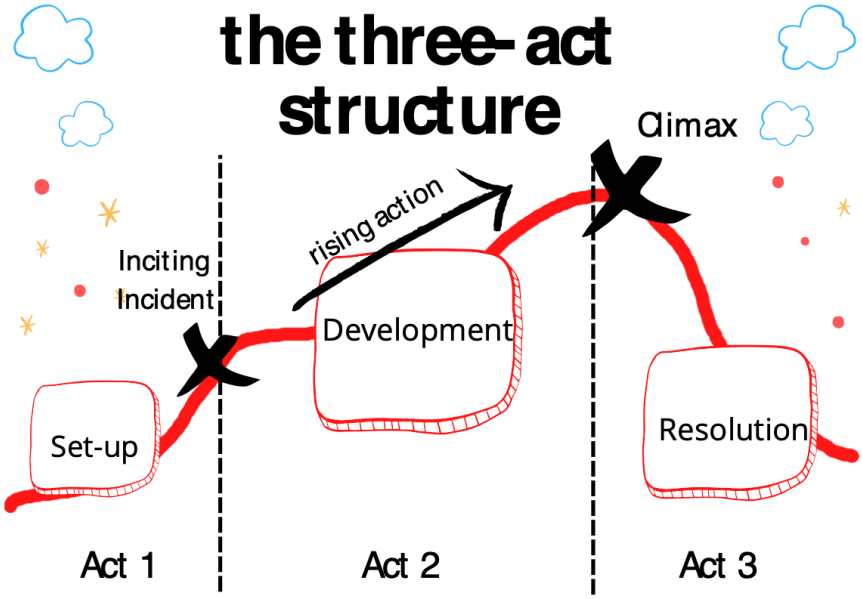
The initiating incident introduces the audience to the **second act,** corresponding to DEVELOPMENT. It begins when the protagonist, after the initiating incident, cannot turn back, but must move forward to 'confront' the challenges and obstacles that increase as the story progresses. This represents the development of the story.

The second act can be used to:

- **Getting to know side characters**.
  These characters are important to reveal the character's flaws, show their interactions with others or simply make their lives more difficult.
- **Creating more problems.**
  The main character has a goal to achieve and it is your job, as the creator of the story, to make the hero's path to the goal very difficult. Then, in the second act, you have to add difficulties, obstacles and conflicts to stop the main character from achieving what he wants.
- **Developing characters' internal struggles**.

The conflicts and complications of the characters on their journey should not only be physical or external, but also psychological and emotional.

At the end of the second act, the second turning point changes the action again, moving the story firmly into the **third act**. Sometimes the second turning point consists of (1) a dark moment followed by (2) a reaction from the main character. This turning point not only pushes the plot in a new direction, but also gives it momentum, accelerating the action and pushing the story towards its conclusion. Indeed, the third act entails the RESOLUTION of the story. In this act, the CULMINATION POINT of the story takes place, its grand conclusion and the moment of maximum emotional tension. The hero gets his precious object, the villain is (usually) defeated, and it is time to go home.



The Aristotelian structure is the most common narrative form in feature films, but the situation may be slightly different if you are thinking of making a **short film.**

- Short films often use a circular form. It is a simple structure but still provides order and unity. If it fits your story, use it.
- Short films often use a mechanism based on an exact reversal of the situation. In this case, the conflict plays out mainly against the viewer. This is also a classic structure that can be used.
- Many short films rely on a final twist. However, be careful not to rely too much on the surprise effect. Firstly, audiences, especially of short films, are very crafty and expect it. So either the surprise effect is masterfully crafted and creates a real shock, or make sure that the effectiveness of the short film does not rely solely on the strength of the final twist.

Short films are often seen, because of their short duration, as the realm of 'anything goes', as if no real meaning or story is needed. This is not true and it is possible to create meaningful stories even in very short films. To do this, you can count on a few tips:

- **Set-up/pay-off**: Preparation (set-up) is useful to avoid casualties, and events are seen as 'deus ex machina', i.e. dropped from heaven directly by the will of the God-author. When you gather information (pay-off), you perceive that there is an overall sense, due to the fact that events have been prepared with clues or premises.

- **Dramatic irony**: this is a very interesting type of conflict, based on the fact that the spectator has information that at least one of the characters involved in the scene does not have. This ignorance leads not only to a situation of conflict, which is dramaturgically useful, but also to tension, tragedy, patheticness.... Dramatic irony pleases the audience because it puts them in a position of cognitive superiority over the characters, which is not possible in real life.

- **Suspense and twist**: the twist is when two people are sitting at a table talking and suddenly a bomb goes off. Suspense is more like when we see two people sitting at a table and talking and we know there is a bomb under the table. The advantage of suspense is suspense, the advantage of a twist is surprise.

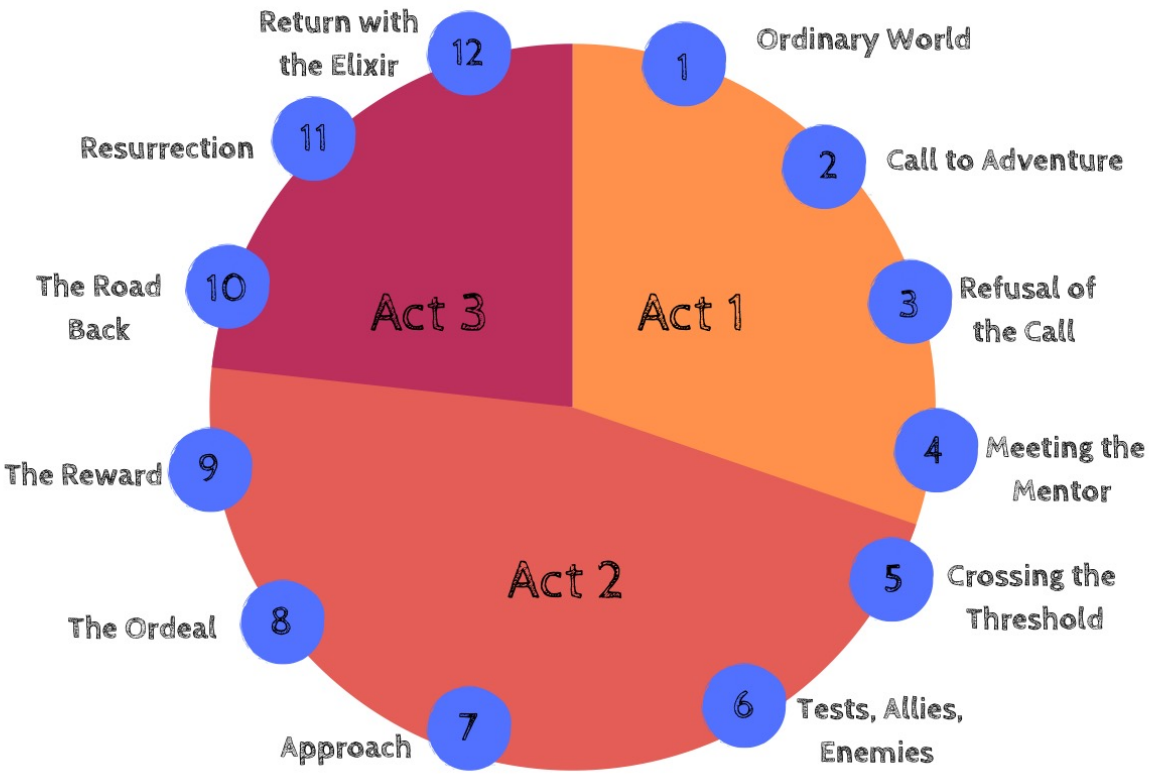
2.2.2 Introducing the hero on the journey

The three-act structure can also be seen from the point of view of the main character. "The character arc" has been described by Chis Vogler (building on the work of Joseph Campbell), analysing a typical narrative structure common to all stories, which he calls the 'hero's journey'. In this journey, the archetype known as the Hero sets out, undertakes a mission and, overcoming a decisive crisis, performs great deeds and ultimately returns home transformed. This journey is divided into twelve stages:

1. ORIGINAL WORLD. (set up): the protagonist is set in his environment, which is in equilibrium.
2. A CALL TO ADVENTURE. Something disturbs the situation and destroys the equilibrium, whether because of external forces or because of an intimate, psychological dynamic growing out of the depths of the soul.
3. REJECTING THE CALL. The protagonist feels fear of the unknown and tries to turn away

from the adventure. In order to be a hero, our protagonist has to strive for something and run away from something else: that is, to simplify, he has a desire (to achieve something, to be someone, etc.) and a fear that he will not be able to fulfil his desire. The plot is designed to create events that hinder or support his desire, pushing him to make choices that bring him closer to his 'danger zone', which is the theme of the whole story.

4. MEETING A MENTOR. The protagonist has met someone who helps him overcome his fears and begin his journey
5. CROSSING A THRESHOLD. At the end of act one, the protagonist leaves the ordinary world and enters new territory or conditions (the extraordinary/special world), with inexperienced rules and values.
6. TESTS, ALLIES AND ENEMIES. In the second act, the protagonist is tested by some challenges (which can also be personified by enemies) and finds new friends/allies to help him.
7. THE OUTLOOK. The action picks up as the protagonist, along with his newfound allies, prepares for his main challenge with the antagonist.
8. THE HARD TRIAL. The hero confronts the antagonist or faces his greatest fear. From the moment of death, new life is born.
9. AWARD. The hero takes possession of a valuable item and celebrates with friends.
10. THE WAY BACK. About three-quarters of the way through the story, the protagonist ends the adventure by leaving the extraordinary world, but the antagonist is not completely defeated and attacks again.
11. RESURRECTION. At the climax, the protagonist is again severely tested. Another moment of death and rebirth occurs, and the hero is finally fully transformed: he has overcome his fears and attained the object of his desire. The polarities that changed the initial balance of the ordinary world are resolved.
12. RETURN WITH THE ELIXIR. The hero, changed and enriched, returns home or embarks on a new adventure.



2.3 Things are getting better: From story to script

Once you have the backbone of your story (you've set the atmosphere, created the characters, placed the conflicts, shaped their 'adventure', etc.), the next step in screenwriting is to fill in this basic structure, making your story more compelling, more real.

2.3.1 Research and development

Your story will be based on something you know, but as you write and develop it you may discover that questions arise and you need more information. Perhaps you have characters set in a particular work environment (hospital, school, court, etc.) and you need to know the rules of those workplaces; perhaps your characters have to deal with certain subjects (law, history, maths, etc.) and you realise you don't know enough about that. It is very important to do your research on the particular subjects your story deals with, otherwise you run the risk of it being inconsistent. Every story has an internal logic that needs to make sense. For example: if you're writing a story about a doctor and you don't know anything about anatomy, you'd better do your research, because a doctor confusing a lung with a liver is not very credible, and neither is your story!

Research can be carried out in a number of ways:

- Library research: looking through books, articles, diaries and newspapers and consulting librarians for other resources. You can also use digital tools such as Google, social media, websites or other sources that can help you find out more about a topic.

- Field research: going to a specific place and talking to the people directly involved. For example, people who lived through a specific historical event and can help gather facts and memories.

Doing enough research and developing the story to make it more believable has important consequences for the whole scenario, as research determines the vocabulary of the characters and how they relate to each other and to the story world. Remember: a coherent story world helps you organise your thoughts and communicate your idea and point of view more effectively.

2.3.2 Visual storytelling

In the scriptwriting process, it is important to consider that telling a story through the language of film means combining images, sound and words. It is important to understand how to convey your idea through action and images, while also using dialogue.

The first, basic rule we must remember is to show, not tell!

There is no place in a film for pimped-out, rich descriptions of characters' emotional states and thoughts. The inner states, opinions, plans and reflections of the characters cannot simply be written on paper, as in a novel, but should be shown through the actions performed by the characters. Film stories are primarily visual stories, and the inner world must be dramatised. This means that everything has to be shown through the actors' movements and words, told through images and dialogue: every time you imagine your character is thinking about something, you have to make them do something that expresses that feeling/thought. This can be a physical action or something they say to someone or even to themselves (using the voiceover technique).

For example, in your story, your protagonist, Marc, is secretly in love with a classmate, Jenny, and every time they meet, especially when she smiles, he is embarrassed, behaves awkwardly and ends up saying something inappropriate, making a fool of himself.

How to tell the story visually? How to make the audience understand the situation, Marc's feelings for Jenny and his reactions when he sees her?

- Through action:
  When Marc sees Jenny, he freezes, starts sweating, rocking back on his heels and blushes when she smiles at him.
- Through dialogues:
  Jenny approaches, smiling at Marc, and he, with a dreamy expression on his face, starts talking to himself, saying: "oh my God, she's coming! She's so beautiful... I love the way she smiles. I hope I can say something this time that doesn't sound completely stupid."
- Through actions and dialogues

Practical tips →
- When writing dialogue, think about how people actually speak (if they speak slang, use it).
- Avoid the appearance of characters giving a speech.
- Dialogues should be natural. If they sound forced, unfamiliar and strange, rewrite them.

2.3.3 Concretising the story: Towards scriptwriting

Now you have an idea, a story with characters and conflicts and a narrative structure. What's next?
The next stage involves concretising all the material into a scenario. While everyone knows what the script looks like - more or less - less attention is paid to the intermediate stages that culminate in the script.

The first phase is (from English - *translator's note*) **SUBJECT**
Subject is a fairly general term for the written form that evokes and describes the idea, the gist of the film. In the case of a short film, it can be a page, a page and a half, or even less than a page if you have focused very well on the message of the film. As for its structure, it must evoke the style, tone, effects and atmosphere of the whole film as much as possible: if the film evokes laughter, the *subject,* if possible, must also evoke laughter; if the twist is meant to surprise you in the film, you must also be surprised when reading the *subject*.

Subject is usually written in the present tense and as simply as possible: don't say "Let's look at x, which ..." unless it is necessary to understand something related to the plot and a privileged way to convey the idea of the film without explaining it.

The three-act structure or at least the basic turning points of the plot should be emphasised. It is not important to detail the plot twists anymore, unless they are fundamental to understanding the overall workings of the story. The most important thing is to emphasise, as much as possible, the strength of the idea and the story you have in mind.

Here are some tips on how to write a good *subject line*:

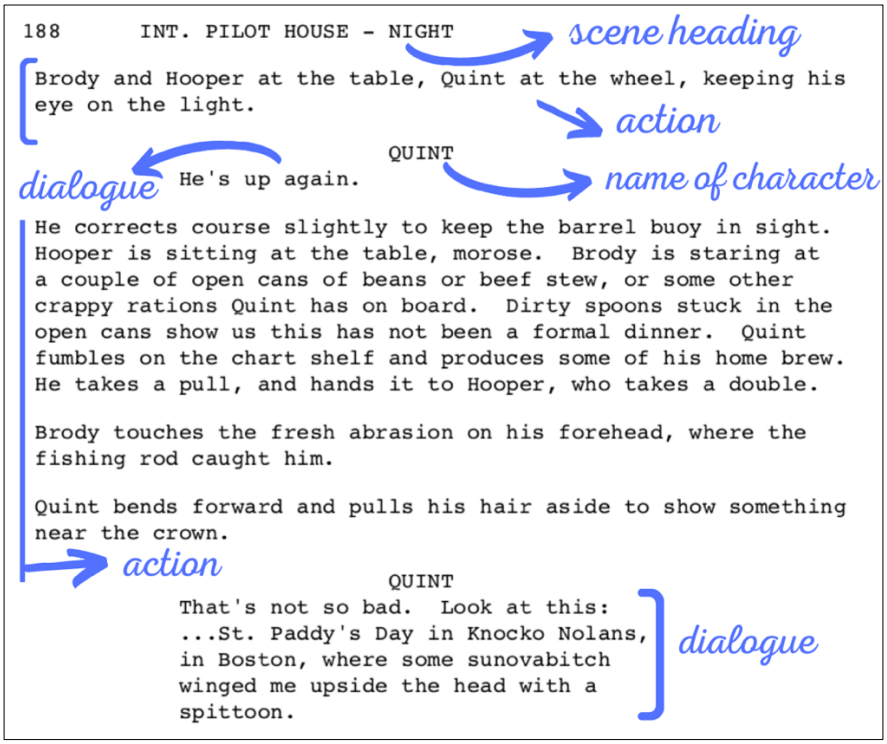
- Simple concepts in a simple form.
- Present the description and intricacies of the plot as simply as possible.
- Keep character descriptions to a minimum.
- Avoid literary embellishments and intellectual references (these are not forbidden, but must not dominate).
- Summarise the content of the video and focus on the content.

The second stage is called (from English - *translator's note*) **TREATMENT**.
This is a detailed written description of the story and how the film will tell it. In *treatment* you design the narrative material and scenes according to the order of the sjużet, not the storyline (i.e. if you are thinking of placing the last scene at the beginning of the film, in this phase this scene should be placed at the beginning of the film, whereas in the previous phase, *subject*, it was at the end).

Then, using the *treatment* as a framework, a fully developed **SCENARIO** can be written**.**
It is an applied text for the purpose of making a film and should be thought of as such. It is not an artistic text per se and, although it may have aesthetic and narrative qualities, its main purpose is to provide all the useful information for those who will actually have to make the film: issues for the actors, subtitles for the production designer and costume designer, information for all those involved in the production and who have to set the budget and, of course, all the elements needed by the director

to shoot the scenes. It must therefore be a very clear document, which in a few words should evoke both the atmosphere you want to suggest in the film and all the necessary technical information.

How to write a script:
Remember to use the layout of the document to make your point:
Scene header: where and when the scene takes place (also indicate lighting and set information).
Actions: take care to describe the action, who is doing what, when, where and how.
Characters: remember to indicate the character's name before you start writing their lines (dialogue).



Now that you have a script, it's time to start planning the shoot!

GLOSSARY

Antagonist: A character(s) who opposes the main protagonist and creates narrative conflict by challenging, obstructing or confronting the main character(s). The antagonist can take many forms, including an individual character, a force, a group of people, an institution or even the (dark) side of the protagonist's inner character.

Archetype: It refers to a general character, feature or configuration that embodies an example or model with ideal characteristics. It can be a character, a representation or even a symbol. As a narrative device, an archetype is a recurring motif in stories that represents a universal pattern of human behaviour.

Fabula: It corresponds to the thematic content of the story. It is the raw material of the story, presented in the sequence in which events are experienced in the fictional world.

Pitch:	A term used in the film industry to describe the act of explaining in one sentence the basic idea of a film.
Stereotype:	Unrefined and fixed mental images of individuals and social groups based on the repetition of certain (often exaggerated) physical and psychological characteristics. Such conventionalized beliefs, anchored in everyday cultural knowledge, provide key reference points for the narrative construction of fictional characters.
Sjużet:	It corresponds to the chronological order of events in the narrative. It is the way in which the story is organised and how it is presented to the viewer. It influences the viewer's perception of cause and effect, their access to information and, consequently, their experience of emotional states.
Voiceover:	A production technique that involves recording the voice for off-screen use. This occurs when the actor's thoughts are spoken aloud, but the image does not show the actor's moving mouth. It can be used when an unseen narrator speaks above the images or to express internal states of mind.

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3.
Filming

Up to this point, the screenwriter was the 'protagonist' of the work. However, from this point onwards, **the director** takes on the role of the person responsible for the cinematography and practical execution of the film.

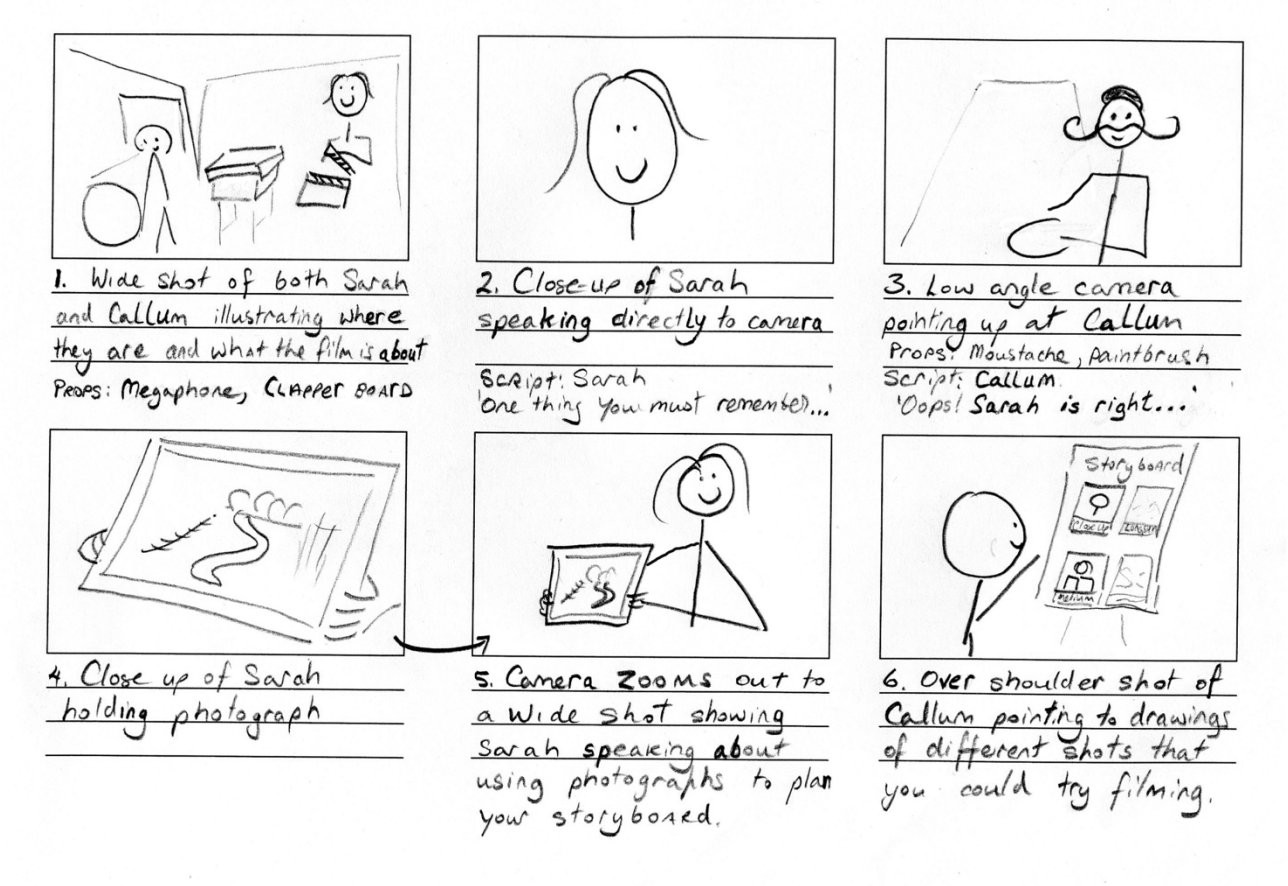
3.1 From script to screenplay

Once you have a scenario, it is a good and practical idea to 'visualise' it, map it in your mind and then put it 'on paper'. The result of this operation is a **STORYBOARD**. This is a shot-by-shot layout showing what the film will look like in terms of images, scenes and sequences, before moving on to the actual shooting of scenes with the camera. Storyboards are tools to help the director think visually about the story, so they don't have to be flawless and finished: even basic sketches can help visualise the film. You can use simple drawings of people, squares for houses, circles for the sun and road lines. The essential aim is not to create an artistic masterpiece, but a helpful tool to help you get an idea of what each shot will look like.

To realise a storyboard, you need to decide what information will be included in the shot, which actors will appear, what they will do and how they will shoot.

You can use this scenario template:

Here is a practical example of a storyboard:



You can also use photos instead of drawings if that is more convenient.

Some directors plan each shot with a storyboard, in which each image represents exactly what each shot should look like. While this is not a rule, as a general recommendation it can be said that the more complex the script, the more accurate the storyboard should be. This will help you to be more efficient when you structure and organise your recording.

Scripting means thinking about what you want the shots to look like *before* you arrive on set on the day of the shoot. Of course, you can always make changes, but having a clear idea of the work you will need to do with the camera will optimise your time.

3.2 Time to get your hands dirty: preparing the scene

Once the storyboard has been finalised, the set should be prepared and the filming activities organised before the actual start of shooting. The right set design will help to avoid typical pitfalls and make the shoot go as smoothly as possible.

There are several keys to getting the scene right:

1. Site selection

Depending on your project, you will need to find a location (or more than one) that suits your needs. Once you've chosen your set, check the location where you plan to film in advance, perhaps more than once. When visiting the location, ask yourself the following questions:

- Do you need a filming permit?
- Will there be a charge for filming there?
- Is it possible to shoot all the scenes in the same place?
- Do you think the lighting is adequate? Or will you need to bring floodlights?
- Will you be allowed to stay on set for a day or more without interruption?
- If you plan to record live sound, will there be any disturbing background noise?

2. Camera positioning and framing

Once you have chosen your venue, you need to determine how best to set it up. Consider whether you have power sources available, what lighting equipment you will need, the most suitable backgrounds and the physical space needed for camera movements or choreography. What's more, if you plan to film outdoor shots, make sure you have a plan B in case of bad weather!

You'll also need to determine the right angles, the best places to place the camera and test it, and look for visual problems (reflective surfaces, distractions, flashes, etc.) The best way to do this is to place an object or volunteer as a surrogate where the actors will be (that's why you need a storyboard!).

3. Lighting design

Once the camera is set up, the lighting needs to be designed accordingly. Remember to consider the mood of the scenes and position the lights accordingly, as they can be used to create visual meaning. The light can be natural or artificial (or both) and you should consider the colour, temperature (a way of describing the appearance of the light provided by the bulb), the positioning of the actors, etc. The main purpose is to illuminate objects and enhance the overall mood of the scene.

4. Materials and props

Appropriate props and materials are needed to provide authenticity and context to scenes. These are essential for providing the necessary visual cues, helping to orient the audience and making the story more coherent from a visual point of view. For example, if you are planning to shoot a story set in the 17th century, actors cannot wear jeans and a t-shirt.

3.3 "Lights, camera, action!": Directing the film

One of the most popular metaphors to describe the work of **a director** is that of a conductor. François Truffaut in *La nuit américaine* (1973) said that a director is someone who is constantly asked questions, questions about everything. Thus, the first role of the director is to coordinate the various technical and artistic activities, giving them a unified and inevitably 'personal' direction. To be effective, the director uses his or her imagination to think about the story, how it should be told and what the film should look like. It is the director who: helps shape the script (often with the screenwriter), designs the storyboard, selects the crew and chooses the actors (thinking about who will best play each character), decides on the shots for each scene, etc. Basically, the director oversees everything. Every director has his or her own method: some are more concerned with the actors than with the technical aspects, or vice versa. However, both aspects are fundamental, so we will analyse them in detail.

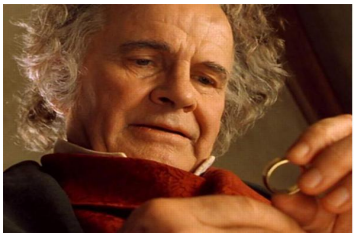
Let's start with the technical stuff!

3.3.1 Image

It is important to consider these factors when planning your shoot:

SIZE OF THE SHOT
How much of the scene is included in each image (see below)

OBJECTIVE
Decide which elements of the image should be in focus.



ITEM/ ANGLE
Where to position the camera in relation to the subjects?
(see below)

SIGHT LINE
Consider where the actor is looking in relation to the scene configuration.

COMPOSITION
How do you position objects/ things in the photo in relation to the background?

MOVE
If objects move in the image, plan how the camera will follow them

LIGHT
What is the light and from which side does it fall?

COLOUR
Colour can help tell a story and express an idea

The concept of light and **ILLUMINATION** deserves further consideration. The light source illuminating a scene can be placed in different positions depending on what is being filmed. Even this choice is not indifferent to the effect desired by the director. For example, lighting that emphasises chiaroscuro effects is usually used to highlight dramatic situations.

There are two main options for placing the lights in the frame:

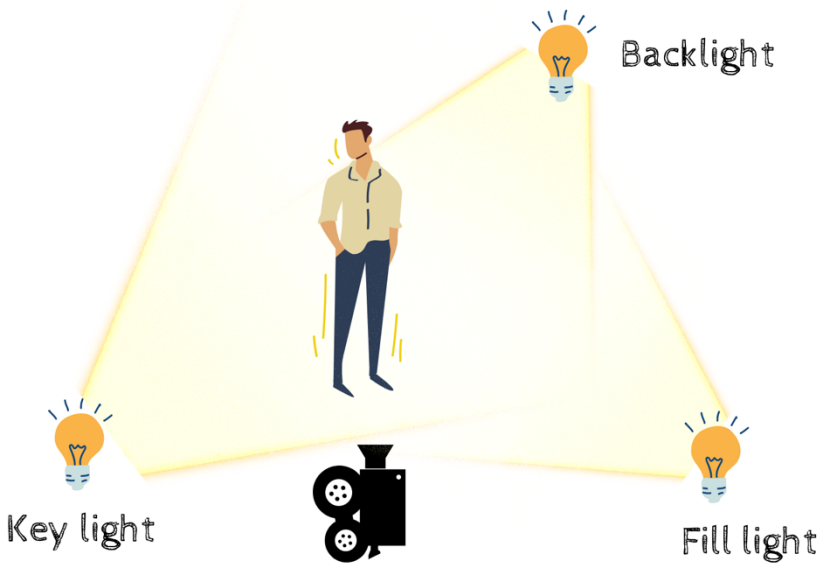
- light that illuminates without being seen (**neutral light**)
- light that not only illuminates things, but shows itself as a physical presence (**anti-naturalistic light**).

There is a standard principle that can be followed to optimise and balance the lighting of a scene: **the three-point lighting principle.** According to this principle, three points of light should be set up:

- **Key light: the** main source of light for the scene. This light has the highest intensity (although it needs to be somewhat diffused) and is angled 45 degrees in front of the subject to avoid creating too many shadows.

- **Fill light:** balances the shadows produced by the key light, exposing the details of the subject. For this reason, the fill light is usually placed opposite the key light and it is recommended that its brightness is not too intense (50% of the key light).

- **Backlighting:** this is the third and final light in the three-point configuration. It is used to avoid the object appearing flat and losing dimensionality. To offset this effect, place a low-intensity light behind it.

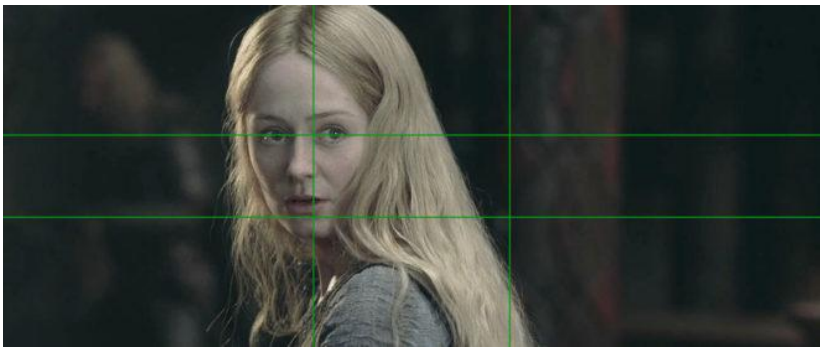


In addition to these general guidelines, there are other tips we can use to improve our image when filming.

When it comes to **COMPOSITION**, for example, the main objective is usually to focus the viewer's perception and attention towards the parts of the image that are most desirable.
Our eyes tend to focus primarily on the geometric centre of the image:

Alternatively, the so-called '**tri-partite principle**' can be applied:

Commonly used in photography (and also in cinematography), the one-third rule refers to a type of composition in which the image is ideally divided into three parts, both horizontally and vertically. The result is a grid composed of two horizontal and two vertical lines. The viewer's eye lands on the points of focus at the intersection of these lines. Therefore, the main subject or subjects of the frame should occupy the intersection point and continue along the horizontal or vertical line.



3.3.2. Framing and shot plans

The framing decision means many things: where to place the camera (at what point, distance and height, angle and tilt), but also which lenses to use. The director discusses these aspects with **the cinematographer,** especially the choice of lenses and lighting.

A frame is a single film or video image. Framing (shot) involves designing the visual content of a series of frames seen from a single point of view, i.e. a still camera.

There are different types or, better put, **shot plans,** which differ according to the character's relationship with the environment. Familiarity with this nomenclature is essential to ensure that all those involved in the project 'speak the same language' and communicate effectively during the shoot.
We can divide shots into two main catefories: (A) shots indicating the size of the object and (B) shots indicating the angle/position of the camera.

A) shots indicating the size of the object:

In general, we can distinguish between three main shot sizes: Long, Medium and Close.

- Long shots show the facility from a distance, highlighting the site and location,
- Medium shots put the emphasis on the subject while showing some of the surrounding environment.
- Close-up shots reveal details of the subject, thus emphasising the emotional states of the figures

To be more precise:

TOTAL PLAN

The focus is completely on the scenery and the characters are small or even absent. This type of shot is particularly useful for establishing a scene (see Establishing shot below). Characters are not necessarily visible in this shot.

GENERAL PLAN

The figure is framed from head to toe. The figure becomes more centred than in an extreme long shot, but the frame is still dominated by the scenery.

FULL PLAN (also known as FULL BODY SHOT)

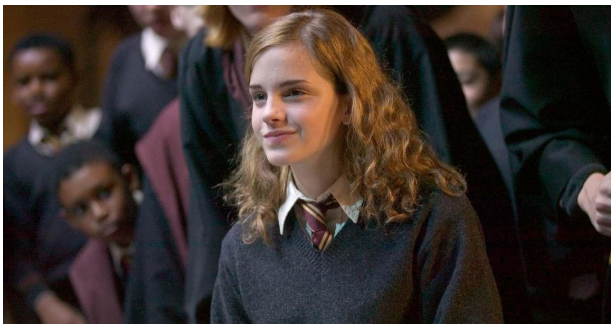
The characters are head to toe and the subject fills the frame. The emphasis is on action and movement rather than expressing the emotions of the characters

US PLAN

The frame covers three quarters of the body and shows the subject from the knees upwards.

MEDIUM PLAN

It shows part of the subject in more detail. In the case of a person, a medium shot usually frames them from hip to head.



HALF-LIKE

It usually frames the subject from the chest or shoulders upwards.

IMAGE

It fills the screen with part of the subject, usually the head/face of the person. By framing in this way, the emotions and reactions of the character are the theme of the scene

LARGE ROCK (also known as CHOKER)

The frame covers only the main facial features, usually from above the eyebrows to below the mouth.

DETAL

Highlights a small area or detail of the subject, such as the eyes or mouth.

MAKRODETAL

The frame focuses on a detail of an object that is of particular importance for understanding a scene or film.

B) Shots indicating camera angles

In addition to the size of the object in the frame, shot types can also indicate where the camera is positioned in relation to the object, thus defining different **perspectives.** With regard to camera position, we can identify several shots:

EYE-LEVEL SHOT

Shot with a camera more or less at human eye level, giving a neutral effect for the audience.

HIGH PERSPECTIVE (also known as PLONGÉE)

The subject is framed from above. This can make the subject appear vulnerable, weak or frightened.

LOW PROSPECT (also known as CONTRE-PLONGÉE)

The subject is framed below eye level. This can make the subject look dominant, heroic or menacing.

THE DUTCH PERSPECTIVE

A shot in which the camera is positioned at such an angle to the axis of rotation that the horizon line is not flat. It is often used to express a confused or anxious mental state.

OVER-THE-SHOULDER SHOT

The subject is framed (in medium close-up) from over the shoulder of another character. The shoulder, neck and/or back of the head of the person turned away from the camera remain in the frame. Interviews and dialogue scenes look more natural with this framing.

ESTABLISHING APPROACH

One or more wide shots that inform the viewer of where the action is taking place. Character facial expressions (if present) are illegible; the relationship of the character to the environment is important.

VIEWPOINT

Shot to simulate what a particular character sees in a scene. This puts the audience directly in the character's head.

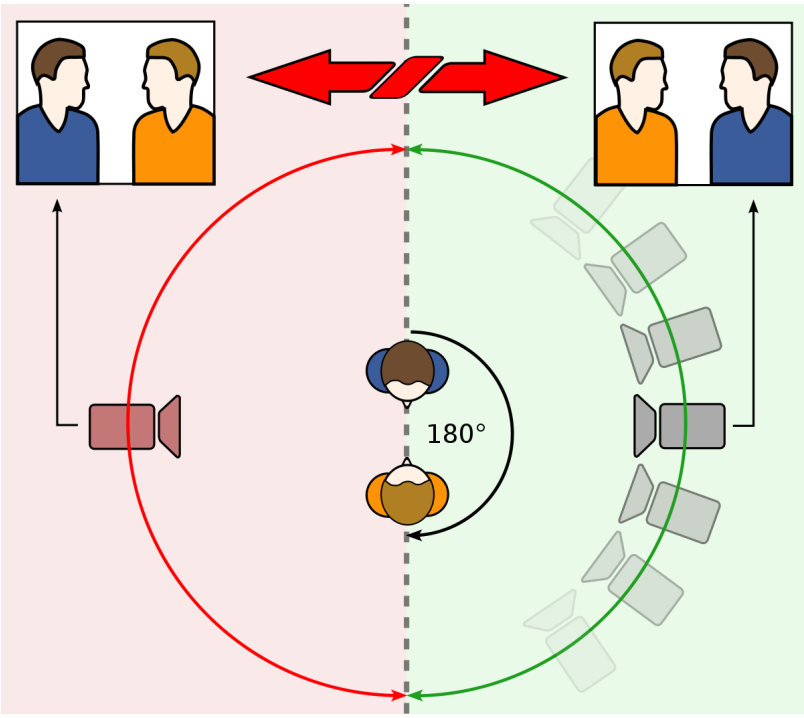
The director decides not only the cut of the shots and the camera movements, but also where to place the camera. Contrary to what is often thought, the director's talent is not in creating the 'strangest' (memorable??) shots, but in finding the 'right' positions in relation to the development of the narrative and the relationships between the characters.

In order to orientate between two consecutive images, the viewer must have reference points: therefore, *continuity must be* ensured! In order to have a montage with shots that can be connected, it is necessary to follow the **180° PRINCIPLE**:

It is a basic principle concerning the spatial relationship on screen between two characters or the interaction between characters and objects within a scene. According to Bordwell and Thompson, 'the action of a scene, a person walking, two people talking, a car racing down a road, is assumed to take place along a discernible, predictable line' (1990, 221).

The 180° rule states that the camera should be positioned on one side of this line, which is supposed to be the fictional axis between the two characters, so that the first character is always framed to the right of the second character. So during filming their positions remain consistent in relation to each other. The transition from one character to the character opposite is called a **SHOT/PRINT**. The counter-shot does not cross this axis, but shows the space corresponding to the space of the interviewee (thus remaining on that side of the line).

This rule ensures the continuity of the film, because if you break this rule by moving the camera out of line, you can end up with both characters being on the same side of the screen, which is spatially confusing for the audience.



By combining main shots with shots/counter-shots during editing, the result will be a scene seen from different angles.

An alternative to using different action shot angles is to use a single point of view, using a camera placed on a stabiliser (Steadicam). This method is commonly referred to as a **LONG SHOT**. It is a particularly long shot, with no cuts or breaks, that captures the scene as a whole. It is a shot that is intended to appear as a single continuous shot in the final edit of the film.

Long takes are particularly appreciated by those directors who strive for realism (because real time and film time correspond) and a high level of quality in terms of cinematographic technique. Indeed, long takes involve particularly difficult work, as you cannot rely on editing and back-up shots to correct your mistakes (an object out of place, unexpected events, a badly spoken or misspoken line, etc.).

3.3.3 Camera movements

Camera movements are a specific code of audiovisual language that is specific to moving image practices. The static or dynamic nature of the camera is therefore also a basic framing parameter. Among camera movements, we distinguish three main types:

PANORAMA (**PANNING**): Generally used to describe an environment, external or internal, so that the viewer can get an overview of the whole. As such, panorama is usually slow. Otherwise, it can perform a relational function, combining two frames without cropping.

TRACKING SHOT: occurs whenever the camera moves through space (in each of the three spatial dimensions, side, front and top). The camera is placed on a moving support such as a cart or car. Tracking shot is an expressive, highly evocative way of communicating the director's point of view, as it increases or decreases the importance of the framed elements. It is also very important to define the relationship between the camera movement and the elements of the scene (for example, driving can be used to follow a character or a main element).

ZOOM: This is a way of simulating tracking (in fact, zoom is often referred to as optical tracking) by using a variable focus lens to zoom in or out (zoom in/out) of the framed subject. Compared to tracking shot, which is implemented physically by moving the camera, zoom provides a deformation of the optics and thus a different rendering perspective and sharpness of the image.

Unless your budget allows you to invest in advanced equipment such as dollys, drones, stabilisers (Steadicam), etc., you will probably use the camera yourself and handheld. You can use a stand (easel) to stabilise the image, but you can also move the camera yourself without the help of tripods or other devices. This technique is called **HAND HELD CAMERA** and is particularly appreciated by those directors who value aesthetic notions such as the idea of visual instability and emulating non-professional formats.

3.3.4 Filming with telephones

Nowadays, mobile phones allow you to record any kind of video with professional, high-quality results. However, using a phone has its advantages and disadvantages:

PLUSES

- You probably already own a phone and don't need to buy expensive professional cameras and equipment.
- People are already used to using it to record video and you probably already know/use many of the filming functions and capabilities of your device.
- It's easy to carry your phone with you, even if you plan to shoot in unusual locations.
- You can also rely on inexpensive equipment that can help you take better quality shots, such as stabilisers, tripods, lens kits, etc. What's more, you can use your phone to film smooth tracking shots.

FAILURES

- The camera is small and does not allow for all the effects that a professional camera provides, especially in terms of the types of shots.
- The phone does not perform well in low light, so if you plan to shoot at night or in special lighting conditions (sunrise or sunset), mobile phones may not be suitable for your needs.
- The sound is limited, so you will have to get very close to the actors to record them in good quality or use a separate microphone. What's more, you may not be able to monitor what you're recording, risking leaving the set, returning home and discovering you've wasted your time because the sound is bad.
- It can be difficult to maintain a stable position when shooting, so consider buying stabilisers, cases or clamps.
- Even with professional camera applications, adjustments and manual control are limited.

3.3.5 Sound (even silence)

Sound is an extremely important part of a film. It helps to create a mood, directing the audience's attention to a particular element of the image Particularly in environmental messages, in filming themes related to conservation issues, habitats, etc., it should be taken into account. Sound in cinema takes many forms, which can be summarised in three categories: speech, music and noise (sound effects). However, to be more precise, a distinction can be made:

DIALOGUE: Conversations and verbal communication between two or more characters This is one of the most important parts of the film, as it drives the plot and themes.

ENVIRONMENTAL or BACKGROUND SOUND: This is the sound characteristic of the location or outdoor area in which you are recording. This sound is extremely important for consistency.

SOUND EFFECTS: Sounds that are usually not easy to reproduce (e.g. military noises in a war scene, a crowd cheering in a stadium). You can rely on pre-recorded sound libraries to get these types of sounds, often for free, and then add them to the image in post-production.

FOLEY: Some people have never heard of it, but it is quite an interesting type of sound. Named after Jack Foley, who pioneered the practice of pre-recording everyday sounds, the term refers to all the sounds we commonly hear in everyday life (footsteps, fabric sounds, objects and props) that are fundamental to making a film consistent. These are recorded separately (there are online libraries you can use) and added to the images in sync when the film is already recorded.

MUSIC: is one of the most important elements of a film, as it plays a key role in setting the tone of a scene or sequence. Through the right choice of music, the director is able to emphasise the emotional charge, tone and overall atmosphere of a scene or sequence, and even better describe a character and his or her narrative role.

The configuration of such sounds (in terms of volume, rhythm, etc.) goes beyond issues directly related to cinema. But when it comes to the use of sounds in film, several other technical issues need to be taken into account. Any sound can be related to the diegesis and can be completely detached from the level of the narrative. We can have:

- SOUND IN: diegetic sound; the source is framed - a song played on the radio is heard by both the characters and the audience.
- SOUND OFF: diegetic sound, the source of which remains out of frame - the protagonists and the audience hear the sound of the sea and the cries of seagulls, but none of these appear in the frame.
- SOUND OVER: non-diegetic or internal diegetic sound (the character hears it in his mind).

3.3.6 Directing actors

Another fundamental task of the director is to work with the actors to determine how their characters should be played and what a particular scene should look like. The actors contribute, of course, but the director is the person most responsible for the final outcome, even the final acting decisions.
Directing an actor means giving him cues to discover the intention of what he is supposed to do. The problem for the film actor is that he cannot perform in continuity, in front of an audience, as in the theatre. There is a risk of the performance being broken down into countless episodes and movements without any overall unity. It is the director's job to guide the actor so that he or she maintains the coherence of the character by giving him or her psychological and emotional cues. The essential point is to get the actor to play his part as if he were the character, not just imitating the character's attitudes, but living them as if they were his own.

Treating an actor like a puppet replicating gestures and reflexes is a director's biggest mistake. You can't teach an actor how to behave on set, but you can create the conditions that allow them to feel that character within themselves. To achieve this, the director must help the actor find the key to portraying the character. Perhaps engaging him, making him react and working on how **he feels about the characters he is portraying emotionally** would help**.**

A key element in the relationship between director and actors is the number of doubles of the same take. There are directors who rehearse a lot and then limit the number of doubles in order to keep the actor's performance 'fresh'. On the other hand, there are directors who prefer to accumulate doubles to get a particular intensity from the actor through tension and fatigue. The choice is yours, but remember that whatever your directing style, actors must be driven!

GLOSSARY

Diegeza — Generally speaking, a diegesis is a whole world of narratives. Every narrative contains a diegesis, but each type of story captures this space-time in different ways.
In film theory, this term refers to the spatio-temporal world depicted in a film. Everything in this world (such as dialogue or sounds used to establish location) is referred to as **diegetic**, while everything outside it (such as voiceover, music that only the audience hears or superimposed subtitles) is **extra-diegetic**.

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4.
Editing and post-production

Post-production is the phase following the production of a film in which the editing of the audiovisual material begins.

4.1 Combine the material and cut it!

Once all the scenes have been shot and you have the raw footage, it is time to start editing. At this stage, the film is finally edited: you have the chance to look at all the available footage and decide which shots to insert, which to trim or delete, and in what order to place the frames next to each other to create the film you have in mind. During editing, you can really see how the film is made. As such, the editor, working closely with the director, decides which shots to use, how to combine them and how long to keep each shot before moving on to the next. Good editing is therefore about choosing shots and combining them to convey the director's vision.

4.1.1 Do you like puzzles? Sense-making montage

A film in its raw form resembles a jigsaw puzzle: you have individual shots, music, sound effects and perhaps some visual effects, and then you have to combine all these elements to create a complete, coherent film. Editing, however, is more than just combining shots into scenes and sequences. Editing is not just a mechanical process, it is also an art; the art of selecting the best/most important shots from the footage recorded on location and collecting, combining them into a cohesive film.

According to some theorists, editing represents the true specificity of film language. Even those who don't go that far claim that editing is one of the most important parts of filmmaking: you may not notice good editing (film editing is often referred to as the 'invisible art') because you are immersed in the story, but you will definitely notice bad editing because the film will be confusing, boring and uninteresting.

This is because, through editing, it is possible to convey meaning, deliver messages and emotionally influence the audience! Film directors discovered the power of editing from the very beginning of the medium. They realised that an image on screen did not have to show a person from head to toe and that shots could be taken in different locations at different times and then combined to form a narrative whole. Moreover, they discovered that combining two shots creates an emotional and cognitive effect in the viewer's mind.

Particularly with regard to the emotional engagement of the audience, one of the most important theories is the '**Kuleshov effect**'.

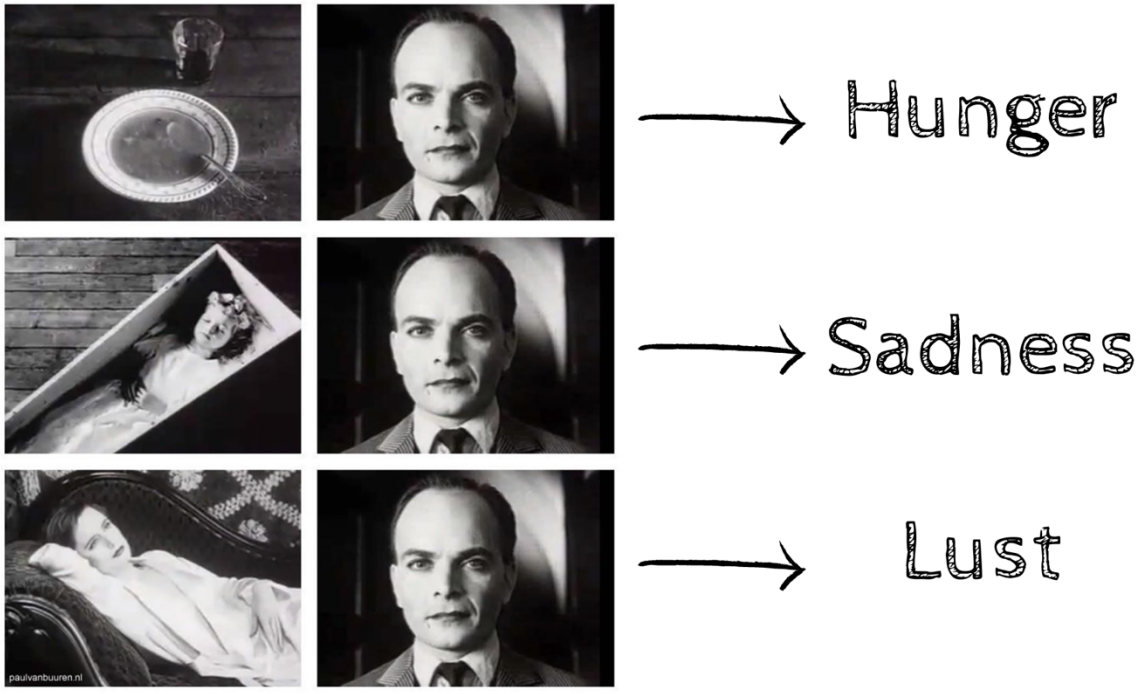
The Kuleshov Effect was a filmmaking experiment conducted by Soviet filmmaker Lev Kuleshov in the 1920s, who was interested in pushing boundaries and experimenting with creative editing

techniques. Kuleshov demonstrated that viewers derive more meaning from the interaction of two sequential shots (which is the basis of the editing process) than from a single, isolated shot. The experiment also showed that editing has a strong impact on viewers in terms of both emotional and intellectual engagement.

How exactly did Kuleshov achieve this result?

While teaching at the Moscow Film School, he conducted an experiment to demonstrate how the viewer's interpretation of a character's facial expression could be influenced by juxtaposing it with a second image. He edited a close-up of an expressionless man (for which he used a frame of Tsarist silent film actor Ivan Mozzhukhin) together with three alternative final shots: a dead child in a coffin, a bowl of soup and a woman lying on a couch. Kuleshov then showed the three edited films to three separate audiences and asked the audience to interpret what they thought Ivan Mozzhukhin was thinking.

People who saw the image of the dead child claimed that the man's facial expression indicated sadness. Viewers who saw the man and then a frame with a plate of soup interpreted the man's facial expression as hunger. And combined with the image of the woman on the couch, viewers assumed that the man was feeling lust. In fact, the man's facial expression was identical in all three films, but how viewers interpreted the expression - hunger, sadness or lust - depended entirely on the image that followed.



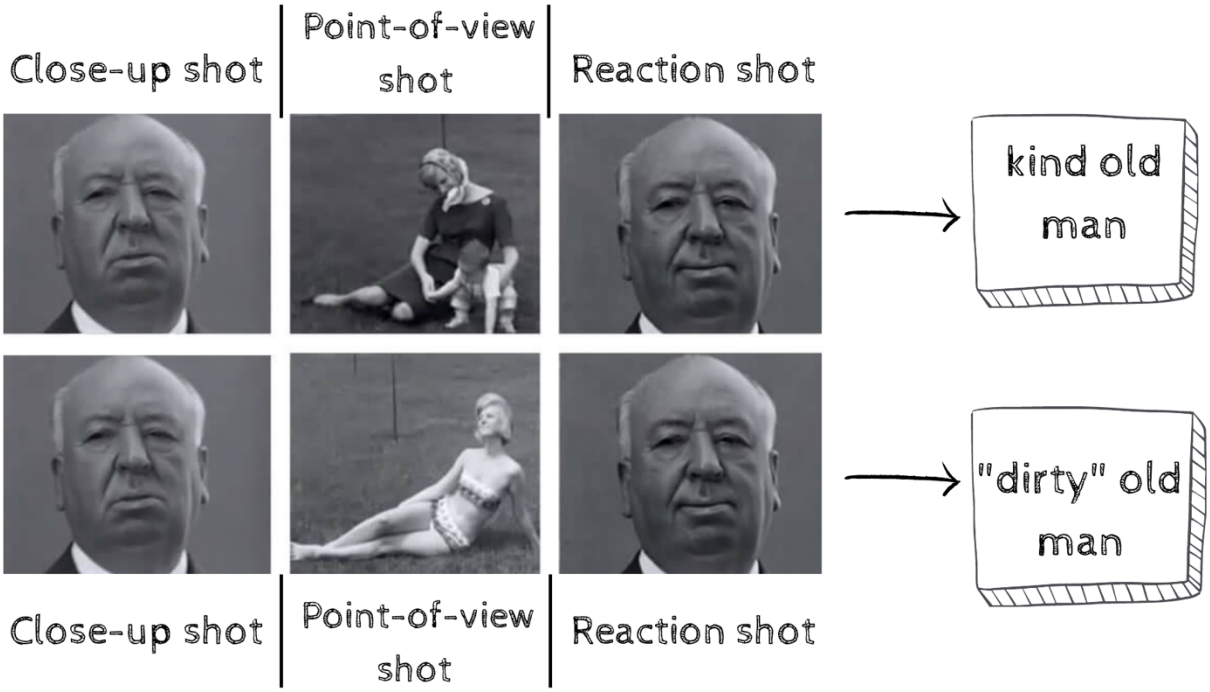
The experiment showed directors and editors that shot length, movement, cuts and juxtapositions are cinematic techniques that can be used as linguistic means to communicate something, a message or a feeling to the audience.

Kuleshov eventually came to the conclusion that a film story is better told by cutting and juxtaposing individual fragments of a film.

Many years after Kuleshov's first experiment, director **Alfred Hitchcock** used and adapted it into his own theory of montage. In Hitchcock's vision, the core of the editing process is based on three shots:

1. Close-up shot
2. Putting it into perspective
3. Reaction shot (a shot that cuts away from the main scene to show a character's reaction to it).

Hitchcock added a reaction shot to his basic 'montage unit' to further explain to the audience what the character is thinking or feeling about what he has just seen.



How to practically use the 'Kuleshov effect' in a film? Well, this principle should be kept in mind at all stages of production. For example, in the script you should give the characters a chance to react to every important piece of dialogue and action. These reactions will be invaluable at the editing stage! Furthermore, during filming, care should be taken to use close-ups to focus on the face of a single character to emphasise their emotional reactions, which will help the audience to feel and understand the action on screen. All of these elements culminate in editing: having enough close-ups and reaction shots gives editors the opportunity to connect scenes in a way that leads the audience to specific feelings/emotional states.

What we have said about the ability of montage to arouse and channel certain emotional states in the audience is also important from an intellectual point of view: montage can significantly influence the audience and their understanding of a film and its message. Indeed, editing can be seen as a way to effectively communicate information, themes, thoughts and ideas about a subject WITHOUT WORDS.

During the same period in which Kuleshov was working on his experiment, his pupil**, Sergei Eisenstein, developed his** teacher's discovery and elaborated on his theory, arguing that the essence and communicative power of film language is based on montage, aiming to juxtapose shot A ('thesis') with shot B ('antithesis') in order to create an entirely new idea ('synthesis') in the viewer's mind.

Using its tools, editing plays a key role in the narrative, cognitive and dramatic construction of the entire film:

- The montage defines the role of characters and objects: the hierarchies of characters, the dynamics of the relationships between them, but also the importance of certain objects can be emphasised through montage techniques.

- Editing enhances acting: it allows the filmmaker to insert close-ups, reaction shots, visual relationships between two or more actors and pauses between lines of dialogue to maximise acting.

- The montage creates the climax of the scene: the use of a suspenseful montage of images, music and sound effects reinforces the tension of the scene.

- The montage reinforces the director's stylistic choices as well as the message he wants to convey through the film

4.1.2 Creating an assembly: Cuts and transitions

There are many different elements to consider when editing footage:

a) **Pace**: the length of shots and scenes gives the whole film a pace - a sense of moving fast or slow.
b) **Stage length**
c) **Order of shots and scenes**: by arranging shots in a specific order, the meaning of a scene can be influenced. We can distinguish between two main ways of ordering scenes:
   - *Linear editing*: this involves editing the shots shot in the order in which they follow each other.
   - *Non-linear editing*: each shot and scene can be moved in any order in the film. (For example, the opening scene can easily be moved to the end). Non-linear editing is easier, faster and allows for more imagination than linear editing.
d) Cut on Action: most shots are better cut (or edited) in action.
e) **Matching shots**: combine static shots with other static shots and moving shots with other moving shots. Otherwise, the result can be shocking and disruptive (which, however, may have been your intention all along!).
f) **Showing simultaneous action**: scenes taking place at the same time can be intercut.
g) **Selection of the best shot** (or combination of several best shots): The more shots, the more choice you have in the editing room. You can also combine fragments of different shots to achieve the desired effect.

The most popular editing technique to achieve all of the above-mentioned goals is the **MONTAGE CUT**. Cuts are instant transitions used to move the audience from one image to the next or from one scene to the next. A cut can change a scene, compress time, change point of view or even create an image or concept.

There are many different types of cuts in film. While some are more conceptual and others more narrative, they are all defined by the direct linking of images.

CUT ON ACTION

The transition from one shot to another while the subject is still in motion. It is an abrupt change of shot from one point of view or location to another. The use of cutaways in action makes for smooth and fluid editing.

CUT AWAY

It is the interruption of continuous filmed action by inserting the view of something else. It breaks the continuity of a scene by giving the audience a new point of view.

MATCH CUT

Any transition, audio or visual, that uses elements from the previous scene to move the viewer seamlessly into the next scene. It differs from regular cuts because it provides a thematic connection (subtext) between two separate events or concepts.

CROSS-CUTTING

Transition from one line of action to another. Juxtaposed shots interweave two actions taking place at the same time but in different settings.

JUMP CUT

This happens when a cut is made within the same shot, usually static. Characters are shown in different positions, so it can be an effective film editing technique to represent a jump in time.

The final edited version of a film is called the **final version**. Parts of scenes, or even whole scenes, may be cut if the director and/or editor feel they are not needed to tell the story - or if the film is longer than expected.

In addition to cuts, editors can use visual effects called **TRANSITIONS** to move from one scene to another (they are not often used to move from one frame to the next).

FADE IN / FADE OUT

The scene emerges gradually from silence or darkness and vice versa.

CROSS DISSOLVE

When you gradually mix one shot with another. This can represent the passage of time or the transition from two different situations/places.

WIPE / IRIS

One shot replaces another, moving or 'crossing over' from one side of the frame to the other. The transition can be made from any direction and in various shapes. One of these is called 'Iris' and is achieved by enlarging or reducing the circular transition.

J-CUT / L-CUT

X

These are transitions in which sound either precedes or continues from the next scene. An L-cut contains the sound from the first clip over the second clip, while a J-cut contains the sound from the second clip over the first clip.

SPLIT SCREEN

Dividing the screen into sections that can show the viewer several images at the same time (sometimes the same action from different perspectives).

4.2 Editing music and sounds

So far we have seen the post-production phase of the visual material, but of course we also need to take care of the audio material. Audio post-production mainly involves inputting separate soundtracks - containing dialogue, sound effects, songs and music - into a computer and mixing them using special audio mixing software. More specifically, this involves synchronising these sounds with moving images, editing them and adjusting levels. More than 80 per cent of the sound in a film is added after shooting and during post-production: dialogue, sound effects, music, etc. are often recorded separately and then mixed to create a soundtrack to be added to the visual track. Even if you have chosen to record the sound in sync, you will always have to add something (perhaps music, a theme or sound effects) or at least adjust something, such as sound levels. When editing sounds, bear in mind that you can insert multiple sound levels at the same time: you can add dialogue, music and background sounds to the same scene by manipulating the sound modulation effects.

The first concept you need to know in order to edit audio is **audio dynamics.** This term describes the difference between the maximum and minimum volume of a track. If an audio fragment goes from quiet to loud, it is said to have a high dynamic range, and when a loud fragment becomes quiet, it is said to have a low dynamic range. Dynamic range is used to make sure that audio fragments from different tracks have the right dynamic range, blending well together and then contributing to the overall impression of the scene.

The sound layers consist of several elements: dialogue, sound effects, foley, music, voiceover narration (if present), ambient sounds and songs/music within the scene. You need to make sure that all these elements do not compete with each other. To do this, you need to focus on the imagery, reinforcing the sense of the scene and the cognitive as well as emotional message. In this way you can help the audience focus on the story. **A compressor** can be used to mix, balance and adjust the different levels of all these tracks. Compression is commonly used to maintain a constant level by lowering the level when it is high and raising it when it is low. It is a very common tool that can be found in any editing software. It is particularly useful when mixing music and dialogue.

As we have already noted, finding the right **music track** is an important step in the creation of a film, emphasising the scene, dramatising the situation and helping the audience to feel a certain atmosphere. Any music can be added in post-production. If you have a limited budget, look for public domain music, royalty-free music and/or Creative Commons music to use in your videos. Make sure you choose the most appropriate music for your purpose and place it (or parts of it) in the right place at the right time. Adjusting the volume level of the music is crucial when combining music and dialogue. To do this better, you can 'play' with editing tools such as **transitions**: the music can *fade in* or *out,* meaning that the sound becomes progressively quieter or louder at a certain point in the scene, depending on the presence of dialogue. Essentially, when there are dialogues, the music serves as a kind of emotional 'accompaniment' to what the actors are saying. This means that the volume of the music should not exceed the volume of the dialogues.

Dialogue can also be edited. Although dialogue is the only sound from the actual recording that has been retained throughout the film, it also needs to be enhanced. The key word for dialogue editing is 'fluidity'. Properly edited dialogue does not sound edited at all. They sound as if a real person is speaking. So, when dialogue editing is not smooth, when you hear a click, a strange pitch jump or an odd tempo, it reminds you that what you are watching is not 'real'.

Furthermore, **sound effects,** or sounds that build up layers of sound, can also be added in post-production to create an immersive soundscape as suggested by the director. Almost all sound effects accompanying a film are added or reconstructed in post-production. Almost every possible sound effect can be found in online libraries (many of which are free).

4.3 A colourful life! Colour correction and gradation

Once the editing (of both the visual and soundtrack) is complete, the next step is all the additional processes to finalise and refine the video.

One of them is **COLOUR CORRECTION**.

It is a technical process (implemented by software) that involves adjusting the colour, contrast and exposure of footage to make it appear natural and unprocessed (as the human eye experiences it in real life). Colour correction is used to harmonise and optimise footage, but it can also correct technical colour errors and can help save a great scene that has been penalised by poor lighting.

Another interesting tool is **COLOUR GRADATION** (also known as **colour washing**).
It involves giving a film an overall specific look through a process of colour change for aesthetic, informational and artistic purposes. It is a process of 'styling' the colour scheme (*palette*) of the footage, which emphasises the visual tone and atmosphere of the film and characterises it as more 'cinematic'.

An important difference between colour correction and colour grading is that, while the former is carried out shot by shot, the latter covers the entire footage or at least a large part of it, depending on the location and the various moments in which the story takes place.

Vocabulary

Leitmotif: A musical motif, a recurring melodic phrase in music that allows the filmmaker to convey a clear characteristic of the story in an engaging way. It can signal a character, setting, emotion, repetition of events or theme.
Think of the shark appearing in *Jaws*, every scene of Darth Vader's entrance, the James Bond theme and so on.

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5.
Organisation of work

The following pages contain advice on how to concretise the project and work with all those involved in the production and post-production phase of the film.
Making a film requires teamwork and a clear division of roles: every film needs a crew, because one person cannot do everything.

5.1 Roles

The creation of a film is a collective operation and requires the cooperation of many people. Each person involved in the creation of the film has a specific role to ensure that all operations (pre-production, production and post-production) run as smoothly as possible and no time is wasted.

DIRECTION
Director - Assistant Director - Scriptwriter

PHOTOGRAPHY
Director of Photography - Camera Operator - Gaffer

AUDIO
Sound Engineer

PRODUCTION
Producer -Script Supervisor

EDITING
editor

COSTUME DEPARTMENT and SET DECORATION
Set Decorator - Prop Master - Costume Designer

In addition to these main positions, there are of course many other people and many other departments involved in film production. Just to name a few: the **film location scout (**who searches all the locations in the script and finds the actual outdoor locations where the film is shot), the **casting director** (who suggests actors suitable for each role according to the script), the **post-production co-ordinator (**who co-ordinates the shooting of the film and plans the editing of the cinematography and sound elements), the **make-up artist** (who knows how to work with different skin tones and make them look the way you want them to, even in difficult lighting conditions).

5.1.1 Creative and technical roles

To be more precise, we can identify two categories of roles in film, creative roles and technical roles. This is a useful distinction, but be careful not to take it too seriously: cinema is both an art and a technique, so technicians are a bit of an artist too, and artists need to be a bit of a technician!

Creative roles:

DIRECTOR

As Bryan M. Stoller (2009) stated, 'a director must be a multi-talented multi-tasker. The director is the captain of the ship, the leader of the pack and is responsible for bringing all the creative elements together'.

The director is responsible for everything that happens on set and is the author and artistic supervisor of the film. The director has a multitude of tasks that he or she carries out, working alongside many other production roles:

- Together with the scriptwriter(s), the directors contribute to realising the script and turning it into a storyboard.
- They select and direct the actors.
- Together with the production designer and costume designer, they decide on the visual layout of the film.
- Together with the cinematographer, they decide on the shots.
- Together with the fitter, they decide on the installation.

The director is responsible for the coherence of the film and its visual and stylistic identity. Therefore, he or she must have an in-depth technical knowledge of filming techniques and a good understanding of the roles of individuals.

SCENARIST

These are writers who practice the craft of screenwriting. No specific training is required to become a screenwriter, just good storytelling skills and a good command of language and imagination.

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

They are responsible for the lighting of the film and assist the director in setting up the cameras and imagining the film from script to screen. The director of photography is one of the most important members of the team: during preparation, he carries out inspections and draws up a list of the necessary technical materials; during shooting, he lights the scene, sets the set of lights and tells the cinematographer which apertures to use; after editing, he performs colour correction.

The director of photography is jointly responsible with the director for the final look and style of the film, so he or she must have both technical and aesthetic skills.

MONTAGIST

The film finds its form, rhythm, style and often structure in the editing. Editors are responsible for

making sure that each shot flows seamlessly into the next, as well as the timing and pace of the film. The work of a film editor is at once creative, technical and collaborative.

The editor helps the director tell his story by assembling the footage into a coherent whole, adding transitions, sound effects and music.

Their tasks include:

- Combining shots into sequences.
- Reading scripts to plan shots before filming begins.
- If necessary, shoot additional material on set. The editor should be in consultation with the director, but can also interfere with the choices made by trying out alternative solutions.
- Watching the shooting day's footage (*dailies*) (footage shot the previous day) to make sure the director got everything he or she needed.

And, of course, **the ACTOR(S)** must be taken into account!

Technical roles

PRODUCER

The producer is responsible for developing the project (and sometimes finding funding). The producer is responsible for 'assigning roles', hiring the crew and working with the director to hire actors. The producer helps to 'produce' all the elements necessary for the production.

Among their tasks:

- Location scouting and organisation of site inspections.
- Execute the work plan and production schedule (together with the assistant director).
- They're like 'Mr Wolf' from *Pulp Fiction*: they solve problems on set!

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

They act as intermediaries between the director and the production and the various departments such as set, costume and make-up. They have a coordinating and organisational role. Among their tasks we can include:

- Auditioning actors.
- Creation of a working plan.
- Analysing the shot plan with the director.
- Checking that actors know their lines and practising with them before shooting scenes.
- This is the contact person for all clarifications and information.

SCRIPT SUPERVISOR

Their job is to be a guide during editing. They oversee the continuity of the film, including costumes, props, sets and actors' actions during a scene. Essentially, they take notes on every aspect of the film. The notes written by the script supervisor during the filming of a scene are used to help the editors edit the scene. Among their tasks are:

- Saving the contents of each shot.
- Record the director's, cinematographer's and sound engineer's comments and assessments on each shot.
- Ensuring continuity and consistency of the film.

CAMERA (or SMARTPHONE) OPERATOR
The cinematographer is responsible for framing shots under the supervision of the director of photography and the director. As the cinematographer is responsible for the practical execution of the shots on set, he or she must have both technical and artistic skills in image composition. He must have the ability to understand the type of camera movement in relation to the action, controlling the image in real time (which requires good reflexes).

GAFFER
The lighting master arranges the lighting on set as directed by the director of photography to ensure that the mood and lighting of each scene works effectively. Often the lighting master is also an electrician or has experience and knowledge of working with electricity and voltage.

SOUND ENGINEER
They are responsible for recording the sound of dialogue and all ambient sounds. They usually follow the action through headphones and check the clarity of the recording, that is, whether the sounds are clear and understandable. If you are using directional microphones, ensure that they are close to the actors, without entering the frame or causing shadows.

SCENOGRAPHER (and RECORDER)
The set designer has the task of 'framing' the story written in the script, i.e. building the right environment and providing the right furnishings around the characters. The production designer can also be a prop maker. Very few films do not require props, and it is the prop designer who has to ensure that they are all available for use on set, work as they should and fulfil the director's (or director of photography's) vision.

COSTUME DESIGNER
The costume designer takes care of the actors' image by creating or finding costumes for them according to the script and the director's instructions. The costume designer must carry out research (the amount of which depends on the genre of the film, as well as the concept and creation of the costumes) to ensure that the costumes are appropriate for the film and do not jeopardise the coherence of the film.

5.1.2 Something nice for everyone

To decide what role you will take on or split (perhaps within a class), consider what you and your colleagues enjoy doing most. If someone likes to put things together and has a flair for problem solving, they are likely to be a great producer. If someone can imagine things as they should be and loves working with people, they might make a good director. If someone loves to tell stories, is inspired and gets ideas from everywhere, they might be able to write scripts.

5.2 How to create a cinema laboratory.

To optimise your work, define a timeline and stages for the creation of the film and develop a schedule. Ensure that you have enough time to complete the film, from preparation to the final version. For this reason, consider planning a schedule of at least two months (more or less).

Week 1: Preparation

- *Initiation of script writing and drafting*→ Screenwriter(s), Producer.

Discuss the idea with the class, brainstorm, and once you have decided what you want to write about, start writing down your story and turn it into a script (see Chapter 2).
In order to bring all the plots together, a script outline should be written. It should include the main facts that will happen, the situations and how each character will evolve in each scene. Furthermore, create character sketches for each character so that you have a clear profile of each of them and their identifiers. This will help you maintain consistency throughout the film.

- *Checking and improving the script*→ Director

Discuss the design of the scenes with the scriptwriter(s) and make sure the story will be told 'visually'. Begin briefing crew members on their assignments and plan the shoot

Week two: Pre-production I

- *Rethinking and re-writing the script*→ Writer, director and cinematographer.

Once you have a draft script, circulate it to everyone involved in the making of the film and collect comments, considering which suggestions you should consider and incorporate into the final version of the script.

- *Start involving the crew and position them at*→ Director, assistant director, actors, technical crew, producer.

The director holds auditions and selects actors for the roles. Shortly afterwards, the selected actors take part in a 'table read', during which the actors take on the roles of each character and read the script and their lines aloud. This helps the director, scriptwriters and actors to imagine the end result, get to know the characters and create emotional tension between the actors.

Reading table for *Game of Thrones*, season 1.

- *Start thinking about photography*→ Cinematographer and editor

The cinematographer begins to think about possible locations and light placement, while the editor and director begin to consider possible shots and camera movements that will be useful in the editing phase.

Weeks three and four: Pre-Production II

- *Concrete preparations*→ Director, assistant director, director of photography, editor, producer, actors, technical crew.

The director works on the storyboard with the director of photography and editor to design the scenes and visualise them. In addition, he carries out a script reading with the actors, who continue to work on their characters and memorise issues. Once the script has been finalised and circulated, several rehearsals should be conducted with the actors before shooting, discussing the 'story' of each scene and revealing each character's motivation.

Set designers, costume designers, make-up artists and other technical operators begin to organise and prepare their material.

Have a final meeting with all the cast and crew before the production starts to discuss all the details. Is everyone in their seats and briefed on their assignments?

Weeks five and six: Production

- *Preparation of a film set, organisation and execution of shooting*→ Director, assistant director, director of photography
  Technical crew, shooting continuity supervisor, producer, actors.

The director works closely with the director of photography, checking the shots for each scene according to the storyboard. The director and director of photography place the necessary props and start shooting.

Once the actors are in their seats and the camera is ready, the director shouts "Camera!" and then lets the cameraman know that it is time to start shooting.

The director then says "Action!", which is the signal for the actors to begin.

While filming, carefully observe what is happening and try to imagine the end result. Ask yourself: does the scene work? Is it as it was planned? Are the actors OK, or should/could they have done better? If you are unsure about a scene, shoot a re-shoot: you can choose which one you prefer in the editing phase. Shoot as many takes as necessary, but remember that you have limited time (and don't abuse the tolerance of the actors and crew!).

When a scene is finished and satisfying, wait a few seconds and let the camera continue and then the director shouts "Cut!". Only at this point do people feel free to talk to each other and move around the set.

Weeks seven and eight: editing and post-production

- *Shot editing*→ Director of photography, director of photography, editor

It will take a lot of time and effort to edit the film and combine all the scenes. Once you have collected all the shots, you need to organise them by creating a list of all the raw shots with the corresponding place number where they appear. Remember to label the list with all the information and comments you need to recognise. This will help you decide whether to use the shot or not.

During these weeks, the director and editor complete the editing of the film, select and add music and other sound effects, and correct the cinematography (colour correction). Then, when the film is ready, a screening takes place.

When	What	Who
week 1	Preparation	Director, Screenwriter(s), Producer
week 2	Pre-production I	Screenwriter(s), Director, Assistant Director, Producer, Cinematographer, Editor, Actors, Technical Crew
week 3-4	Pre-production II	Director, Assistant Director, Producer, Cinematographer, Editor, Actors, Technical Crew
week 5-6	Production	Director, Assistant Director, Producer, Cinematographer, Script Supervisor, Technical Crew, Actors
week 7-8	Editing and Post-production	Director, Cinematographer, Editor

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