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HOW ASPIRING FILMMAKERS COPE WITH UNEXPECTED EVENTS ON SET

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ABSTRACT

Making the transition between plans and unexpected occurrences is something organizations are used to doing every day. However, not much is known about how actors cope with unanticipated events and how they accommodate them within predefined schedules. In this study, we draw on an inductive analysis of aspiring filmmakers' film sets to elaborate on how they plan their shooting activities every day, only to adjust them when unforeseen complications arise. We discover that film crews anchor their expectations for the day based on a planned shooting schedule, yet they incorporate a built-in assumption that it will inevitably be disrupted. We argue that they resort to triage processes and "troubleshooting protocols" that help decipher incoming problems. Familiar problems are solved by making use of experience obtained from past situations, whereas unprecedented problems are solved through a tacit protocol used as a tool to quickly devise an appropriate game plan. This study contributes to the literature on sense-making and provides valuable information about the unexplored world of filmmaking.

INTRODUCTION

The process of making a film is a very complex one. (Cox, 1985) It is a highly collaborative art form that relies on the creative inputs of several people, who must be given specific roles to ensure the process unfolds smoothly. It involves three stages, all of which are equally important: pre-production, production and post-production.

In the pre-production stage, filmmakers try to prepare as much as possible for the next phase. This is when producers finalize the script, assemble the team, find locations, cast actors, plan accommodation and catering, design wardrobes and define shooting times. It is particularly important, because the next stage, when the film is actually shot, is usually the shortest of the three – and also the most expensive – and thus filmmakers cannot afford to be dealing with those details during the shoot. They strive to sort everything beforehand, and that includes anticipating problems that have not occurred yet, but just might. Even so, some complications are evidently unforeseeable, and will have to be solved on the spot. That is the unpredictable nature of moviemaking.

Even in Hollywood, the world's greatest film industry, filmmakers face unexpected setbacks and are forced to devise immediate solutions (Sedgwick and Pokorny, 1998). Time is always the scarcest resource, because it translates into two types of cost: money being spent, and money not being made. That is why the importance of time is twofold, especially during the production stage when both actors and crew are being paid. Preparation is key:

> *"I don't even have time to think for half an hour if I'm on the set directing, because in that half an hour I've got 30 people coming up to me asking me questions. So I can help everyone else, but I can't help me. I don't get the time I*

> *need to think."* Peter Jackson, on directing "The Hobbit" without the proper preparation. (IMDb, 2015)

In the context of independent and aspiring film productions, this is even more patent. Film students' projects, for instance, are often low- to no-budget endeavours that involve a large amount of uncertainty and disarray. Crewmembers are usually quite inexperienced, and generally work on an unremunerated basis. They do so as a means to put the theory they have studied into practice, and to learn the craft by making mistakes and acquiring experience. It is therefore a process that involves a great degree of experimentation and improvisation, in sometimes highly tumultuous environments.

Independent film sets are a fertile ground for studying improvisation processes, because they are fast-paced environments where several people are constantly trying to tackle obstacles that arise. On set, plans are always changing: shots have to be reframed in the last minute, lights have to be repositioned, props must be replaced, make-up retouched, wardrobe re-ironed – and all this under rapidly approaching deadlines that must be met. The pace of the work is determined by whatever time is left, and in this process, crewmembers must make quick decisions to cope with unexpected changes in the planned outlook of the day.

Naturally, this phenomenon occurs in other environments as well, but in a different fashion. For instance, in fast-paced situations like hospitals or police squads, improvisation is practically constant (Argote, 1982, Faraj and Xiao, 2006). These are environments where the reality is mostly chaotic, with constant interruptions and where "the boundary between routine and non-routine work is increasingly blurred". (Patriotta and Gruber, 2015)

By contrast, film sets feature a particularly interesting ratio between planned and unexpected action. (Bechky and Okhuysen, 2011). This paper delves into these dynamics in the context of the Portuguese aspiring-filmmaker scene by analysing how these young filmmakers set this ratio and cope with the unexpectedness of their jobs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Projects require organization, a structure that successfully turns a complex and chaotic reality into a rational orderliness. To achieve this, organizations develop temporal orders as a way to schedule, allocate and synchronize activities (Zerubavel, 1979; Hassard, 1991). Indeed, organizations need plans, routines, schedules and deadlines to fathom the complexity of the work they perform. (Patriotta and Gruber, 2015). To this extent, time represents a resource of great importance towards the establishment of order. Actors in the organization create expectations based on a timeframe. In fact, the very concept of "planning" or "expecting" requires a sense of a temporal order. (Weick and Sutcliffe, 2007). Any given plan must refer to a certain point in time, just like any expectation must. Thus, when this orderly structure is confronted, actors are forced to alter their plans and adapt resources to adjust to the new, unexpected reality.

To this regard, several scholars have studied how sense-making and improvisation unfold in a variety of settings. For example, the literature on Jazz Improvisation is extensive, and provides valuable insight towards the comprehension of complex improvisation processes. In fact, jazz musicians build their *jams* "on-the-go", based on an intricate process of improvisation that is developed over the course of years. In that sense, a jazz performance is never the same, because musicians can never repeat any given interpretation – the performance comes from the improvisation that arises in the spur of the moment. The existing literature points towards the existence of two major

pillars that sustain this phenomenon: the musicians' technical knowledge (of keys, chorus, riffs etc.), and the social interactions between them. (Bastien and Hostager, 1988; Kamoche and Cunha, 2001)

In addition, most scholars seem to agree that there must be a basis for improvisation. As one musician put it, "You can't improvise on nothin', man. You gotta improvise on somethin'." (Kernfeld, 1995). For example, Kamoche and Cunha (2001) argue that the basis of improvisation is the existence of so-called "minimal structures", that is, a range of unanimous conventions upon which musicians build their *jams*. Barrett (1998) also supports this theory and reinforces that "successful jazz performances are not haphazard or accidental. Musicians prepare themselves to be spontaneous".

By contrast, other academics have identified the need for improvisation in other environments, where the circumstances that lead to improvisation are completely distinct. For example, Patriotta and Gruber (2015) studied the sense-making processes that occur in a newsroom, providing some refreshing insight on this topic: in fact, whereas jazz musicians *intend* to improvise, news people *have* to improvise due to the unexpected nature of their job.

These scholars have recognized a distinction between "clock time" (that is, a measurable unit composed by hours and minutes) and "event time" (a set of sporadic occurrences that happen in an unpredictable fashion), and established that these two variables are related, but temporally disconnected. In the newsroom, this implies an improvisational activity: as incoming events disrupt the clock time of previous deadlines and timetables, news people must reconsider their comprehension of current circumstances to "fit work into time" (Gersick, 1989).

Similarly to the “minimal structures” found in Jazz, there are comparable protocols that news people put in place when they need to decode incoming news. It is ultimately the combination of formal and improvisational procedures that helps individuals cope with unexpected events while managing calendar deadlines. (Crossan et al., 2005)

METHODS

Research Question and Data Collection

With roughly twenty feature films being produced each year, the Portuguese professional filmmaking industry is smaller than most other industries in the world – like India, where over one thousand features are produced each year. (Robertson, 2001)

Thus, the investigation for the research question was conducted in the context of the *aspiring* filmmaking industry instead, more specifically through contact with filmmakers who are at the start of their careers. These artists are involved in the production of short films with low- to no-budgets, which means they work with inexperienced and non-remunerated collaborators under paramount time constraints.

Because the existing literature is insufficient, data was collected inductively, similarly to DeFillippi and Arthur (2002). Four semi-structured interviews were conducted with aspiring directors from the Portuguese filmmaking scene: João P. Nunes, Ricardo Reis, Flávio Ferreira and Pedro Caldeira. These are all aspiring directors, yet they have various degrees of experience and influence in the industry. The focus of these interviews, and the research question of this study, is to understand how these directors cope with unexpected events on set. In particular, interviewees were asked about situations where they had to deal with unexpected occurrences under time constraints.

In addition, to secure the reliability of the findings, other professionals from the industry were interviewed: Paulo Branco, one of the most influential producers in the country; and Pedro Marta Santos, a renowned Portuguese screenwriter.

Lastly, I also drew on my own experience as a director, mostly from the set of "Nos Teus Sonhos", a short film I was producing at the time of writing this paper. With a team of nine people and a shooting schedule of five days, I was able to make observations on the set almost uninterruptedly. This allowed me to have a first-person experience of events, and also to establish informal conversations with my colleagues as they went about their work. All of this information was systematized and reviewed at the end of each day.

FINDINGS

Walking on set

Filmmaking is the art of telling a story using a visual medium. When the time arrives to actually roll the film, a sizeable amount of work has already been done. There have been months of preparation, and everything hinges on the moment when the director calls "action". The Director of Photography is in charge of lighting every scene, overlooking the camera operation and positioning it. The Art Director overlooks the set decoration, the props, the characters' wardrobes and make-up. The Sound Director ensures the sound is properly and invisibly captured. The Producer makes sure everything runs smoothly, secures locations, sets timetables, organizes the catering. And lastly, the Director defines the shots, visualizes the story, directs the actors and has the final say on every decision. Every person on set has a clear idea of their responsibilities, and every one respects a very specific hierarchy that has been established since the early days of cinema.

All of this exists to create order. There is a plethora of variables influencing a shot, and that makes this structure essential. As a matter of fact, for any given shot, the lens may be out of focus, the wardrobe may be stained, the sound may be poorly captured or the location inadequately selected. Perhaps the actors are conveying the wrong message, or saying their lines in an unfitting way. It is very complex – "but when all these variables are finally aligned, magic happens, and cinema is made". (João P. Nunes, interview notes)

This hierarchy exists to create structure, like in any other organization. The Director communicates with the Department Heads, while they communicate with their direct subordinates, and so on. The rhythm at which this happens is usually frantic, and most film sets involve a certain degree of chaos. However, when audiences watch the final product, it seems like it was all made in a linear and stress-free way.

Plan everything, but be ready to let it go

During the pre-production stage, the producer, director and assistant director plan everything down to the last detail, even if they know it will end up being changed. As Paulo Branco stated, "you have to know that you can't plan everything, but you have to try all the same". (Interview notes)

Thus, they define the shot list (a list of all the shots the Director wants to film) and more importantly, the shooting schedule. This is a document that contains all the necessary information for the shoot: which crew members are necessary in what dates and times, in which locations, to film which scenes and which shots, and with which materials. It is a go-to map that clearly states what the filmmakers should be doing at any given point in time during Production. All of this is planned before the actual shoot to reduce costs

and create the necessary conditions for success. Without this sort of order in place, it would be impossible to shoot the film.

Thus, every morning starts with a meeting with the director and all the department heads, which sets the crew's expectations for the day. The team allocates the available time to the scheduled tasks, and commits to respect it – under pain of not accomplishing all the shots. This ensures the whole group is on the same page and clearly aware of their deadlines and responsibilities: they must focus on accomplishing their objectives by "wrap time", regardless of any possible setbacks. The shooting schedule is "almost sacred, and must be credible" (João P. Nunes, interview notes). It should not be changed lightly, as it could undermine its credibility and interfere with the teams' expectations – something the Producer and Assistant Director work really hard to manage.

Even so, the schedule *does* suffer changes – and as illustrated by Paulo Branco's quote, the crew expects it. Because of the multi-variable nature of filmmaking, the team understands it may take longer than anticipated to get all aspects right, or that a certain shot might have worked in theory, but not in practice. When this sort of setback happens, the plan *can* be changed – but only the Director (or in some cases, the Executive Producer) has the power to do it.

Like journalists in a newsroom, the film crew develops an "expectancy framework" in the morning meeting that incorporates a built-in expectation of change (Patriotta and Gruber, 2015). However, these deviations always come at a cost, and they invariably imply a compromise of some sort. For instance, if the Director decides to spend an extra hour in a certain shot, the crew knows he will either have to forfeit another shot, or decrease the amount of time he can dedicate to the remaining shots. As Ricardo Reis put it, "unfortunately, time cannot be stretched, and trade-offs need to be weighed out."

Filmmakers develop a set of expectations for every shooting day and prepare themselves to follow them according to plan. However, over the years, they have also developed an innate openness and acceptability to accommodate modifications to those plans (Tuchman, 1973). As one cinematographer told me, "I am excited to see how this plan will change and what I will have to do to adapt". They understand these changes are inherent to filmmaking, and embrace them as an exciting, and even challenging part of their professions.

The Triage: drawing on past experience to solve problems

The morning meeting is an indispensable organizational tool in the film set, even if crewmembers already expect it to suffer deviations. Circumstances are constantly changing on set, and adaptability is a quintessential skill for any reputable filmmaker. Modifications in the shooting schedule can happen due to two main reasons – either because the director deliberately decided it, or because he was forced to. He may decide to deflect for a number of reasons: due to a change of heart towards a particular shot, due to an unsatisfactory performance that needs working on, or simply just to try something new. By contrast, he may be forced to change the schedule in case of a serious problem – that is, an obstacle that prevents the team from moving on with their work. The latter represents the focus of this study.

It can be any sort of difficulty. In fact, there are plenty of aspects that can go astray on set. Actors can get ill or not show, lights can get defective, props damaged, batteries drained, wardrobes jumbled, microphones broken, or locations compromised; just to name a few. "There is really no telling what will happen, only that something *will* happen" (Pedro Caldeira, interview notes). And that introduces a great deal of uncertainty into the shoot. How will filmmakers cope?

Although these problems may be a great cause of deflection from the schedule, they represent a rather familiar reality for filmmakers, who are used to facing similar complications. In that sense, the process of finding a solution for these problems might not necessarily represent a deviation from their routine work, but actually a part of it.

> *Whenever I face an unexpected problem, I try to remain calm. I may have never faced that problem before, but it is likely that I faced similar ones.* – Flávio Ferreira

Thus, filmmakers first run the problem through a basic "triage", which allows them to draw on their past experience when they face a problem that resembles something they have encountered before. Simply put, this triage provides a basic process for ordering familiar occurrences under tried-and-tested problem-solving strategies.

The "Troubleshooting Protocol"

By contrast, if they face a completely unprecedented problem, they resort to an implicit "Troubleshooting Protocol" that helps them overcome the idiosyncratic nature of unexpected events. Through a pre-established and tacitly routinized process based on "yes" and "no" questions, they are able to devise a prompt game plan to the problem.

This protocol is a recurrent pattern in film sets. As new problems emerge, filmmakers are forced to deconstruct them quickly and accommodate them within the prevailing schedule. The director often assumes the role of asking the questions to address the issue: "Can we solve this quickly?", "Do we have the required resources to do it?", "What if we get creative?". This allows the team to create a pool of knowledge and know-how that is much broader and richer than any individual would be on their own.

It is also worth noting the underlying importance of time: the occurrence of these setbacks represents a disturbance in event time that has direct repercussions over clock time. In other words, the crew must be as swift as possible to stay on schedule.

The evidence showcased this far sheds some light on the way filmmakers shift from a planned schedule of activities to an unexpected churn of events that must be resolved in a timely fashion. The film set is organized around the morning meeting where the shooting schedule is reviewed. During this gathering, the day's objectives are set and timetabled, and the shoot is then constructed over the firm belief that the plan will be followed through. Nonetheless, filmmakers have developed an intrinsic expectation that this framework may be disrupted due to unforeseeable circumstances. When that happens, they draw on previous experiences to solve problems similar to those they encountered in the past, or resort to a tacit mechanism that allows them to tackle problems of an unprecedented nature.

Solving problems on Set

Complications happened every day on the set of "Nos Teus Sonhos", and the interviewed directors reported the same experience from their sets. Some were simple light bulbs that had to be replaced; others were complicated rigs that had to be totally modified. In this section, we will look at three problems that occurred on the sets of these directors, and how exactly they adapted to them. Naturally, they share some similarities, but they also offer variation in terms of their degree of complexity and precedent. First, they are representative of typical aspiring filmmaking productions with low- to no-budget. Second, they have different levels of difficulty and newness, thus providing valuable perceptions of how filmmakers drop their expectations and resort to tacit protocols when confronted with unexpected occurrences.

The Retiring Soundman: a familiar problem that was resolved in a timely manner

On the set of "Ninho", a film by João P. Nunes, the crew were shooting one of the most important scenes in the whole movie. It involved a sizeable amount of work and months of preparation, for it was the key part of the story that sustained the film. There were twenty actors involved, and the crew had almost thirty members – a number that is unusually high for this type of production.

A very thorough shooting schedule had been prepared and the team were following it closely. Everything seemed to be going according to plan: there were no delays, all the equipment was available and every person knew their responsibility. However, at some point, the person who was responsible for capturing the sound announced they were unhappy and simply walked away from the set.

The producer immediately panicked, as she knew what that meant: having no audio would translate into months of post-production and dubbing, and most importantly, into an unfathomable expense. She went straight to the director to devise the best solution, and found him surprisingly calm.

> *I told her that it was ok. It had happened to me in the past and it could be fixed. I asked her if she knew anyone who could replace him relatively quickly – but because we were filming in Moita, in a secluded location, the access was difficult and no one would join us on such a short notice. So, we had to move to the next best alternative: "Of the people we have here, who can be spared to capture sound?"*

And so they found a production assistant who was free at the moment, and despite his lack of experience in sound design, he knew the basics to perform that duty. Evidently,

the team would have preferred to have someone more knowledgeable, but it was the best solution they could conceive within the timeframe. By the end of the shoot, the director confessed:

> *This had already happened to me. Sometimes sound people lose interest in this sort of project because they have almost no creative contribution. Their job is to capture sound. There is nothing creative about that. And that sometimes demotivates them… They sometimes are unable to connect to the project on a personal level. It has happened to me and to other directors I know.*

As the problem was solved, the crew were able to resume their activities smoothly and reinstate the shooting schedule as the foundation for their action.

The Venetian Blinds: a new problem that required inventiveness

Flávio Ferreira was directing a *film noir*, a subgenre of crime dramas that was very much in vogue during the 1940s. This genre is characterized by a series of visual, structural and narrational devices that make it unmistakable. One of those characteristics is the ever-present use of Venetian blinds – classic shutters that cast striped shadows and contribute to the mysterious atmosphere of these films.

As such, Flávio and his team had decided to incorporate these shutters into their film, and had previously discussed how they would do it: they were going to use stripes of *cinefoil* in front of the light projectors to simulate this effect – a practice that is very common and had been done before. However, when it was time to put the plan in action, it simply would not work, because the *cinefoil* was melting under the heat of the projectors.

The Venetian blinds were a really important part of the scene, and without them, the film simply would not have the desired look and would fall short of the team's ambitions. The director urged the team to remain calm and gather around. Someone suggested using stripes of gaffer's tape – but they realized they would melt too. They knew it could be solved with a "flag" (a piece of equipment that is used to block light and that can be cut to have the same stripes), but they did not have any, nor could they get one quickly. Upon this, Flávio said:

'Look for stripes, there must be something. Let's improvise something!"

And so the team rushed around the set, trying to find something that had stripes and would not melt easily. A few minutes later, one of the production assistants came running with a drying rack, wondering whether it would do the job. Indeed, by placing it far apart from the projector, they were able to replicate the shadow effect created by Venetian blinds. It was not perfect, but it was an inventive solution that could be completed within the timeframe and to satisfactory levels.

Not Enough Recoil: sometimes there is no choice but to move on

On the set of "Nos Teus Sonhos", we were getting prepared to shoot the climax scene were one character stabs another. I knew exactly what shots I wanted to film, and had planned everything down to the minute. The storyboards illustrated the vision I had for the scene, and the composition and framing I was looking after were clear for every one.

However, because we had not tested anything beforehand, when we actually started positioning the camera, we realized it was physically impossible to place it where I wanted, as there was not enough recoil. There was not enough space to place the camera at the necessary distance from the action, because there was a wall in between.

We started trying different alternatives: using a wider lens, changing the camera angle, or moving the action to another space. However, all of these alternatives were useless: a wider lens distorted the perspective and exposed parts of the set that should be concealed; a different camera angle would not show the action properly, as the actor's body blocked the actual stabbing; and the action could not simply be moved because it would be noticeable and there would be a lack of continuity between shots. The only possibility was to actually break the wall.

In Hollywood, where sets are built specifically for films, this would not have been a problem, but for us it was impossible. There was virtually no plausible alternative, and we had already wasted one hour trying to find it. At that point, and to my disappointment, I was forced to forfeit that shot and move on to the next one, keeping in mind that the action we were supposed to have covered from that angle, would now have to be incorporated into one of the subsequent shots. It was something I had never faced before, and that I was not able to solve on set. I was forced to make a decision, and so I chose to move on and incorporate the occurrence into my future actions.

DISCUSSION

These findings have broadened the current knowledge of how aspiring filmmakers cope with unexpected complications on set. In particular, they clarify the process through which these artists (1) plan every aspect of the shoot as thoroughly as possible, while maintaining the expectation that it will suffer changes, (2) rely on past experience to solve problems that resemble bygone ordeals, and (3) resort to an intrinsic protocol to rationalize unprecedented problems.

The Dynamics of Expectations

The importance of time is paramount in any organization, and even more so in filmmaking. Like a company, filmmakers rely on timetabling to manage the course of work (Perrow, 1967). In fact, that is the purpose of the morning meeting: to establish timings that every person on set can respect and take responsibility for. Nonetheless, due to the highly complex nature of making movies, filmmakers often face unforeseeable complications and are forced to cope with unprecedented emergencies. When that happens, they must struggle to reconcile them with the previously established plans and schedules. (Okhuysen and Bechky, 2009).

To that extent, it is worth analysing the dynamics of filmmakers' expectations on set. In fact, it is particularly interesting to note their almost conflicting behaviour: while they rely heavily on the shooting schedule as a basis for orderliness, they simultaneously expect it to be destroyed at any minute.

The reason behind this apparent paradox is closely related to Patriotta and Gruber's Expectation Framework (2015). Just like news people rely on predefined plans to go about their day, they know that they will inevitably suffer changes – because that is the

very nature of the news: they are unexpected, and keep changing. In fact, as one reporter put it, "the ability to constantly switch what you are doing is a strand of DNA that you find in reporters". Likewise, setbacks happen frequently in film sets. People who work in moviemaking have come to know it, because they see it every day.

Thus, it is this notion of complexity that allows filmmakers to bear these converse expectations. They need a solid plan to work on, but they understand it is never final. Much like Jazz artists who need "minimal structures" upon which to improvise (Kamoche and Cunha, 2001), filmmakers need a shooting schedule to guide their action – otherwise it would have no direction whatsoever.

The morning meeting and shooting schedule represent the foundations for orderliness, and film crews feel comfortable working under them. However, they understand that defections will inevitably occur, and that it will require their expertise to get back on track and working according to plan once again.

Initial Triage: the Role of Experience

Our findings from the set reveal that, once faced with a problem, filmmakers quickly run it by a "triage" of sorts. Like nurses in a hospital, filmmakers resort to their factual knowledge and to knowledge they acquire from experience to make decisions. (Considine, Botti and Thomas, 2007). Specifically, they seem to be concerned about whether the problem is new to them, or something they have encountered before.

Whenever faced with a familiar problem, filmmakers have a head start and are able to resort to solving methods they have tried and tested in the past. The case of the resigning soundman clearly illustrates this – João P. Nunes made use of his expertise to find a solution, because he already knew how it could be done. (Kochan, 2005)

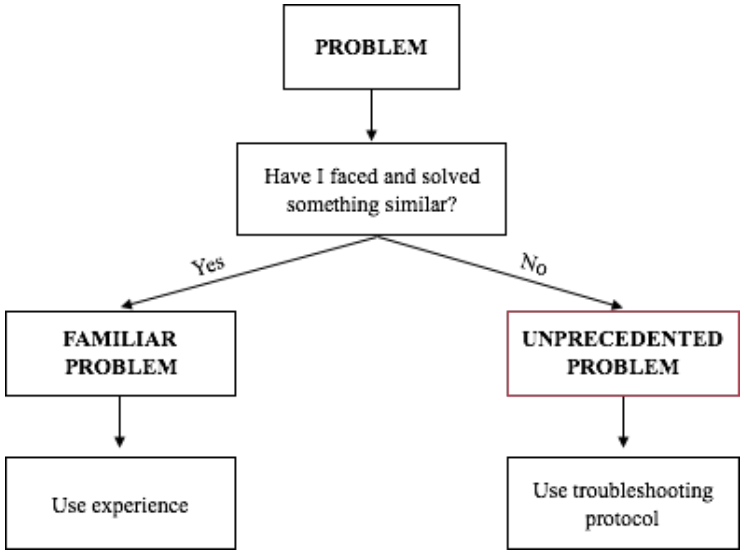

Figure 1. The initial "Triage"

In doing this, filmmakers pool their knowledge, as they recognize they are more likely to find a solution together, rather than on their own. Indeed, creative problem-solving and creative performance depend heavily on knowledge-sharing (Carmeli et al., 2013).

This reality also helps illustrate the importance of acquiring experience – and the reason why aspiring filmmakers are willing to take on unremunerated work. Experience is one of the most valuable assets in filmmaking: savvier artists are quicker and more efficient at solving problems. They have experienced more, and have seen how to solve a greater variety of problems. Experience cannot be purchased or read in books. Filmmakers know this, and that is why they are willing to work for it, even if they do not get paid.

A Tacit Protocol for unprecedented problems

Another interesting finding was the existence of an underlying protocol that filmmakers rely on to decipher problems they never faced before. Despite not institutionalized *per se*, it is intrinsic to the problem-solving method deployed on set. By asking a series of basic “yes” and “no” questions, filmmakers are able to conjure a “diagnostic” that helps decode a problem quickly and define a proper course of action to solve it.

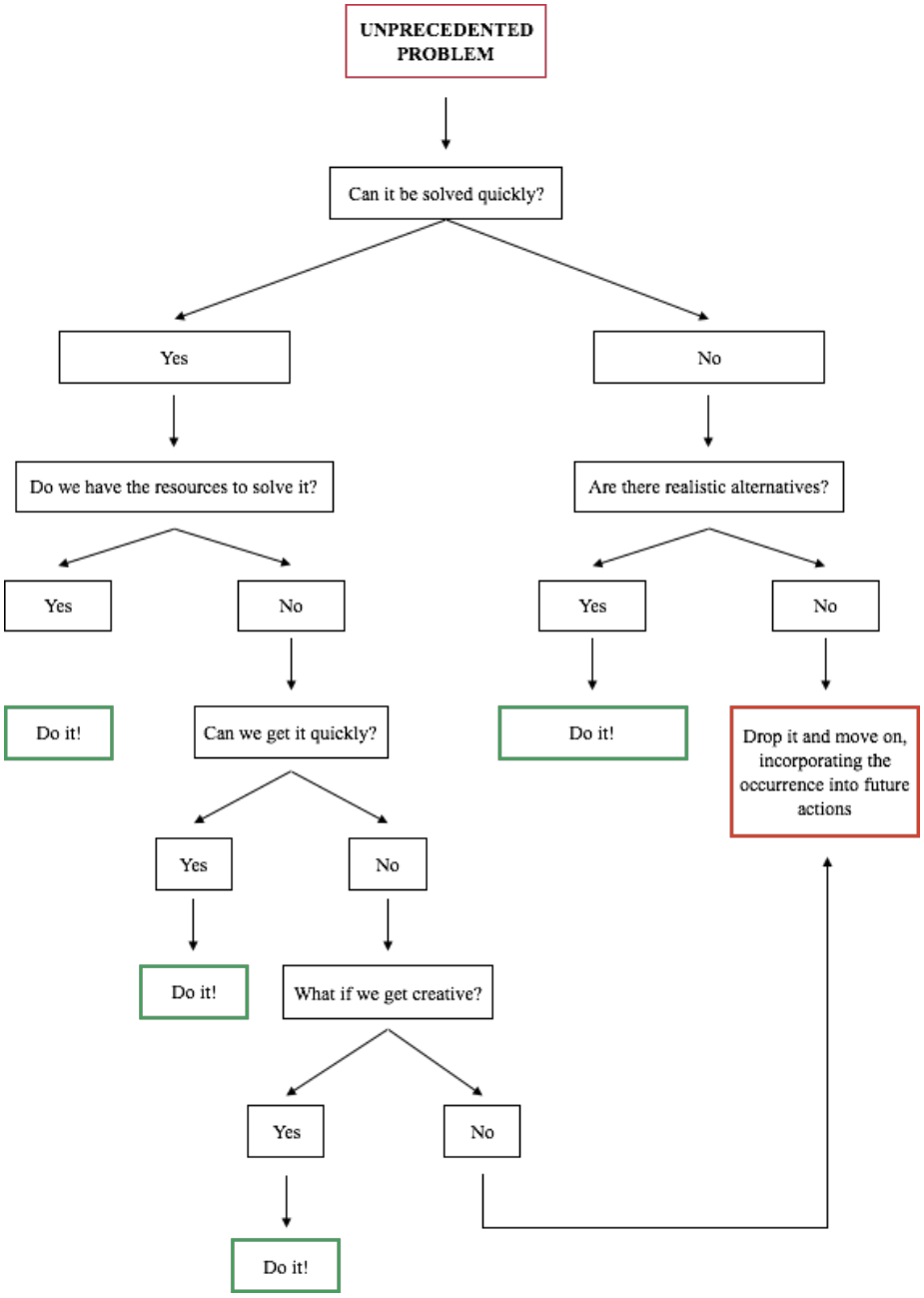

Figure 2. The "Troubleshooting Protocol"

The urgency of time is inherent to this protocol, as filmmakers have to be time-conscious when trying to restore order and get back to the shooting schedule. That explains the recurring questions about whether a certain solution can be achieved quickly. Indeed, if a solution is not swift, it is often no solution at all.

To this extent, this type of decision-making could be compared to the concept of "satisficing" (March, 1978), that is, the process through which decisions are made not to fully optimize, but rather to satisfy and suffice. It is a kind of choice-making often associated with chaotic, constrained environments where time is scarce, like film sets.

Furthermore, it is worth pointing out the relevance of improvisation in this protocol, particularly in the "what if we get creative" branch. Indeed, the very existence of this branch shows that filmmakers resort to improvisation as a last resource. Whenever the "proper" solution is unavailable – due to a lack of time or resources – these artists try to find solutions by improvising. It is a last remedy, but the truth is that it is used frequently: and suddenly drying racks are used to replicate venetian blinds.

Lastly, analysing the red-coloured branch is also pertinent. It shows that sometimes problems have no feasible solution, but also that filmmakers are aware of this. As with the case of no recoil, filmmakers sometimes opt to cut losses and move on, making changes to subsequent plans that incorporate the occurrence. This illustrates once again how time is of the utmost importance in film sets.

CONCLUSION

Transitioning from a planned structure to unplanned occurrences requires expectations that are subject to constant update. Organizations need to have plans in order to have something they can alter. “It is much easier to modify what you already got than to create structure in the light of changing events”. (Patriotta and Gruber, 2015)

This study demonstrates how this structure is implemented in film sets through a thorough shooting schedule, which is accompanied by a meeting where the agenda for the day is reviewed. That constitutes the basis for the day’s work. (Tuchman, 1973)

Then, due to a built-in expectation that these plans will suffer changes, film crews make use of triage mechanisms and “troubleshooting protocols” to make sense of unknown, incoming problems. Whenever possible, they use their pooled experience to solve familiar problems using methods they have tested before. By contrast, when faced with unprecedented complications, they deploy a tacit protocol that is designed to decipher the problem quickly, and provide the most suitable game plan – given the timeframe. According to the reports collected for this study, this can result in a simple solution, a creative solution that largely depends on improvisation, or simply no solution at all. When the latter happens, filmmakers are forced to move on and adapt subsequent plans to incorporate the recent information.

This study provides valuable insight on the topic of sense-making and opens up possibilities for further research on the rich environment of filmmaking.

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