

COMMUNICATION AND DEVELOPMENT
Between the Hammer and the Mirror
The Use of Cinema Verite in the Third World

by
Sharad Shankardass
B.A. Honors; Psychology; Hull University
Hull, England
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Diploma Film/Video Studies; Hornsey College of Art
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Signature of author

Sharad Shankardass, Department of
Architecture

Certified by



Richard Leacock, Professor of Cinema,
Thesis Supervisor

Accepted by

Nicholas Negroponte, Chairman, Departmental
Committee for Graduate Students

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is essentially about the role and use of cinema verite in development communications. The central argument is that in the diffusion of this method of filmmaking to developing countries, the technology was separated from the philosophy. Briefly, it is argued that whereas the technology was readily adopted, the philosophy was rejected for a number of reasons. Chief amongst these is that under the major development paradigms of the first two decades after independence, industrialization and state centralization, the media were used to "hammer" the myths of modernization. In such a context, an aesthetic like cinema verite, which is committed to revelation and "mirroring" people as they are, was bound to have difficulties in being adopted.

However, it is the contention of this thesis that, with the recent crisis in development theory and the development of the newer lightweight video technologies, cinema verite can provide a useful and necessary model. Recent theories of development stress the need for rural development and decentralization. In such a context, the role of media becomes one of encouraging participation by mirroring the concerns of the rural population. It is argued that cinema verite offers distinct possibilities.

A videotape production is offered with the thesis. "When Movies Were Movies" was made using the simplest of video technologies. Though the videotape is not directly related to the area of development communications, it was the intention to use the videotape as a way of providing the author with experience in the production of observational film using the newer video technologies. The video production is supposed to work at three levels. It is an observation of the dilemmas of the

Indian minorities of East Africa caught in the problems of assimilating into Canadian culture. It is also about the role played by media in shaping our perceptions. Finally, it is about the changes in technology which affect the very presentation of everyday life.

The production "When Movies Were Movies" was originally shot on 3/4" U-Matic. The film has black and white and color sequences. The soundtrack is in English and Punjabi. It is forty minutes long.

Thesis Supervisor: Richard Leacock
Title: Professor of Cinema

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"Art is a hammer, not a mirror."

--John Grierson

SECTION ONE
INTRODUCTION

Convinced that the Twentieth Century was "The American Century," Henry R. Luce, the founder of Time/Life publishing company, urged Americans in 1941 to:

. . . Accept wholeheartedly our duty and our opportunity as the most powerful and vital nation in the world and in consequence to exert upon the world the full impact of our influence for such purposes as we see fit and by such means as we see fit . . .¹

Over a quarter of a century later, even as guarded a document as the report on "The role and control of international communications and information," presented to the Committee on Foreign Relations of the U.S. Senate, accepts that Luce's remark has proven accurate, for U.S. media, including Luce's own Time/Life publishing empire, have been deeply involved in Americanizing the world.²

The American influence on mass media is not a recent phenomenon. In fact, though the technologies which gave rise to newspapers, magazines, film, records, radio and television originally emerged from different countries, the specific use of these media to meet mass audience needs was best catered for in the United States. These innovations were then exported back to Europe.³

From publishing to film and television, it is clear that

America has set the tone for the rest of the world. Most recently, American television products have captured the world market. In 1973, it was estimated that American foreign sales of TV productions totalled between 100,000 and 200,000 hours yearly.⁴ By 1980 the value of this international trade had reached 365 million dollars and constituted 60 percent of all U.S. telefilm syndication.⁵

The recent expansion of satellite networks only adds to this effect. American interests control Intelsat. Satellite networks have been established with the specific purpose of providing U.S. embassies with direct communication facilities with their government; the system is also used to allow American Presidents direct access to third world audiences.⁶

Given the all-pervasive nature of American media, it is interesting to note that cinema verite, one of the more important innovations in the production of documentaries for television, has minimally affected the productions of documentaries made in developing countries.

Ostensibly, cinema verite is an ideal model for developing countries. It is not capital intensive and requires a small crew. Yet there are no world famous exponents of the method, nor indeed has it been encouraged by the various TV stations. The question to be addressed by this paper is why, given the suitability of the innovation, which ironically enough was funded by Henry R. Luce's company, Time Life, cinema verite has never been taken seriously by filmmakers in

developing countries.

In order to help structure the search for the reasons, the model for the diffusion of innovations put forward by E. Rogers will be used.⁷ Briefly, he suggests that there are four essential components to the process of diffusing an innovation:

- the innovation process itself
- communication of the process
- the social context
- the dimension of time.

Consequently, the paper is organized to give an insight into all the facets of this process. Section Two gives a brief and selective account of the innovation itself. Section Three provides a general introduction to development theory and the politics of developing societies. Section Four describes in greater detail the role of communications and particularly television in such countries. Section Five discusses in detail the problems of trying to adopt cinema verite in such a context. Section Six looks at the future prospects and makes a case for one use of cinema verite in development communications. Finally, in Appendix I, I describe my video production and relate it to the concerns expressed in the paper.

It must be stressed that this paper does not attempt to provide a definitive account of communications in development and the role of cinema verite in that process. Instead, it is

a highly selective and personal account of some of the issues involved. I draw on the literature to discuss some of my concerns; I draw on my experience to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the method.

SECTION TWO

CINEMA VERITE IN AMERICA

According to Jean Luc Godard, it is not by chance that cinema verite found its best ground in America, "because it is hard to imagine an American doing nothing." He could have added, "because communication is central to the American constitution."

The First Amendment is committed to protecting the right to freedom of speech. Even if monopolized, the media are guaranteed autonomy from the government in order to allow for the free flow of information, a flow of information which is meant to help the formation of public opinion so necessary to a democratic polity.⁸

The early Drew/Leacock productions, Primary, The Children are Watching, Crisis, are a direct extension of this tradition. The innovations in the technology were used to pursue Life's philosophy to inform its readers of the daily machinery of a democratic society.⁹

It is not the intention to provide a detailed chronological history of cinema verite, or to draw out the relationship between the communication requirements of a democratic society and cinema verite. Instead, I shall concentrate on those elements which I think are useful to providing an analysis of its use in developing countries.

Technology and Philosophy

At its very simplest cinema verite might be defined as a filming method employing handheld cameras and live synchronous sound. This description is incomplete, however, as it emphasizes technology at the expense of filmmaking philosophy.¹⁰

Central to cinema verite is a practical working method which attempts to eliminate as much as possible the barrier between subject and audience. These barriers, which had been erected under previous systems of production, were in Mamber's opinion technical, procedural, and structural.

Attempts to overcome these barriers had been made by a number of filmmakers, amongst others Dziga Vertov, Roquier, and Flaherty.¹¹ However, the technology limited their ability to successfully transcend these barriers. Dziga Vertov had to rely on silent images, Flaherty on clumsy equipment.

The film Housing Problems (1935) provides a delightful insight into the limitations set by the medium. The British working class is made to act its way through this historic attempt at authenticity.

It took the invention of the transistor to allow the design of portable equipment. It also changed the very character of the film aesthetic. To quote:

Tolstoy, for instance, in 1907 said: "Now we can capture Russian life as it really is. We have no need anymore to invent stories." The point was that, in fact, they couldn't, because the only way you can deal with human beings is to record

the way they communicate. That is talking.

Richard Leacock¹²

The Films

Technical innovations paved the way for a whole new style of filmmaking. On three continents people investigated new avenues of describing the "real." But the focus of all the activity was clearly the Time/Life-funded offices of the early Drew/Leacock period.¹³

Rather than analyze all the variations which arose, for my purposes I intend to concentrate on two aspects of these films. In particular, I intend to use the work of Richard Leacock and Fred Wiseman.

You've got the problem of observing. It's extremely difficult. I think in works I have had to do there are only tiny moments of revelation when you really find something out.

Richard Leacock¹⁴

Revelation is central to the work of Richard Leacock. In the early films, I am thinking in particular of Happy Mother's Day and Chiefs, he waits until the individuals involved reveal their beliefs in the subtle way they interact with each other. In the later works, Community of Praise and Light Coming Through, the process of revelation is altogether more private; there is an almost direct revelation to the camera/audience.

Fred Wiseman seems less concerned with revelation as

defined by Richard Leacock and more concerned with the processes of institutions. His films concentrate on tax-supported institutions. Like a social scientist he observes the institutions through a mosaic structure in the hope of picking up ". . . reflections of the larger issues of society in these institutions."¹⁵ The editing is kept to an impersonal pace concerned with highlighting only the processes. The camera is never allowed to intrude. These are portraits of people using their public personae.

To summarize, the issue of portability and live sound recordings is central to cinema verite. Such technological developments led to various different uses of the medium. In common was the attempt to show people as they are. In the case of Leacock, this involves a process of waiting for the moment of revelation. Wiseman concentrates on capturing the whole process of an institution at work. Both are concerned with finding the means of mirroring the larger issues in society.

SECTION THREE
DEVELOPMENT THEORY

The Two Paradigms: Industrialization and Rural Development

The literature on development is vast. It goes back to the Marshall Plan in the forties, when America helped Europe reindustrialize after the devastation of the war. For the purposes of this paper, it is only important to understand the importance of the industrial paradigm in shaping the newly independent nations and, in particular, the role of the communications system.

Briefly, the forties and fifties were a period of reconstruction for the shattered economies of Europe. The injection of American capital and the resulting process of development must have influenced the numerous Asian and African leaders then resident in Britain. They carried home with them models which equated development with industrialization.

This paradigm was influential until the contradictions began to surface. In India, Mellor¹⁶ cites the second five year plan and the simultaneous reduction of aid as the two critical factors which changed attitudes in development theory. In China, Sigurdson¹⁷ suggests that there was a shift in development planning during the great leap forward in the late fifties. Traditional paradigms of industrialization were questioned: rural development surfaced as an essential component of development theory.

At its simplest, the industrialization model was premised on keeping the cost of rural production to a minimum. Agricultural prices were to be kept low; investment in rural infrastructure was negligible. Credit borrowed from foreign sources was to be used to fund industrial development on the premise that savings would accrue rapidly and the debts repaid.¹⁸

Arguments were also made in favor of creating a small concentrated band of elite entrepreneurs. Given the early European experience, policies were directed at the urban elite in order to encourage a group of people who would invest in the future of the country.¹⁹

However, by the mid sixties and early seventies most of the promises of the industrial model had not materialized. The economies, in fact, began to stagnate. The industrial sectors contained extremely affluent elites who wasted their money on conspicuous consumption, while the slums swelled with the youth from the impoverished rural areas.

The extremes of poverty and affluence led to a crisis in development theory. Social science data was collected which clearly showed the importance of the rural economy. It was argued that, with further investment in rural infrastructure, the output could be doubled. The emphasis was now on giving the rural peasant the necessary services.²⁰

The paradigm in development theory has changed.²¹ The importance of the rural areas has brought with it new require-

ments for the media which, as I shall show, has led to the need for a new production model.

Politics and the Process of Centralization²²

The economic theories which encouraged the formation of highly visible urban elites were matched in practice with the development of powerful political elites eager to consolidate their power. Representative politics were kept to a minimum, while the executive branch of the government, the civil service, expanded its power.

The political elites of Africa have been best described as elites with power but without the necessary money. With the ousting of the colonial governments, most of them came into power without a sound financial base. The rapid process of modernization in which foreign governments and multi-nationals lined up to invest in developing countries was to come to the aid of this group. Corruption is the neocolonial way of acquiring bounty rapidly.

In such an environment it is clear that the role of the media as an independent agency, concerned with providing its population with information for the running of a democracy, was anathema. Instead, it was in the interests of the government to have a centralized communications network. This helped control any of the serious issues of nationalism; it also made it easier to orchestrate the essential message: modernization.

To summarize, we have political and economic theories which encouraged the formation of highly centralized elites in the hope of encouraging development through industrialization. Though the theorists have been disillusioned by the industrial paradigm, the alternative paradigm has not, as yet, given rise to any major changes in the political economy of developing countries. At best, it has led to the awareness for the need to invest in a rural infrastructure; this has resulted in a renewed interest in the role of communications in rural development.

SECTION FOUR
MEDIA AND MODERNIZATION

The modernization theorists were the first to recognize the importance of communications in development. For Daniel Lerner, the preeminent modernization theorist from MIT, modernization was directly correlated with exposure to media. It created the necessary empathy and mind set for a modern polity. In fact, for Lerner,

The movies are like a teacher to us; they²³
tell us what to do and what not.

The predominance of this model, of a centralized body giving out pedagogical messages, was further reinforced by the type of aid which agencies gave during the sixties and seventies. For example, in 1973, the USAID document emphasized that popular participation can be increased through activities such as taxation, land reform, and other government practices, while media was allocated a small role only in formal and non-formal education.²⁴

Such an emphasis on the pedagogical role of media in the role of modernization recalls the central tenets of the other major documentary tradition started by Grierson. For Grierson, "Art was not a mirror, it was a hammer." His whole aesthetic was premised on providing the masses of Britain with messages about the beauty of industrialization. It was a tradition which greatly influenced the aesthetic of documentaries in the developing countries.²⁵

To coordinate the production and dissemination of such pedagogical messages, the government opted for state control of all television stations and all media production facilities.

Most film and video production facilities in developing countries, particularly in Africa, are owned by the government. In Kenya, there are documentary film units attached to the Broadcasting Organization, the Voice of Kenya, and to those ministries involved in organizing pedagogical messages, such as the Ministries of Health, Agriculture, and Education.²⁶ For the rest there are small film houses geared to making news footage for American and British television. It must be stressed that in environments like Kenya, television is still a small scale operation. There are only 60,000 TV sets as of 1983. The limitation of the market brings problems of finance and programming.

The following section attempts to highlight some of the issues of media production in the developing world which directly relate to the paper.

Institutions and Funding

In 1964, two years after independence, the Kenya government took over the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation. Run by a private consortium of British, Canadian, American, and East African interests, it was nationalized because of government policy and because the private consortium had problems

financing a television station for such a small market. There was not enough revenue to be had from the advertising agencies.²⁷

The funding of television stations has always been a problem for developing countries. For example, the recurrent budget of all broadcasting activities in Kenya was only about 3,000,000 Kenya pounds in 1983/84.²⁸

Programming

The issue of funding and the minimal amount of money available for productions has led in the past to an overdependence on foreign productions. On average, most third world TV stations run between 40 and 75 percent foreign productions. In Kenya, about 60 percent of the productions are from the United States or Britain.²⁹

The dilemma facing producers in Kenya, as in other developing countries, is that at even five hours a day, the station has to be able to produce 2,000 hours of programs of reasonable quality a year.

In the mid-seventies, even if an average local production cost \$500, this required a production budget of over \$1,000,000. Taking away indirect costs, this leaves only \$250 per program. When one compares this with the average BBC production cost of between \$30,000 and \$100,000, it is clear that the quality will be questionable. It is, therefore, hardly surprising

that foreign programs are purchased so regularly, especially as one hour of a recent production can rent for as little as \$60.³⁰ Nor is it surprising that the media emphasize urban productions: it is cheaper to make programs in the studio.

Manpower and Training

The broadcasting personnel of most African countries are employees of the current government. Consequently, they are subject to dismissal if the government changes policy or leadership. In such a situation it is more likely that personnel will make every effort to show loyalty and support to the current elite.³¹

The problem is compounded because, under civil servant procedures, little attention is paid to such vital qualifications as talent, aptitude, or even interest. In consequence, individuals with imagination and creativity are rarely attracted. Even in the rare cases where creative individuals had been attracted and trained, it has often been found that salary scales, promotion policies, job assignments, etc. often lead to low staff morale and a rapid turnover of personnel.

Training programs rarely achieve the desired ends. In order to maintain their influence, most embassies organize training in a spectacularly uncreative fashion. Scholarships are offered on the basis of a head count. For the recipients, the training programs are seen as a reward for seniority.³²

SECTION FIVE

THE DIFFUSION OF CINEMA VERITE

It is the thesis of this section that in the process of diffusion, the essential innovations of the method of cinema verite filmmaking were separated. The technology was accepted, the philosophy rejected. It is the intention of the section to outline some of the reasons for this process, as understood by the author.

Portability and Technology

The lightweight cameras and tape recorders which made unobtrusive field observation possible are now common to all documentary crews in the world. However, the production processes have been adapted to suit the individual nations. Whereas in America, the equipment was used to strip down the crew to a minimal presence of two people, in countries with stringent trade union laws, like Britain, the smallest crew allowed on a shoot consists often of at least five people.³⁴ In Kenya, in an environment where the government is the chief employer, crews have a propensity for being well padded.

The advantages of the equipment have given way to the bulky presence of the filmmakers themselves. The equipment itself is rarely used to pursue the philosophy developed by the original exponents. One simple reason for this might be exposure and awareness.

Exposure and Awareness

Of the millions of dollars worth of TV programming which are exported by America and Canada, it is probably accurate to say that there are few, if any, examples of cinema verite productions. The reasons are complex. I suspect that the nature of the production process--small, independent craftsmen's shops--works against the producers. Most of the exported programs are made by large media corporations which monopolize the channels of dissemination. Consequently, access to the foreign markets becomes difficult for the small independent producer.

However, even the more protected channels committed to cultural exchange seem to have rejected cinema verite movies. The USIS and the French Embassy take their roles in the field of cultural exchange very seriously; they both have large film libraries. Yet, when I tried to locate examples of cinema verite documentaries in Nairobi, all I found was a film by Chris Marker on Yves Montand. It is not clear to me why these films are not included in these libraries. It may well be that films like Crisis and Primary are considered only of historical interest. Alternatively, I would argue that, in the desperate bid to modernize the African and Asian nations, a selective process takes place in which all films which seriously mirror the concerns and confusions of the originating society need to be censored.

Despite this censoring and the minimal exposure that most Kenyan and foreign filmmakers have had to cinema verite documentaries, I would argue from personal experience that in those rare cases when a deliberate attempt has been made to inculcate the method it has met with failure for very specific socio-political factors.

Modernization Theories, the Role of Media, and the Need for Myth

When it comes to making industry not ugly for people but a matter of beauty, so that people would accept their industrial selves, so that they would not revolt against their industrial selves as they did in the late 19th century, who initiated the finding of beauty in industry? The British government as a matter of policy.

Grierson³⁵

The quote from Grierson is perfect. It epitomizes for me the central problem in transferring cinema verite to a developing country. Change the country and emphasize the notion of modernity, and you have an accurate description of the role media have played in developing countries.

It is meant to sell the myth of modernization. There is little space for private reflections, the mirroring of personal confusions or the failure of public institutions. In fact, the images are specifically concerned with the "formation of self-perpetuated cultural myths," to quote Richard Leacock.³⁶ In such a context, it is hardly surprising that the philosophy

of cinema verite was not accepted.

Observation and the Public Institution

Wiseman's self-confessed aim is to film public tax-supported institutions in order to pick up a reflection of the larger issues of society. It is clear that in an environment in which the priorities have been class consolidation and state centralization and in which the major employer is the government itself, even the most neutral observation of a public institution will be considered dangerously critical. Furthermore, as all film/video making facilities are run by government civil servants, few if any filmmakers would be willing to bite the hand that feeds them.

Revelation and the Notion of Privacy

Richard Leacock argues that the central tenet of his work and observational cinema is "revelation." If my understanding of this term is correct, it is one of the tenets which third world filmmakers have the most difficulty with.

According to my understanding, revelation can be described as the process whereby the central assumptions, beliefs, and contradictions of an individual or a group are exposed on film. In films like Happy Mother's Day or Chiefs, the observational camera exposes the hidden assumptions of public beliefs and patterns. Subsequently, in films like Community of Praise and

the film portraits of personalities like Maud Morgan (Light Coming Through), the attempt is to observe a more private form of revelation.

This process of revelation is central to cinema verite and, in particular, to Richard Leacock's work. It is also the element which disturbs Kenyans the most.

It has already been established that at a socio-political level, nobody wishes to have the confusions of modernization and class formation too closely observed.

At a more anthropological level, there is a definite revulsion at the intrusion into people's lives. Friends of mine, Kenyan filmmakers, were genuinely confused and upset by sequences in the Chris Marker film on Yves Montand in which the actor loses his temper. Noone could understand why such a private emotion should be filmed; nor what it would achieve.

Interpersonal distance and the use of media are dictated by the social context. In societies as small and personalized as Kenya it is difficult to create intimate family portraits. In fact, I would argue that for the media to partake in the process of revelation, the society needs to have been industrialized and urbanized to the point that depersonalization is the norm.

This is a difficult argument and one that involves delving into anthropology of urban and rural societies. But I do feel that the process of baring one's soul to a camera is very culture-specific and is not easily nor necessarily

activated in other cultures.

Controlled Cinema versus Cinema Verite

In his instructions to the Kino eye group, Dziga Vertov rails against the films of illusion.³⁷ In his interviews, Richard Leacock refers to his reaction against the controlled film.³⁸ Observing the very private revelations which are currently being made by young filmmakers in Boston, I am struck by the same phenomenon. They seem to me to be intensely personal reactions against the gloss of the Hollywood image.

There is no national cinema in Kenya, there are no cinematic images of Kenya. Kenya only exists in the films of the first world as a backdrop for science fiction films such as 2001 or The Quest for Fire. Occasionally, when Britain is feeling nostalgic, the very talented Kenyan actors will be draped in loin cloths and made to play the noble savage to the proselytizing preacher from Hollywood or the BBC. Alternatively, you have the "respected films" about those wonderful, strange, noble, dying tribes of Africa, which in their "sheer romanticism" are difficult to differentiate from the environmentalist/protectionist movies about "those dear things," the wild animals of Africa. Finally, there is the rare occasion when the BBC or 60 Minutes may decide to film the country for a current affairs program. But it is normally required that the country be on the verge of some

horrendous calamity, like a coup or the possibility of communism, before such an alternative presents itself.

In such a context, it becomes impossible to differentiate "the real image" of the people. Take even the most stilted, dry, clapperboard, scripted Kenyan documentary which shows some Kenyans going about their daily lives, and it reeks of the "real" in comparison. It is this sense of novelty and freshness in any Kenyan image that makes it less likely that filmmakers will necessarily struggle to work at authenticity as defined by the cinema verite filmmaker.

However, as I argue later on, it is my hope that the need to create fresh, authentic images will come not from any reaction against the cinematic image but from the reaction to the stifling atmosphere of the controlled TV studio.

Direct Sound and the Problem of National Integration

The notion of sound is central to cinema verite. Yet it is this very facet which makes it difficult in the third world.

Most independent countries, and Kenya is no different, are concerned with structuring a national identity and, in particular, a common language. Regional languages are discouraged. With 42 dialects in Kenya, communication becomes a problem and a political issue.

This dilemma is easily reflected in film. To film people

naturally, one needs to film them in their milieu, speaking their mother tongue. This means that 41 other tribes are left out. The rather vehement reaction to a couple of cinema verite films I made in Kenya are witness to this dilemma. In retrospect, one wonders what Dziga Vertov would have done if the cinema could have talked!

Training

The current procedures for training filmmakers has already been established. However, from personal experience, I would argue that the critical problem lies with the philosophy behind most training programs. They are geared to meet the manpower requirements of the new governments. Consequently, the onus was on training "operators," not "innovators."

Reading through the interviews with Jean Rouch and Ed Pincus,³⁹ I am fascinated by the process with which they started making movies. They just went down there . . . "We didn't even know how to load a Movieola." This kind of courage and ability is severely discouraged; students are still taught to film with a tight script and a tripod.

Cinema Verite and the Ratio Problem

The moments of revelation are rare. In terms of film stock, the moments are expensive to achieve. It has been established that most developing countries face severe

constraints in budgets. This is a serious barrier. However, it is my contention that the relative cheapness of the newer lightweight video technologies may well offer a solution.

In this section I have tried to highlight some of the socio-political reasons why the philosophical and procedural, as opposed to the technological, innovations of cinema verite were not adopted in the past. In the next section, I argue that the future prospects are brighter. Given the demands of rural development and specifically rural communications, and the recent advances in low cost technologies, I believe cinema verite may well serve as a useful model.

SECTION SIX

THE CRISIS IN DEVELOPMENT THEORY AND CINEMA VERITE

If true development is to come, people must make their wants felt and their needs known; for that decentralization communications must replace the present centralized channels.

Ithiel de Sola Pool⁴⁰

According to Katz, in his book Broadcasting in Africa, governments in Africa have only taken development seriously when moments of crisis have arisen. I would argue that such a crisis has arrived, and that there is a new set of solutions available by combining the use of the new lightweight portable video technologies and the production procedures established by the earlier exponents of cinema verite.

Crisis

It has already been established that there has been a definite crisis in development theory and, consequently, in the theory of communications in development.

If industrialization is no longer seen as the panacea for all ills, and if rural development is essential, then it is clear that we need a new set of aesthetics. Grierson's model of hammering information will not work. Already there are signs that the official channels are losing credibility. Leaders like Khomeini were masters at exploiting traditional channels of communication, the mullahs, and in taking

advantage of new ones, the cassette tape recorder. The modern channels of communication set up by the Shah had lost credibility.⁴¹

If the authorities in power are seriously concerned about overcoming the problems of stagnation and encouraging the rural peasantry to participate in development, and particularly in helping them increase their output, then it is clear that the media have to reflect their concerns. It must cease the hammering and begin to mirror the dilemmas, needs, and even the pleasures of the ninety percent of the population which lives in rural areas.

It may be argued that, given the financial constraints, the required productions would cost too much, that in fact it is impractical to try to set up a decentralized production system. Clearly, there will be problems in creating new solutions to meet the demands. However, it may be useful to describe the Kheda project in India. It is one of the few media projects which made the needs and concerns of the rural population central to its investigations.

The Kheda Project, Ahmedabad, India

I was fortunate to be allowed to conduct a study tour of the Kheda project in Ahmedabad in 1980. What follows is a brief description of some of the more interesting solutions which I observed. Detailed descriptions of the project can

also be found in the literature.⁴²

The Kheda project was the direct result of the Satellite Instructional Television for Education project set up in 1975 under the auspices of the Indian government and the United States. The initial project attempted to provide 2400 villages with direct broadcast satellite television for the first time. Technologically, the project was stunning. By all accounts, it broke new ground. Special equipment was designed and assembled in India; receivers were made out of chicken wire mesh; the televisions were designed to run on batteries. In terms of software the project was a self-confessed failure. To quote:

I am tempted to admit that I am lost,
and call for help, because our knowledge
of media software is so far behind what
we know about the hardware.

Wilbur Schramm⁴³

The Kheda project was set up to overcome this gap in the knowledge of development communications. By 1980 they had initiated some exciting new projects, of which I shall describe a few.

The first innovation was to emphasize mobility and portability, with the need to keep production costs at a minimum. At a time when few people had dared to broadcast using small gauge video systems, they encouraged the use of field recordings using portapak which were subsequently edited onto one-inch for broadcast. The whole production process was

designed to allow the villagers the greatest access to the media: The production process and the crews were kept to a minimum.

The concept of the television studio was also completely overhauled. A complete mud-walled village compound was built on the grounds of the TV station, the wires for the studio cameras were then fed to the vision mixers inside the building .

Finally, in order to ensure that the media were not produced just by urban intellectuals for a rural population, they started the rural writers series. Briefly, they advertised for scenarios and plots from villagers. The most successful ideas were polished and put on air with the help of the writer. In fact, over time they started decentralized writers workshops to train the most promising writers. The resulting programs were delightful. They had a veracity that most development media sorely lacks. The plots were subtle reflections of the real concerns of the audience themselves. It seemed to be a perfect solution to a number of problems which plague developing countries, not least of which is that it provided the perfect way of creating feedback to the government about the success and failure of projects initiated in the rural areas.

Feedback and Cinema Verite

In his book on development communications, R. Graff states that establishing two-way communications between peasants and the national leadership requires the following:

1. The willingness of the leadership to undertake the political risks of creating rising expectations among the citizenry.
2. Experiencing with various communications channels such as videotape to find effective means of communication.
3. Training the leadership in the possible pitfalls of two-way communications.
4. Gradually installing experimentally proven channels; organizing message design systems on a national scale. ⁴⁴

It must be clear that the goodwill of the government and the authorities in power is something that this paper cannot hope to address itself to. Instead, it is the contention of this paper that the philosophy and the techniques of cinema verite, combined with the recent advances in video technologies, provide an excellent basis for pursuing the experiments called for in point two.

In fact, I would argue that if we track back to the reputed founder of the cinema verite aesthetic, Dziga Vertov, his genius lay not only in his demands to minimize the barriers to projecting reality but in recognizing the need for feedback systems. For me, his genius lies in organizing the Kino train which was fully equipped with film processing and editing rooms. The train was the perfect solution to going out to the

villages and creating networks of communications between, in his case, communes. The communes got to see films about the state at work and images of other peasants. It is ironic that his work was repressed at precisely the point that Russia pushed forward with its program of forced collectivization, under the program of New Economic Policy, in order to create enough savings for the great panacea of that time: industrialization.

Over fifty years later, we are at a point when the myth of industrialization is giving way to the prospect of rural development. It may well be the time to reverse what happened to Dzigo Vertov's work and really take the camera out to the field. And it is the hope of the author that Dziga Vertov's ideas and the subsequent developments initiated in cinema verite in America can now be used to create a new, and a more valid means of communication in the field of development.

In outlining the process of the diffusion of innovations, Everett Rogers raises the role of the change agent.⁴⁵ The change agent is the individual who helps to transfer the knowledge and skills of the innovation to those who are most likely to adopt it. It is my modest hope to help the process of diffusing the technology and philosophy of cinema verite into the field of development communications and, in particular, to Kenya.

More specifically, it is my hope that the central tenets of cinema verite can be used to help young Kenyan filmmakers

break away from the controlled and constricting environment of the capital-intensive TV studio and centralized media production systems. It is a journey which Richard Leacock had to take. He had to break away from the boredom and dishonesty of the controlled film made by Hollywood to shoot subtle movies which mirrored reality. We have to break away from the stagnation of the TV studio, the overdependence on American media, and the "hammer" of the media of modernization to make films which "mirror" our reality.

APPENDIX I

When Movies Were Movies: A Defense

I come from a tradition of "hammering." Under the influence of the earlier paradigm of development and Grierson's aesthetics of propaganda, I have been involved in making movies which hammered their messages home. I saw myself as a "propagandist first," a "filmmaker second."⁴⁶

I had already understood the limitations of the development paradigm and the film aesthetic I worked in before arriving at MIT. My choice to come and work with Professor Richard Leacock and to attend courses in development theory were deliberate moves to overcome my confusion. This period of study has helped clarify and resolve some of the issues.

Ideally, I would have filmed my thesis project in the field of development communications, putting into practice some of the issues discussed above. This had been my original hope. I had negotiated with various rural service organizations in Kenya to try these new alternatives. They seemed interested. However, owing to delays in receiving money from my funding agency, I was unable to activate the project. It remains for me to pursue these ideas on my return.

Instead, I used the opportunity to investigate the philosophy of cinema verite locally. I spent time filming in Boston and Toronto, Canada, observing the life of my student contemporaries and my relatives who had left East Africa to settle in Canada.

The resulting footage, which, in my opinion, evolved from the situation, works at three levels.

First, it is an investigation into the dilemmas of the Indian minorities of East Africa caught in the problems of assimilating into Canadian culture. Second, it is about the role played by the media in shaping our perceptions. Finally, it is about the changes in technology which affect the very presentation of everyday life.

The production was deliberately shot using the simplest of video technologies. This choice was in keeping with the philosophy outlined in the paper. The decision was also made because the Newvicon camera allows filming in under lowlight conditions. This allows the filmmaker to observe private moments with a minimal intrusion from the technology itself.

My decision to film members of my family was the logical conclusion of my present concerns. If I wanted to break away from making films which hammered public images, it seemed to make sense to try the polar opposite: private images. I was terrified and felt appallingly self-indulgent. Yet it seemed a useful exercise for me to find out if issues of race relations could be handled in a quiet, private manner.

In the final analysis, I feel that the film does provide a simple observational portrait of the problems of a specific professional middle class Indian community in Toronto.

The community is busy creating myths about India while denigrating it. Racism from white Canadians is countered

by the perennial defense: jokes. Africa, and in particular Uganda, from which most of them were thrown out, is condemned. The elders cherish their mementoes of family history in East Africa; the children are busy organizing companies and shares. For the youngest children, Africa is nothing but a batch of photos kept in the basement with the broken tape recorders. The most damaged generation is probably the middle generation of twenty year olds. They are left with a distinct feeling of not "fitting in."

The film is also about the media and artifacts which transfer culture. The Canadian media are seen to be busy selling pluralism. The India media, now so easily available on half-inch at the local Indian grocery, delivers its own contradictory messages: East is East and West is West, while at the same time movies are busy replicating the disco tradition for young Indian audiences. The youngest are being brought up on violin lessons and Star Wars, giving them a mythology all their own. While their parents harbor memories reinforced by the super-8 and silent 16mm films they have brought with them: home movies of picnics, birthdays, weddings, servants, and the life of the extended family.

Wiseman chooses to film an institution for a period of a few months to get a reflection of the larger issues of society. I feel that despite the short amount of time I spent with my relatives, the period acted as a statistical sample would for a social scientist. It elicited most, if not all, the central

motifs of immigrant life in Canada. More important, I feel that the approach provided subtle insight to the problems of this particular community. After all, as one of the protagonists says, "It is and isn't really a problem."

By definition any such portrait would elicit the important influence of the media. This motif is picked up in other sequences of the film. The media not only affect the life of newly arrived immigrants. The average American spends six hours a day watching TV. It was inevitable that I, "the foreign anthropologist" let loose on the shores of America, should turn my camera on this amazing activity. It provided me with a comprehension of the American way of life; it helped me contextualize the work of the proponents of cinema verite; it helped me decipher the daily codes of American existence.

It remains to say that making the production When Movies Were Movies provided me with a deep and personal insight into the way cinema verite can work. The ability to let situations remain as they are in front of the camera yields a more honest and subtle portrait. Though the film may not have achieved the sheer intensity of the great moments of revelation in Richard Leacock's best movies, it is my modest hope that the production When Movies Were Movies goes some ways toward mirroring the concerns of society and media in 1984.

FOOTNOTES

1. Henry R. Luce, The American Century (Farrar and Reinhart, Inc., 1941), p. 23.
2. U.S. Congress, Committee on Foreign Relations, Report on the Role and Control of International Communications and Information (June 1977), p. 30.
3. Jeremy Tunstall, "The American Role in World Wide Mass Communications," in Mass Media Policies in Changing Societies, ed. George Gerbner (John Wiley and Sons, 1977), pp. 3-13.
4. Tapio Varis, International Inventory of Television Programmes: Structure and the Flow of T.V. Programmes Between Nations (University of Tampere, 1973).
5. Larry Levine, "The Role of Foreign Markets in the American Television Program Production and Distribution Industry" (Ph.D. thesis, MIT, June 1982), p. 2.
6. For more information on the role of satellites in international communications, see Brenda Maddox, Beyond Babel: New Directions in Communications (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), Part II.
7. Everett Rogers, The Diffusion of Innovations (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1962).
8. For a discussion of the role of media for public opinion formation in a democracy, see Ithiel de Sola Pool, "Public Opinion" in Handbook of Social Communication, ed. Ithiel de Sola Pool et al (Chicago: Rand McNally College Publishing Company, 1973), pp. 779-836.
9. Stephen Mamber, Cinema Verite in America (MIT Press, 1974), p. 28.
10. Mamber, p. 1.
11. A description of cinema verite and its early practitioners can be found in Mamber, Cinema Verite in America; Eric Barnouw, Documentary: A History of the Non-Fiction Film (Oxford University Press, 1977), Chapter 2; Louis Marcorelles, Living Cinema (George, Allen and Unwin, 1970), pp. 34-38.
12. G. Roy Levin, "Interview with Richard Leacock," in Documentary Explorations (Doubleday, 1971), p. 202.
13. Barnouw, Documentary, p. 236.

14. Levin, Documentary Explorations, p. 203.
15. Mamber, Cinema Verite, p. 216.
16. John Mellor, The New Economics of Growth (Cornell University Press, 1976), p. 2.
17. Jon Sigurdson, Rural Industrialisation in China (Council on East Asian Studies, 1977).
18. One of the more influential theorists who eschewed this position was Arthur Lewis. See in particular his book The Theory of Economic Growth (George, Allen and Unwin, 1955).
19. Joseph Alois Schumpeter, Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy (Harper and Row, 1962).
20. One of the best articulations of this argument can be found in Mellor, The New Economics of Growth, Chapters IV, VII, and XI.
21. It may be useful to explain that the concept of paradigm is borrowed from Thomas S. Khun, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (University of Chicago Press, 1962).
22. This section is drawn from a number of sources, of which the following two provide the most succinct analyses: Joel D. Borkans and John J. Okumo, ed., Politics and Public Policy in Kenya and Tanzania (Praeger Publishers, 1979); Colin Leys, Underdevelopment in Kenya: The Political Economy of Neo Colonialism (Heinemann, 1974).
23. Daniel Lerner, The Passing of Traditional Society (Free Press, 1958).
24. USAID Report for Financial Year 1973, as quoted in Sydney W. Head, "Agency for International Development," in Broadcasting in Africa, ed. Sydney W. Head (Temple University Press, 1974), p. 228.
25. Barnouw, Documentary, p. 90.
26. Bureau of Educational Research Report No. 5, Audio Visual Resources in Kenya (F.A.O., UNICEF and University of Nairobi).
27. Sydney W. Head, Broadcasting in Africa, p. 54.
28. Republic of Kenya, Development Plan 1979-83 (Government Printer, Nairobi, 1979), p. 127.
29. Sydney W. Head, Broadcasting in Africa, p. 58. Also see

- Elihu Katz and George Wedell, Broadcasting in the Third World (Harvard University Press, 1977), p. 156.
30. Katz and Wedell, Broadcasting in the Third World, p. 162.
31. Dennis C. Wilcox, Mass Media in Black Africa: Philosophy and Control (Praeger Publishers, 1975), p. 84.
32. Alex Quarmyne and F. Bebey, Training for Radio and Television in Africa (UNESCO, 1964).
33. Katz and Wedell, Broadcasting in the Third World, p. 114.
34. A useful book discussing the political economy of Britain and the predominance of trade union politics is John H. Goldthorpe, Social Mobility and Class Structure in Britain (Oxford University Press, 1980).
35. Quoted in Barnouw, Documentary, p. 91.
36. Interview with Richard Leacock in Levin, Documentary Explorations, p. 205.
37. Luda and Jean Schnitzer and Marcel Martin, ed., Cinema in Revolution: The Heroic Age of the Soviet Film (Secker and Warburg, 1973), pp. 77-89.
38. Levin, Documentary Explorations, p. 204.
39. Levin, Documentary Explorations, pp. 131-147, 329-373.
40. Quoted in Robert Graff, Communications for National Development: Lessons from Experience (Oelgeschlager, Gunn and Hain Publishers, Inc., 1983), p. 362.
41. Majid Teheranian, "Iran, Communication, Alienation, Revolution," in Intermedia (March 1979).
42. B.S. Bhatia, ed., Television for Education and Development (Space Applications Centre, Indian Space Research Organization, 1980).
43. Bhatia, Television for Education, p. 25.
44. R. Graff, Communications for National Development, p. 51.
45. Rogers, Diffusion of Innovation, Chap. IX.
46. Barnouw, Documentary, p. 90.

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