

FROM SCREEN TO SUSTAINABILITY: EXPLORING THE WILD ROBOT AS A TOOL FOR SDG EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The intersection between multidisciplinary research sustainable development and storytelling is explored through the animated movie The Wild Robot. This paper analyses the movie through the lens of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which reveals the compelling narrative of the movie. The paper highlights the intersection of ecology, technology, education and social inclusion. The movie emphasizes themes such as environmental stewardship, responsible innovation, and the role of education in promoting sustainability. The story illustrates the potential of storytelling as a tool for promoting sustainable development values. The researcher connects the film's core message to the SDG 13, 'Climate Action', SDG 15 'Life on Land', SDG 9 'Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure', and SDG 4 'Quality Education'. The narrative illustrates the importance of responsible resource management and the harmonious coexistence of technology and nature, reflecting current trends in the integration of sustainable practices in technological innovation. Roz's process of learning symbolizes the crucial role of education in fostering sustainable mindsets and critical thinking. The themes of inclusion and social equity resonate with the SDG 10 'Reduced Inequalities'. The paper underscores the value of cross-disciplinary research in promoting sustainable development. This paper also contributes to the discourse on innovative approaches to sustainability education. It emphasises the importance of multidisciplinary collaboration in addressing complex sustainability challenges, showcasing how art and media can play an integral role in fostering sustainability awareness.

KEYWORDS: SDGs, Multidisciplinary Research, Sustainability Education, Modern Storytelling.

Introduction

Sustainability refers to the ability of a system or process to be maintained at a certain level over time, without depleting natural resources or causing harm to the environment, society, or economy. Sustainability is about meeting a present need without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It is a multifaceted concept that includes economic, environmental, and social aspects (World Commission on Environment and Development).

Creating awareness about Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is crucial for promoting sustainable development, encouraging action, and achieving the goals. By raising awareness about SDGs, individuals and organizations can gain a deeper understanding of the importance of sustainable development and the interconnectedness of social, economic, and environmental issues. This increased understanding can lead to informed decision-making, inspiring individuals and organizations to take action and make a positive impact on sustainable development. Furthermore, awareness about SDGs can foster collaboration among different stakeholders, including governments, businesses, and civil society, which is essential for achieving the goals. By working together and sharing knowledge, resources, and expertise, we can address global challenges such as poverty, inequality, climate change, and environmental degradation. Ultimately, creating awareness about SDGs can lead to increased support, improved accountability, and a more sustainable and equitable world.

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There are some possible strategies for awareness, like integrating SDG and sustainability education into school curricula, corporate training programs, and community workshops. Social Media Campaigns can be done by utilising social media platforms to share engaging content, stories, and updates on SDG and sustainability.

Community events can be organised, such as conferences, seminars, and workshops, to raise awareness and promote discussion on SDG and sustainability. To amplify SDG and sustainability messages and initiatives, people can collaborate with organizations, businesses, and governments. Storytelling is another great means of creating awareness. Sharing personal stories and experiences related to SDG and sustainability can inspire and engage audiences.

SDG Toolkit is a comprehensive resource platform designed to support the implementation of the SDG's. It is a collection of tools, resources, and guidelines to help the governments, NGOs, and stakeholders to achieve SDGs. By utilising the SDG toolkit, one can access resources, guidance, and best practices for promoting SDG awareness. The UN SDG website provides information, updates, and resources on SDG and sustainability.

By creating and sharing infographics to visualize SDG and sustainability data and information, one brings awareness among people. The role of documentaries and films is notable in Sustainability awareness. The genres like screen documentaries, and films that highlight SDG and sustainability issues and solutions.

The key focus is to highlight the critical role of SDG and sustainability in ensuring a livable future, to emphasize the interconnectedness of SDG and sustainability issues and solutions at local and global levels, and finally encourage individuals and communities to take action and make a positive impact on SDG and sustainability.

Apart from the core idea to create awareness, few other things are to be taken for consideration, like being authentic and transparent- one should ensure that awareness efforts are genuine, transparent, and accountable. One of the effective ways is to engage diverse stakeholders, including communities, organizations, and governments, in awareness efforts.

The ultimate results rely on proper monitoring and evaluating the progress, while tracking and assessing the impact of awareness efforts to refine and improve strategies.

The main aim of the proposed study is to analyze how the film connects with the SDGs and the multidisciplinary approach required to address global sustainability challenges.

Multidisciplinary approaches play a vital role in tackling complex sustainability issues by integrating knowledge and methods from various fields. This approach helps in recognising that sustainability challenges are interconnected and require a comprehensive understanding of social, economical, and environmental systems.

Role of Films

Films have played a significant role in human culture and society, serving as a powerful medium for storytelling, education, and entertainment (Brordwell). They captivate audiences, evoke emotions, and convey complex ideas and messages (Tan). Films tell stories, myths, and legends, preserving cultural heritage and passing it down to future generations (Campbell). They educate audiences about important issues, provide entertainment, and facilitate cultural exchange, allowing audiences to experience and appreciate different cultures and traditions (Said). The impact of films is significant, influencing cultural norms, social attitudes, and political discourse, while also contributing to the economy and providing a platform for artistic expression (Scott).

Films can be used as educational tools, supporting advocacy efforts and promoting policy changes related to sustainability. Films can raise awareness about specific sustainability issues and showcase sustainable practices and behaviors, inspiring audiences to adopt more environmentally friendly habits. They can also promote empathy and understanding by sharing personal stories and experiences related to sustainability issues. Additionally, films can be used as educational tools, supporting advocacy efforts and promoting policy changes related to sustainability. Online platforms have also enabled the creation and dissemination of short films and videos promoting sustainability and the SDGs.

The Wild Robot

The Wild Robot is an animated film, released in the year, 2024. This American animated science fiction film produced by DreamWorks Animation and distributed by Universal Pictures. Movies

based on a 2016 novel, *The Wild Robot* written by Peter Brown. Its story continues in other novels *The Wild Robot Escapes* (2018), and *The Wild Robot Protects* (2023). The film opens with a scene where a robot is found on an island. The cargo ship carrying the robots of the tech company "Universal Dynamics" was hit by a storm and loses the ROZZUM robots. One of the robots, ROZZUM Unit 7134 survives and is accidentally activated by wildlife. Initially the robot frightens the wild animals in the island. ROZZUM Unit 7134 tries to help the wild animals but fails to communicate. The robot takes initiative to learn the environment and find the means to communicate with the animals and it does succeed in this process. But the animals saw the robot as a monster and tried avoiding it. In an attempt to save an animal the robot insert in an accident destroying a Goose and its eggs.

Only one egg survives the accident and responsibility of taking care of that egg falls on the robot. The robot saves the egg from a hungry fox, Fink. The gosling finally hatches and imprints on the robot. The gosling follows the robot everywhere, and even breaks the robot's long-range transponder. Taking advice from a opossum, Pinktail, the robot starts to care for the gosling. In this process, the robot starts developing emotional bond with that gosling. The gosling calls the robot as Roz and the robot names the gosling, Brightbill. Before winter Roz is supposed to help Brightbill learn to fly, getting him ready for the winter migration. Fink discovers he can benefit from Roz, who builds a shelter. Roz names the gosling Brightbill, and the three cohabit. As Brightbill grows, he learns to swim but is rejected by other geese. Discovering that Roz killed his family, Brightbill feels betrayed and angrily disowns her.

Roz reconstructs another ROZZUM unit, who advises her to return to the Universal Dynamics factory. Enlisting the help of a falcon, Thunderbolt, and taking advice from the goose flock's leader, Longneck, Roz decides instead to finish helping Brightbill learn to fly, and master flying just in time to join the geese's migration. As Brightbill starts the migration, Roz has completed the task of taking care of the little gosling. Unsure of the purpose of staying Roz decides to leave the island. Roz reactivates her transponder but shuts it off immediately after Universal Dynamics detects her signal.

During the migration, a thunderstorm forces the geese to shelter inside a Universal Dynamics greenhouse, triggering a contamination alert that sets reconnaissance (RECO) robots after them. Longneck sacrifices himself so Brightbill can lead the flock to safety. Meanwhile, Roz and Fink save the island's animals during a severe snowstorm, urging them to a truce before Roz powers down. Spring arrives, and Roz reawakens to find the animals still following the peace and Brightbill returning, hailed now as a hero.

Shortly after, a Universal Dynamics retrieval robot, Virtual Observational Neutralizing Troublesome Retrieval Authority ("Vontra"), arrives to recover Roz. Roz flees with Fink, pursued by robots dispatched by Vontra. The animals band together to fight off the RECO robots, but Vontra captures Roz and then starts a forest fire by detonating the damaged RECOs. Brightbill attacks the Universal Dynamics dropship to save Roz as Fink and the others extinguish the fire. Despite Roz appearing to have been shut down by Vontra, her love for Brightbill restores her systems. Roz and Brightbill eventually destroy Vontra and escape as the dropship explodes.

Roz decides to return to Universal Dynamics to protect the island from future attacks, but promises the animals to return. Months later, the animals continue to live together on the island while Roz works at another Universal Dynamics greenhouse, maintaining her memories. Brightbill visits her, and the two embrace.

The Wild Robot's Sustainability Quest

The SDGs are designed to promote sustainability and address global challenges. There are seventeen goals set by United Nations in 2015. The film, *The Wild Robot*, discuss the themes of technology, nature, learning, and inclusion. There is a connection between the movie score ideas and the sustainable development goals- 13, 15, 9, 4.

- **SDG 13- Climate Action:** The movie showcases the island's diverse ecosystem, highlighting the interconnectedness of all living beings. This emphasizes the importance of preserving natural habitats and ecosystems, which is crucial for mitigating climate change. The forest fire caused by the malfunctioning robots serves as a dramatic example of the devastating consequences of human activities on the environment. This incident can be seen as a representation of the real-world impacts of climate change, such as increased frequency and severity of wildfires.

- **SDG 15- Life on Land:** Roz's growing connection with the natural world and her desire to protect it can be seen as a symbol of the importance of developing a deeper appreciation and respect for the environment. This connection is essential for promoting sustainable practices and mitigating the loss of biodiversity. The film showcases the island's diverse wildlife, highlighting the importance of preserving natural habitats and ecosystems. This emphasizes the need for sustainable practices and responsible management of natural resources to protect life on land.
- **SDG 9- Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure:** The film touches on the impact of industrial activities on the environment, highlighting the need for sustainable practices and responsible management of natural resources. This emphasizes the importance of industry, innovation, and infrastructure in promoting sustainable development. Roz's design and functionality can be seen as a representation of the potential for innovation and technology to promote sustainable development. Her ability to adapt and learn highlights the importance of investing in research and development to create sustainable solutions.
- **SDG 4- Quality Education:** Roz's ability to learn and adapt can be seen as a symbol of the importance of education and lifelong learning. Her experiences on the island highlight the need for accessible and inclusive education that promotes sustainable development and environmental awareness. The film showcases the animals' learning and growth, highlighting the importance of education and adaptation in promoting sustainable development. This emphasizes the need for education that promotes environmental awareness and sustainable practices.

Multidisciplinary Approach to Sustainable Development

Sustainable development requires more than just a singular perspective—it calls for an integrated, multidisciplinary approach that combines technology, ecology, education, social science, ethics, and inclusivity. *The Wild Robot* serves as a poignant allegory for this intersection. Through the journey of Roz the film underscores the essential cooperation between disciplines to create a sustainable and compassionate world.

Ecology and Technology: At the heart of *The Wild Robot* is the juxtaposition of the artificial and the organic—Roz, a machine, learns to navigate and eventually thrive within the ecosystem of the island. Her transformation from an outsider to a caretaker of nature illustrates the potential for harmony between technological advancement and environmental stewardship. Rather than overpowering the natural world, Roz adapts to it, learns its rhythms, and contributes to its well-being. This narrative aligns with real-world principles of sustainable development, where innovation in technology must be guided by ecological understanding. Modern solutions to environmental challenges—such as renewable energy systems, smart agriculture, or conservation tech—require collaboration between engineers, ecologists, and environmental scientists. *The Wild Robot* metaphorically represents this synergy, showing that technology, when guided by respect and knowledge of the environment, can support rather than disrupt ecological balance.

- **Education and Social Sciences:** Roz's journey is not only about survival but also about learning and teaching. She acquires knowledge from her environment and from the animals around her, adapting her behaviors to become more integrated into the community. In turn, she becomes a teacher and protector, especially for a gosling she raises as her own. This reciprocal exchange of knowledge highlights the critical role of education in building a sustainable future. In the real world, education is a cornerstone of sustainability. It fosters awareness, critical thinking, and action-oriented mindsets. Social sciences—such as psychology, sociology, and anthropology—complement educational efforts by offering insights into human behavior, cultural dynamics, and social systems. Together, they help shape a society that values and acts upon sustainable principles. Roz's evolution embodies these interdisciplinary interactions: her story is not only about learning facts but also about understanding relationships, cultures (animal societies in this case), and the importance of empathy in education.
- **Social Inclusion:** A central theme in *The Wild Robot* is inclusion—Roz is initially seen as an outsider, even feared by the island's inhabitants. But through patience, empathy, and consistent efforts to understand and help others, she becomes an accepted and even beloved member of the community. This transformation reflects a key element of sustainable development: reducing inequalities and fostering inclusive societies. Social inclusion is vital in sustainability discourse,

as marginalized communities are often the most affected by environmental and economic challenges. Roz's acceptance is not based on her origin or nature, but on her actions and her willingness to connect across differences. The film encourages viewers to consider the importance of empathy and mutual understanding as foundations for reducing social disparities. In a broader sense, it reflects the need to include all voices—particularly those historically excluded—in conversations and decisions about sustainability.

- **Ethics and Innovation:** Perhaps one of the most compelling aspects of *The Wild Robot* is its invitation to reflect ethically on the role of technology. Roz, a product of human innovation, is abandoned on an island due to a shipping accident—an implicit critique of the careless consequences of industrial and technological systems. Yet, rather than wreaking havoc, Roz chooses to care, nurture, and protect. Her existence poses ethical questions: What is our responsibility as creators of intelligent machines? How should we design technologies that align with moral and ecological values?

The film pushes audiences to consider the ethical dimensions of innovation—especially as artificial intelligence, automation, and biotechnology become more prevalent. Sustainable development isn't just about creating new technologies; it's about ensuring those technologies serve humanity and the planet equitably. Roz's choices throughout the film reflect a model of ethical innovation, where technology enhances life rather than exploits it.

Summation

The Wild Robot offers a compelling narrative that deeply intertwines with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those related to environmental conservation, quality education, responsible consumption, and climate action. Through the story of Roz the film provides an accessible yet profound lens through which we can explore the complexities of sustainability. Its themes highlight the urgent need for empathy between humans, technology, and nature, aligning with the SDGs' call for inclusive and responsible progress.

The film's relevance spans multiple disciplines—environmental science, ethics, education, engineering, and media studies—making it a rich resource for multidisciplinary research. Roz's journey exemplifies how technological development and ecological balance can coexist, but only through intentional learning, adaptation, and respect. This narrative challenges conventional disciplinary silos by demonstrating that meaningful sustainability efforts must draw upon diverse perspectives and fields of expertise.

The Wild Robot serves as a powerful case study for why interdisciplinary collaboration is essential to advancing the SDGs. Researchers, educators, and policymakers must increasingly work across boundaries to address complex global challenges. Whether integrating environmental science into tech development, or infusing ethics into robotics design, collaboration will be key to building resilient, sustainable futures.

Finally, this film underscores the transformative power of art and media in driving social and cultural change. Storytelling has the ability to engage hearts and minds in ways that data and policy alone cannot. By making abstract goals tangible and emotionally resonant, works like *The Wild Robot* can inspire audiences of all ages to reflect on their role in shaping a sustainable world. As we look toward the future, it is vital to recognize and support the role of creative media in the global sustainability dialogue—because sometimes, a story is the catalyst we need to imagine, and then build, a better world.

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