D2.1
SOTA Storytelling technologies and application
(public document)

Edited by: Chaja Libot (VRT), Karim Dahdah (VRT)
Contributions from: Consortium partners

Version: 2
Date: July 7 2020
Delivery date: May 30 2020

CityStory is an ITEA 3 project from call 4 (reference 17006)
Project Key Data

Acronym and full-length title

Reference: 17006
Full-length title: Citizen Storytelling
Roadmap Challenge: Urbanisation

Project description

The project CityStory wants to innovate through a creative, intelligent, safe, and social storytelling development environment. Do-it-yourself and do-it-with-others, around media and make it accessible for everyone. The project aims to stimulate collaboration with a co-creation and design platform to share ideas and get opinions heard. Through new modes of interactive storytelling, city touchpoints, interactive screens, innovative media recognition, and data analysis, tools that assist while filming and intelligent, and deep learning tools, the project will enable ideas to be turned into a story and valuable media output.

Project duration & size

Size: Effort: 24.18 PY
Costs: 2 933 930 €
Time frame: Start; 1 September 2019
End: 31 August 2022 (36 months)

Coordinator

VRT (Belgium)
Type: Public Company
Contact person: Karim Dahdah
E-mail address: karim.dahdah@vrt.be
Consortium

Belgium
Bits Of Love
BUUR bureau voor urbanisme
Katholieke Universiteit Leuven
NXP SemiConductors Belgium NV
Studio Dott
VRT

Denmark
Legind Technologies

Table of Contents

Project Key Data 2
Acronym and full-length title 2
Project description 2
Project duration & size 2
Coordinator 2
Consortium 3

Table of Contents 3

Project Acronyms 4

Introduction 4

1 Storytelling techniques 5
  1.1. Storytelling 5
  1.2. Participatory storytelling 5
    1.2.1. The role of social media 6
    1.2.2. The role of public space 7
    1.2.3. As a contribution for public broadcasters 9
  1.3. Storytelling tools 10
    1.3.1. Existing tools that are applicable in context of city development 10
    1.3.2. Existing audio and video tools 11
    1.3.3. Existing tools for the creation and manipulation of pictures and photos 11

Conclusion 11
Project Acronyms

AI  Artificial Intelligence
AR  Augmented Reality
EDL Edit Decision List
GDPR General Data Protection Regulation
IoT Internet of Things
ML  Machine Learning

Introduction

Participatory citizenship is gaining ground in most major cities in the western world. The initiatives cover almost all social areas, from healthcare to well-being, from energy to mobility, from food to construction, from security to integration and from culture to education and finance. These self-reliant collaborations are increasingly seen as a necessary addition to managing the smart city. In order to obtain a long-term commitment, we will need a formalized form of collaboration. The CityStory project is going to apply a bottom-up approach and make the story-telling and story-sharing experience easy, fun, entertaining, inspiring and rewarding to encourage more people sharing their day-to-day life experiences along with feedback on city developments and city social life.

CityStory wants to explore the effectiveness of collaborative storytelling in community building and in the fostering of bottom-up community initiatives. In this deliverable we will give an overview of the State Of The Art of the theory, explorative experiments and best practices of storytelling techniques that will be of value for the CityStory project.

https://www.ris.uu.nl/ws/files/20148613_/PUB_Homo_cooperans_NL.pdf
1. Storytelling as an engaging form of communication

Storytelling can be used as a method of combining facts and narratives to convey something to an audience. It is widely considered as an activating and engaging form of communication that enables the sharing of local knowledge and cultural values, among other aspects. Consequently, storytelling has already been applied in the context of local community participation, such as to translate an audience made drawing into an animated projection, capture urban testimonials of neighborhood residents through audio-recordings or historical images. Storytelling in its most basic form happens naturally by how we convey information through verbal or visual means.

“Stories are universal – they help us to understand ourselves, our culture, and our environments.”
– Amy Hill, Center for Digital Storytelling.

Not only are stories universal, but they are personal. People often connect better to other people than to abstract ideas or numbers and figures. Stories can create an emotional connection that improves our understanding of situations and events, encourages reflection, and allows people to discuss normally taboo subjects.

2. Participatory storytelling

Participatory storytelling is a variety of approaches that engage people in creating and analyzing audio and visual media. In the digital era a participatory media practice is digital storytelling, which enables ordinary people to produce media content and to use media as a tool for civic engagement, a process in which people take collective action to address issues of public concern.
Usually it is democratic. In this context, instead of hiring trained professionals to “collect” stories with passive subjects, it allows people to tell their own stories. The facilitators still play a role in producing the material, but it is usually with a light touch. It does not necessarily undermine the honesty of first person stories.

It is collaborative. Stories can be used as a way to bring people together. Collaboration provides insights and helps shift narratives away from generalizations. Witnessing and affirming the stories told in a group can be healing and transformative.

The idea is basically to let people produce their own stories using whatever medium they prefer. This can include photos accompanied by audio, video, etc. Then, people can for example share these stories in their own communities.

Producing and sharing these stories happen often via (social media) platforms.

- https://www.storycenter.org: a platform that creates spaces for listening to and sharing stories, to help build a just and healthy world. The organisation organises public and custom workshops that provide individuals and organizations with skills and tools that support self-expression, creative practice, and community building.
- https://www.ciatlas.org (recent example, during COVID-19 period)
  A participatory storytelling challenge invites people to take a minute to imagine a future far beyond our current moment and share this imagination to inspire others to share their visions too. The collection will also become an enduring archive that preserves our imaginations at this current time. Participants are invited to submit their responses to the challenge via a simple form. The responses will then populate the Atlas of the Civic Imagination, a creative archive of visions and aspirations. Accessible to all, this archive will then inform others to create, analyze and act. The Atlas chosen for this because of commitment to include perspectives from many places and walks of life.
- https://www.citizenlab.co/nl/over: a participatory platform on which citizens are able to co-create their city

And last but not least different social media platforms, for example Facebook groups that are used by Critical Mass\textsuperscript{10}.

2.1. The role of social media

The routines of social media are increasingly integrated in our daily life, including the way we consume and produce audio-visual media. While only a few years ago, user generated content mostly resided on platforms as Youtube, today, young audiences are active on TikTok, Instagram Stories and Snapchat - social media platforms that offer ready-made storytelling formats. As a result, storytelling is even more familiarized. People (especially young people) are tapping into the potential of new forms of communication via social media platforms, spreadable videos and memes, remixing the language of popular culture, and seeking to bring about (political) change.\textsuperscript{11}

\textsuperscript{10} https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Critical_Mass_(cycling)

\textsuperscript{11} By Any Media Necessary: The New Youth Activism (Connected Youth and Digital Futures) Hardcover – May 3, 2016
by Henry Jenkins, Sangita Shresthova, Liana Gamber-Thompson, Neta Kligler-Vilenchik, Arely Zimmerman
2.2. The role of public space

Many different practices of urban art interventions, place-making, DIY and guerilla actions already demonstrate how local communities can be engaged by facilitating the creation of situated content such as stories and opinions.

Figure 1. The InstaBooth (photo: Xavier Ho)

More technological types of civically-motivated storytelling include the deliberate use of custom interactive interfaces, small displays that convey data-driven narratives (see figure 2. Polling Displays), and urban screens that enable interaction through situated snapshots (figure 3, 4) or collecting opinions in a video capturing set-up (figure 5).


Figure 2. Polling Displays

Figure 3. The four phases of the photography service. From top-left: instructions and description; example photos with captions; live webcam stream and camera button with countdown for taking snapshots; virtual keyboard for typing with a button for uploading the result to an online gallery.
2.3. As a contribution for public broadcasters

Public storytelling is also considered by **public broadcasters** as a means of meaningful engagement with local communities. The use of situated media, together with local citizens' current use of online social networks for hyperlocal storytelling, appears as a promising way towards stronger citizen engagement in public storytelling.

Today, consumers of traditional media have many more tools than before for interacting with that media, **making their voice heard**, circulating media content within their networks and producing their own content. Audiences are now used to not only receive content, but to produce, circulate...

---

and share content\(^\text{18}\). A participatory turn is happening in the way audiences engage with media content and media companies. For public service media, user generated content contributes to their universal appeal as it allows them to connect to the community at large\(^\text{19}\). At BBC, for example, user-generated content projects facilitate an increased representation of its public, while building social capital amongst its participants\(^\text{20}\)\(^\text{21}\). Also at the Flemish public service media company, VRT, TV shows that incorporate user generated video trigger a prolonged engagement with its participant\(^\text{22}\).

### 3. Existing storytelling tools

Given the great variety of technologies nowadays a lot of digital co-creation tooling continuously emerge and are being developed. The following list is a selection of tools and platforms to co-create content that are easy to use for non-professional storytellers.

- **myBlogU**: Platform that lets you crowdsource your epic content (from idea to implementation) and get cited for your expertise and digital assets. ([https://myblogu.com/](https://myblogu.com/))
- **Medium**: a blog platform for longreads. If you bring the story in an interesting manner and differ with different kinds of media, longreads do work on a digital platform. ([http://www.medium.com](http://www.medium.com))
- **Storymap**: a free tool that help you tell stories on the web that highlight the locations of a series of events. You can add pictures, videos and text on a map, so you can connect the story parts by walking. ([https://storymap.knightlab.com](https://storymap.knightlab.com))
- **Timeline JS**: an open-source tool that enables anyone to build visually rich, interactive timelines. ([http://timelinejs.knightlab.com](http://timelinejs.knightlab.com))
- **Google My Maps**: Tell a story from a city festival or a building project by adding marking signs, colours, lines, etc.
- **Infogram**: visualize data on a visual manner. Make interactive graphics. ([http://www.infogram.com/](http://www.infogram.com/))
- **Storybird**: platform with challenges to boost your writing skills. ([https://storybird.com/](https://storybird.com/))
- **Stories**: Instagram, Snapchat. Try to think of a scenario before you begin. Via stories it’s also easy to participate: you can easily react on stories via messages.

### 3.1. Existing tools that are applicable in context of city development

- **Lomap**: a smartphone application and photography tool children and youngsters could give their opinion on their neighbourhood or city in a fun intuitive manner. They are able to add


colour codes and icons. What do they think about the youth houses’ neighbourhood for example? ([https://www.lomap.be](https://www.lomap.be))


- **De Noord-Zuidverbinding aan het woord (Dutch):** collect stories about the environment of the project by going on a biking trip with inhabitants. Mission: gather as much context so the design team will be able to make a suitable design. ([https://www.noordzuidlimburg.be/verhalen](https://www.noordzuidlimburg.be/verhalen))

### 3.2. Existing audio and video tools


- **Filmora GO:** A pretty powerful video editor application, which will not stamp a watermark or place a time limit on your clip. ([https://filmora.wondershare.com/filmorago-video-editing-app/](https://filmora.wondershare.com/filmorago-video-editing-app/))


- **Spreaker:** If you want to tell your story via audio, podcast can be an interesting form. Spreaker is a basic tool via which you can record audio, edit and publish audio. ([https://www.spreaker.com/broadcast](https://www.spreaker.com/broadcast))

### 3.3. Existing tools for the creation and manipulation of pictures and photos

- **Pixlr:** basic photo adjustments ([http://www.pixlr.com/](http://www.pixlr.com/))

- **Canva:** start with templates (e.g. for right dimensions for Twitter, Facebook etc.) ([https://www.canva.com](https://www.canva.com))

- **Snapseed:** Start with Snapseed ([iOS](https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/snapseed/id565911578) | [Android](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.snapseed))

- **Lay-Out:** tell your story via a combination of different pictures. (e.g. a comic book) ([iOS](https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/lodaya-lay-out/id737216658) | [Android](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.ladayalayout))

- **Piktochart:** tool for creating infographics ([http://www.piktochart.com](http://www.piktochart.com))

### Conclusion

CityStory wants to create an **intelligent, creative, safe, and social storytelling development environment.** We want to attract everyone, including silent voices, to express their opinion by telling stories.
This deliverable describes valuable research that is already been done on storytelling techniques (like participatory storytelling). These techniques give people a voice to express their opinion. The deliverable also gives an overview of some existing tools and platforms to facilitate this kind of storytelling. We will use this knowledge as a base to further investigate and apply it during the CityStory project and start off with creating a Storytelling Toolkit which should facilitate people in telling their stories.