

Institution: University of Central Lancashire		
Unit of Assessment: UOA34 - Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management		
Title of case study: StoryLab: Developing Innovative Skills Training For Democratised Film Industries in Lower and Middle Income Countries and Marginalised Communities		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: Between January 2000 and October 2018		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Erik Knudsen	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Professor of Media Practice	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 1 July 2016 - Present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: Between May 2017 and July 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)		
<p>StoryLab is a skills training research initiative to develop participants creative voices in pursuit of meaningful cultural contributions and employment opportunities. Over 90 independent and citizen filmmakers in Malaysia, Ghana, Colombia and California were enabled and empowered through the innovative StoryLab skills training research initiative, to develop their own creative voices. This enabled them to pursue meaningful cultural contributions and employment opportunities within the growing democratised cultural and professional moving-image sectors. This unique transnational collaboration across five continents has led to profound transformations in ideation practices, enabled new co-development and production partnerships and enhanced visual storytelling skills. Better engagement with local cultural preservation and deeper awareness of the opportunities of narrative filmmaking, has led to enhancement of the voices of independent and marginalised communities. This has addressed the UN's Sustainable Development Goals 4 Quality Education, 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth and 10 Reduced Inequalities.</p>		
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)		
<p>Knudsen's work has focused on exploring independence in filmmaking and the impact that the development of confident personal voices can have on meaningful transformations of people, cultures and economies. In a world increasingly dominated by complexity and abundance, Knudsen's motivation is underpinned by a strong belief in the importance of stories and storytelling in the freedom and enlightenment of people and peoples: "Stories are the secret reservoir of values: change the stories individuals and nations live by and tell themselves and you change the individuals and nations" (Ben Okri, Nigerian author).</p> <p>Knudsen's research has discovered new understandings of how to liberate the creative mind of filmmakers with a view to challenging dominant hegemonies. While young people, globally, increasingly have advanced digital skills, they often lack experience of generating original ideas and storytelling skills. These are essential skills that underpin any technological knowledge and lead to advanced development of creative craft skills that can be deployed in a variety of employment contexts. The focus of this skills training research project has, therefore, been based on the core practice led research themes explored by Knudsen on story and narrative skills, and include ideation, narrative structure, screenwriting skills, co-development and production, local cultural preservation, creative practice processes and self-awareness.</p> <p>Knudsen's AHRC funded research projects StoryLab International Film Development Research Network and StoryLab Skills Training For Democratised Film Industries, has provided key mechanisms for delivering impact to marginalised communities. This research covers two thematic aspects. Firstly, research focusing on the creative practice of alternative cinematic narratives, exemplified by a body of award-winning film outputs, with supporting portfolios, such as Cleft Lip [2]. In addition, he has written outputs in both peer reviewed books and peer reviewed journal articles, such as Method in Madness [3]. Secondly, Knudsen's research focuses on the meaning of independence in the context of the democratisation of the</p>		

moving image medium [5].

Knudsen's underpinning research philosophically and creatively examines ways in which independent filmmakers may explore, through practice, the discovery and development of a personal voice in the making of their films. He is particularly interested in examining the early ideation stages of cinematic expression and ultimately seeks to understand the practical ways in which ideas are shaped into stories and narratives. Utilising interdisciplinary approaches that take their inspiration from music and anthropology, Knudsen has developed an innovative immersive research methodology entitled Ethnomediaology. An interdisciplinary approach inspired by practices in Ethnomusicology and Autoethnography, Ethnomediaology involves the active and immersive participation of researchers in the research culture and process, using this active personal engagement as a basis for knowledge generation, data gathering and evaluation, as well as impact delivery. These methods, and the underpinning research outcomes driving the StoryLab project, have been brought together in Knudsen's monograph, *Finding The Personal Voice In Filmmaking* [1].

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

1. **Knudsen, Erik** ORCID: 0000-0001-8361-6975 <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8361-6975> (2017) *Finding The Personal Voice In Filmmaking*. Other. Palgrave MacMillan, London. Link: <http://clouk.uclan.ac.uk/21577/>
2. **Knudsen, Erik** ORCID: 0000-0001-8361-6975 <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8361-6975> (2018) *Cleft Lip*. [Video] Link: <http://clouk.uclan.ac.uk/17351/>
3. **Knudsen, Erik** ORCID: 0000-0001-8361-6975 <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8361-6975> (2018) *Method In Madness - a case study in practice research methods*. In: Screen Production Research: Creative Practice as a mode of enquiry. Taylor and Francis. Link: <https://clouk.uclan.ac.uk/17289/>
4. Skills Training for Democratised Film Industries - The StoryLab project web site with aims, objectives, outcomes, impact evidence and more. Source: <https://www.storylabnetwork.com/>
5. **Knudsen, Erik** (2020) *Cinema and Reality: an interview with Erik Knudsen*. Etkilesim, 3 (5). pp. 204-209. ISSN 2636-7955

Details of key research grants or end of grant reports

Award 1 07/01/2016-02/28/2018: Erik Knudsen. StoryLab International Film Development Research Network. AHRC £27,031.

Award 2 1/02/2019-31/01/2020: Erik Knudsen. StoryLab Skills Training for Democratised Film Industries. AHRC £92,679.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Knudsen's research addresses the UN's Sustainable Development Goals 4 Quality Education, Goal 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth and Goal 10 Reduced Inequalities. The impacts are focused in two areas: a) more confident and advanced locally inspired ideation practices; and b) enhanced career focused screenwriting and production skills. Around 45 participating filmmakers from across Malaysia, Ghana and Colombia, countries in receipt of Official Development Assistance, took part in workshops in each country during 2017. They were able to share and access the ideation processes and discussions of all participants across three continents through a closed Facebook Group. Follow on workshops in 2019 in Colombia comprised of a further 40 filmmakers who were able to participate in the evolved workshops led by local filmmaker mentors who had taken part in the first workshops. Two sets of workshops took place in Colombia. One set with young people in a deprived inner-city area of Ibagué, a city previously caught up in civil war, and the other with the Chimila tribe near Santa Marta in the north of Colombia. The Chimila tribe have been ignored by successive Colombian governments failing to protect the small tribe of 1,346 people in 290 family groups (2017 census) dispersed by protracted civil war and land reform. Collaborating with University of Central Lancashire archaeologist Dr David Robinson, StoryLab joined their Wind Wolves Preservation Archaeology Excavation near Bakersfield in California between 2017 and 2019, in an innovative transdisciplinary partnership. The Wind Wolves Preservation Archaeology Project was engaged with excavating sites related to the Tejon

Native American Tribe, who have now been connected into a global StoryLab community. Some half a dozen Tejon tribe members are connected to Robinson's indigenous cave art research project. This project facilitates research-led engagement to enable the restoration of cultural spaces, artefacts and practices to members of the Tejon Tribe. This enabled enhanced cultural preservation for the tribe and also provided increased cultural participation for the wider community. The collaboration with StoryLab empowered members of the Tejon Tribe to commemorate their involvement in the project, as well as learn new creative skills through the co-creation of new cultural artefacts. Example testimonials from participants attest to the impacts achieved, with more examples available the two impact documentaries [A, B].

More Confident and Advanced Locally Inspired Ideation Practices

StoryLab has changed creative ideation practices. **"I totally changed the way I think [...]** StoryLab taught me that I don't have to think hard to come up with good stories. I can just put anything that comes to mind on paper and I'll be good" says Gabi from Ghana [B - 05:40]. Likewise, Kobi also from Ghana explains: **"I think the fact that I didn't have to beat myself up about the script or the story was quite good for me. Because sometimes it can be really depressing when you think you've got a writer's block; yea, it can be really depressing sometimes; pretty hard. But then, these days I just take it easy. When it happens, I just let it be."** [B - 20:54].

StoryLab helped participants connect with personal sources and voices, opening new ways of thinking about ideas development. **"After StoryLab I realised that there are a lot of things I can tell from my own life. The method which I hold onto is the question of: why you? why now? It's very important. Why am I telling this story now and why am I telling this story?"** explains Jannah from Malaysia [B - 03:28]. **"The story is right there"**, Frank from Colombia discovered, **"you just need to tell it. The tools, actions and facts are in the person telling it."** [A - 18:15] Mauricio from Colombia was emphatic about the impact of the workshop experience: **"I think this is the best professional experience that I've had. Because it was the exercise of creating, writing, at the same time we were applying the ethnomediaology. And I feel I grew as a scriptwriter, and a whole world of possibilities opened when we built a relationship with a community like the Chimilas."** [A - 37:30].

StoryLab enhanced confidence to articulate and promote personal ideas in the public domain. This was very evident in Luqman from Malaysia's assessment of the impact on him when he states: **"I feel more, I guess, less judgemental of myself. It made it easier for me to think, OK, the stories that I have, the ideas that I have, they're not that dumb."** [B - 20:27]. Similarly, Fernando from Colombia discovered a new confidence: **"The most interesting aspect is that those are things that start from an introspective perspective to something more imaginative. That's the most interesting thing to me."** [A - 19:15]

StoryLab changed the way participants see how cinematic storytelling can be used in the pursuit of public and political recognition. As Stefany from Colombia points out: **"For the Chimila indigenous community it is very important to be recognised, because due to the internal Colombia conflict, we were banished and the culture is about to disappear. That's why for us these spaces like StoryLab let the world and the Western society to know that the Chimila indigenous reservation still exists and is not lost."** [A - 21:46].

StoryLab has helped give people some tools to re-imagine their heritage and histories. **"That aside from being a fun method,"** Maritza from Colombia points out, **"it is necessary in the communities, because with it, you find yourself, you feel related to your community, your country, your culture. Both when you tell your own story as well as when you listen to everyone else's. And in this historical moment that we live in Colombia, I think it is an important process for our self-esteem, for our peace process. If we don't find ourselves, if we don't recognise ourselves, if the others do not recognise us, that peace will be very difficult to achieve."** [A - 38:40].

StoryLab has played an important role in enhancing cultural identity, cultural preservation and

inter-generational engagement. Sandra Hernandez, the community leader of the Tejon Native American tribe who participated in the California workshop, cited the importance that StoryLab played in helping her community re-imagine their heritage and histories. She stressed how thinking of ideation in the context of the moving image is already helping inter-generational communication within the small Tejon community. A particularly strong example of the re-engagement of the young in the Tejon tribe's lost cultural heritage is one of the short films they made invoking a traditional Native American dance [F]. As Sandra Hernandez reflects: "[...] **seeing our tribal youth work together and knowing that this is going to expand for us and grow and be something more than just this one video is very exciting for me because it's something where we now have the tools to teach, not only to teach ourselves, but to expand our group and to teach others, because we're not the only ones that have a story to share [...] That will definitely be something we take away to give back to our tribal members so that our stories can continue to be told by us.**" [C - 01:40].

Enhanced Career Focused Screenwriting and Film Production Skills

StoryLab helped participants transform their screenwriting skills. "It was very wonderful," explains Devine from Ghana, "learning all of those things from StoryLab Network. And all those who have read the screenplay have seen the difference in the previous days of how I used to write and now. I kind of feel like, wow! It was very engaging, very imparting." [E - 01:13]. Kobbah, also from Ghana, talks of a similar transformation: "Of course I learned scriptwriting in school, but StoryLab brought a new dimension to it for me. For me scriptwriting was mostly business and very serious stuff, but then StoryLab brought a kind of play into it. It made it feel like a game. A serious game, yes, but a game, actually. But with StoryLab writing scripts became more flexible for me." [B - 04:44]

StoryLab helped participants advance their professional and educational careers. Survey results based on participant experience with the StoryLab project has demonstrated the ways in which engagement with these new forms of artistic expression has enhanced their quality of life. 44% said they had applied for a new filmmaking or writing scheme, 22% had subsequently started a new university or other training course and 22% had started a new job in which cinematic storytelling played an important part [D - Q21]. The impact of this is highlighted by Mauricio, an early StoryLab mentee who then went on to become a mentor to participants from the Chimila tribe. "I'm working now for a production company in Bogotá called Cinema Sur. They put out a call, where you had to propose a story from a very minimal idea that they proposed. And I wrote that in a very short time. And I think I applied the technique there from StoryLab. Now that we are talking about this, I am aware that I used some StoryLab steps to apply for that job" [B - 17:28]. Jannah from Malaysia notes that StoryLab has "connected her with people from the industry, because I wasn't in the industry, so this really benefitted me that I get to know them first hand." [B - 11:00].

The benefits of connections fostered through StoryLab participation has contributed to continuing personal development, with 89% of participants writing a new script, 33% developing new ideas originating from StoryLab workshops, 22% of participants selling a new script or idea and 11% going as far as to make a new film [D– Q20]. Measures of success were reported by participants, 44% cited the increased confidence they gained from participating in the StoryLab Workshops, 67% cited the fact that they now feel the quality of their ideas has improved, 33% said they now had new ways of working and 22% cited the fact that new creative partnerships had helped them develop [D - Q22]. These new creative partnerships demonstrate the ways in which professionals are able to adapt to changing cultural values, inspiring Prince D from Ghana to take action; "StoryLab made me to kind of start that up. It's called The African Film Network. It

is actually the people from the class of StoryLab, the workshop, are the nucleus of this particular organisation." [B - 12:17].

StoryLab advanced the teaching methods of filmmaking mentors and teachers in helping participants to create meaningful work. Many of those who participated in the project will go on to teach or be mentors. Frank in Colombia talks about how StoryLab has impacted on him as a teacher and mentor: **"At the university where I teach, I teach from the writing process to filming and post-production. I have applied it [StoryLab] with my students and it has worked a lot. Right now, it is a tool that I use. [...] And I am very happy, very proud as a teacher because they made six good stories."** [B - 00:23:04].

StoryLab has transformed participants aspirations, ambitions and helped make what seemed impossible possible. This is particularly evidenced by the impact on the Chimila community in the remote Santa Marta region of Colombia: **"It was a door that opened"**, says Stefany. **"I was thinking about what to study. When StoryLab came to my life, it showed me that my dream is to follow in the audio-visual world."** [A - 54:42]. Her fellow Chimila participant, Yuranis, reiterates this sentiment: **"I want to keep learning. I want to continue the process because I want to perform plays. My vision is not just to stay there, but to keep going forward."** [A - 55:00]. Mauricio sums up what he feels the real impact has been on the Chimila community, with whom he worked as a mentor: **"The most interesting impact that the StoryLab project had for the Chimila community was the seed that was planted in the young people, because they have been aware that they must empower in a new leadership. So they realise that by having audio visual tools, they can keep their testimony recorded. And they can control the creation of audio-visual stories."** [A - 54:15].

The most compelling evidence of the profound impact that StoryLab has had on participants in Malaysia, Ghana, Colombia and California is evidenced in the scripts and films that the participants themselves have made [G] and in the documentaries that have been made about the projects. These include 'Proowa (Yucca)' a Chimila Tribe film and 'The Box of Silence' a Ibagué Youth Film produced by participants in StoryLab Colombia 2019 workshops [A, F, G, H].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- A. StoryLab Colombia 2019 Documentary - This documentary is a document of the Arts - and Humanities Research Council funded research project, StoryLab Skills Training for Democratised Film Industries, which took place in Colombia during 2019-2020. Source: <https://vimeo.com/388972044>
- B. StoryLab: Measuring Impact Documentary - Source: <https://vimeo.com/348799645>
- C. Sandra Hernandez Testimony 1 - Sandra Hernandez, community leader from the Tejon tribe in California, talks about her StoryLab experience. Source: <https://vimeo.com/313121233/71ed6c7d52>
- D. StoryLab Measuring Impact Survey Results (Workshops Phase 1) - Description: This is a summary of a survey undertaken with selected participants in workshops from phase one of StoryLab in Malaysia, Ghana and Colombia.
- E. Ghana Divine Jones Post Workshop - Devine Jones from Ghana talks about his StoryLab experience. Source: <https://vimeo.com/318493294/e91b63dd32>
- F. Tejon Tribal Dance Film - Young Tejon tribal women dance in ancestral landscape; a StoryLab participant film. Source: <https://vimeo.com/351246538/515ba950a4>
- G. Chimila Tribe Film - Proowa (Yucca); StoryLab Colombia participant film made during 2019 workshop. <https://vimeo.com/382045848>
- H. Ibagué Youth Film - The Box of Silence; StoryLab Colombia participant film made during 2019 workshop. <https://vimeo.com/382045848>