

Institution: Loughborough University		
Unit of Assessment: D27 English Language and Literature		
Title of case study: Increasing active citizenship and community action through Applied Storytelling		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2014-2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Michael Wilson Antonia Liguori	Professor of Drama Lecturer in Applied Storytelling	01.09.2014-date 20.11.2014-date
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2016-2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)		
<p>Communities that are most affected by current environmental challenges are also often most excluded from policy debate when it is conducted in specialist academic, technocratic and bureaucratic language. Effective policy-making demands broader public engagement and active citizenship. Researchers from Loughborough University found that storytelling methods enhance inclusion in environmental policy debate, and developed new practices to bring community voices and knowledge into public discourse, leading to the following impacts: 1) improved understanding, awareness and confidence amongst front-line UK and Kenyan communities at individual and group level, leading to increased active citizenship, civic participation and engagement with policymakers; and 2) the enablement of UK and Kenyan third sector organisations (e.g. National Farmers' Union and Atlas Foundation) to improve the effectiveness of their communication and engagement across their constituencies.</p>		
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)		
<p>This research addressed the problem faced by many organisations of engaging the wider public in developing responses to environmental challenges. Using storytelling as a tool for developing civic participation and effective policy-making, the research brought new knowledge and previously unheard voices into the arena of public debate. This line of enquiry was underpinned by several UKRI funded projects and initiatives that have been led by Wilson and Liguori, supported by a team of research assistants.</p> <p>Through these projects, Wilson and Liguori developed new theories around knowledge hierarchies and storytelling as a knowledge system, which informed and extended their research practice (R1, R2, R3). The research was grounded in the concept that storytelling, as a vehicle for experiential and emotional knowledge, is a distinct way of knowing and thinking about the world and is critical in expressing values and shaping and determining human behaviours. The research brings such knowledge into play with other forms of specialist knowledges (such as scientific, technical, bureaucratic knowledges) to challenge orthodoxies and promote new ways of thinking about, and understanding, global environmental issues (R2, R4).</p> <p>The research was largely practice-based and co-created with communities and local organisations with the aim of gathering, disseminating and analysing stakeholder narratives as a new form of data (R4). It brought together live storytelling performance and digital storytelling into new forms of 'hybrid storytelling'. The research has been focused on specific problems identified by the communities, and adopted an iterative methodology, whereby modifications to the research process were made throughout: each project has built upon the learning of the previous one with new sets of research questions and developments in</p>		

the methodology. Furthermore, the research and its pathways to impact are embedded and entwined throughout the following process.

In the first instance, a series of co-designed performance events ('The Reasons', see R3; R4) was staged in the Cambridgeshire Fens in 2016 to enable the community to address dilemmas relating to water management. The learning from this fed into further photography and Digital Storytelling workshops with the Great Fen Project (a habitat restoration initiative) and a workshop on sustainable transport held in Kenya in April 2017, leading to a storytelling workshop in Nairobi in November 2017 with Hope Raisers, an organisation run by young artists and community activists to promote active citizenship in the Nairobi slums through arts and sport. This resulted in a request to help establish a digital storytelling studio in the Nairobi slum of Korogocho and to co-create a workshop and performance around the theme of waste management. Building on 'The Reasons' as a model we collaborated with residents to reinvent the form for their community (R4). The event, co-designed and co-created with Hope Raisers and UN-Live (the Museum for the United Nations) as part of the 'My Mark: My City' initiative, took place in September 2019. Our work in Kenya also came to the attention of the Atlas Foundation, which works with disadvantaged young people through rugby, and this led to further storytelling workshops in Kenya in November 2019.

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

R1 Wilson, M. (2014) "Another Fine Mess": The Condition of Storytelling in the Digital Age', *Narrative Culture*, Vol.1 No. 2, Fall 2014, pp.125-144. DOI 10.13110/narrcult.1.2.0125.

R2 Wilson, M. (2017) 'Some Thoughts on Storytelling, Science and Dealing with a Post-Truth World', *Storytelling, Self and Society*, Vol. 12, No. 1, Fall 2017, pp.120-137. DOI 10.13110/storselfsoci.13.1.0120

R3 Bakewell, L., Liguori, A., Wilson, M. (2018) 'From Gallura to the Fens: Communities Performing Stories of Water', in *Water, Creativity and Meaning: Multidisciplinary Understandings of Human-Water Relationships* (Liz Roberts and Katherine Phillips, eds.), Routledge (Earthscan Series) pp.70-84. DOI: 10.4324/9781315110356
<https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/e/9781315110356/chapters/10.4324/9781315110356-5>

R4 Liguori, A., Wilson, M. (2020) CONTEXTUAL PDF: *Developing Modes of Storytelling for Public Engagement in Environmental Policy*. <https://hdl.handle.net/2134/13607729.v1>

R5 Liguori, A. (2020) 'Unlocking contested stories and grassroots knowledge.' In Trifonas, P.P. (ed.) *Handbook of Theory and Research in Cultural Studies and Education*, Springer, pp.465-479, ISBN: 9783319569871. DOI: 10.1007/978-3-319-56988-8_35.

The underpinning research was supported by competitively-awarded, peer-reviewed grants from NERC (NE/L010232/2, 2014-19, £493,197), AHRC (AH/P006086/1, 2016-17, £56,807; AH/R006059/1, 2017-19, £199,697), the British Academy (GCRF Cities and Infrastructure Programme, 2017-19, £295,687), and AHRC Connected Communities Utopia Festival (2016, £19,031).

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

Our research with stakeholders in the UK and Kenya, in which practice-based enquiry and impact activity were entwined, demonstrated the need to rethink the way in which narrative is valued as a form of knowledge. By partnering with diverse stakeholders, from national organisations (such as the **National Farmers' Union** in the UK) to community level NGOs (such as **Hope Raisers** in Kenya), we created **pathways to impact** by engaging directly with both senior management in those organisations, as well as grassroots and hard-to-reach communities. These partnerships and routes to senior management were developed through organisational collaboration on multiple research projects and direct approaches due to our growing reputation in this area of work (for example our partnership with the CEO of the **Atlas Foundation** came about after she learned of our work in Africa through her own professional networks). This has delivered **two main impacts for individuals, communities, and organisations**:

1. Improved understanding, awareness and confidence amongst front-line UK and Kenyan communities at individual and group level, leading to increased active citizenship, civic participation and engagement with policymakers

Our research enabled community members (including organisational workers and volunteers), who previously struggled to have their voices included in environmental policy debates, to advocate for themselves by using newly acquired skills in digital storytelling (R4). For **Hope Raisers**, a community organisation from the **Korogocho Slum in Nairobi** that uses sport and the arts to promote active citizenship and community building and individual agency, diverse groups of residents told their stories, including via participating in workshops and events. They developed their knowledge of key issues, increased self-confidence, and a transformative valorisation of their experiences, leading to behaviour change by some individuals, in terms of increased levels of civic participation, which for some meant speaking in public for the first time. As the Director of Hope Raisers, Daniel Onyango, said:

“The best has been from the storytellers themselves. The fact that they start to see the power that they have (...) to share their story, because sometimes they will feel that their stories are not important, (...) just to have the courage to talk about their story. That is a very positive thing that people can actually be proud that they were sharing their stories for themselves and for the community. That kind of empowered people to see the potential that they themselves can have (...); it gives them a freedom that they can actually take control of how they want to tell their story and how they want to design their story without being judged or expecting someone to do that for them.” (S3)

Nikolaj Møller from **UN-Live** (the new Museum for the United Nations) also observed how our work with Hope Raisers encouraged civic participation:

“It also got the attention of local policymakers, and (...) a person who participated in these storytelling processes was elected to join their local committee for the site to be able to reflect both this storytelling point of view, but also the local voices that participated.” (S5)

Through our work with the **Atlas Foundation**, which uses rugby to raise aspirations amongst young people from impoverished communities around the world (c.50,000 in Africa, Asia, South and North America since 2014), other beneficiaries of this impact were those children enrolled on Atlas’s programmes in **Nyambani, Kenya**, a charitable community that provides support for 1000 children that have been orphaned or otherwise affected by HIV/Aids. This work emerged directly out of our work with Hope Raisers, which came to the attention of the foundation’s CEO, Sally Pettipher. She reported the following impact amongst the young people on the Atlas Foundation programme:

“... they just adored it, so they were heard, and it’s not often a culture where their voices matter, so the idea of their opinions mattering is a learning process in itself. Part of the impact is in articulating how they feel and (...) they do two things. They embed the power to communicate and they have communicated more. So they believe more in themselves. Secondly, there was just a whole new skill. They learned about the filmmaking itself, (...) a whole new craft. And thirdly they are talking to the next year groups (...) so we are expanding the positive communication benefits and engagement with the work we’re doing, so it spirals out. It’s great.” (S2)

The impact of Loughborough’s storytelling research extended beyond individuals who participated as storytellers to include those who participated as audiences at storytelling events. For example, after attending both live performance events staged as part of ‘**The Reasons in the Fens**’ in Cambridgeshire, audience members became more engaged with issues around water resource management as a result (R3, R4). As Paul Hammett from the National Farmers’ Union reported:

“The Ramsey event brought together local people in their own environment, in a sociable way and encouraged formal and informal conversation and discussion really was quite powerful in making sure that it was a community-led event. (...) I think both events were excellent examples of when you give everybody the opportunity and the space to state their case. And it starts to bind things together. And integration of those things is really important and really powerful.” (S1)



Fig 1: 'The Reasons in the Fens': Performance at Ramsey Rural Museum, Cambridgeshire, May 2016

2. The enablement of UK and Kenyan third sector organisations to improve the effectiveness of their communication and engagement across their constituencies

Our co-created research on digital stories led to the development of methods adopted by the Atlas Foundation in bringing young people's improve engagement and diminish polarisation around major environmental issues for slum communities (S3). Following a workshop held in Nairobi in April 2017, **Hope Raisers** requested a further storytelling workshop specifically to develop a programme of work to address issues of waste management. This took place in November 2017, when 24 people (young community leaders and activists from Hope Raisers' networks from within the Nairobi slums and beyond) attended a week-long workshop run by the Loughborough team.



Hope Raisers incorporated storytelling as a key activity in support of delivery of their organizational aims and objectives. Hope Raisers then worked with the **African Population and Health Research Centre**, “the continent's premier research institution and think-tank”, to apply the new skills and knowledge acquired through their engagement with the Loughborough team to create digital stories with young people in various locations on attitudes around sexual health (S3).

Fig 2: Digital Storytelling workshop with Hope Raisers, Nairobi, November 2017

Hope Raisers also applied their skills and knowledge to train members of their own community and initiate projects, and raised \$30,000 from the **Cities Alliance** for the '**Future Yetu**' project, to “position digital storytelling as a creative methodology for dialogue between community and local government” in relation to climate change impacts (S4).

The reach of the impact was further extended via the establishment of a **Digital Storytelling** studio in Korogocho, as a new sustainable community-led resource, leading to a performance event in the slum about waste management issues. This joint initiative with



Hope Raisers, Loughborough and UN-Live took place in September 2019 as part of the ‘**My Mark: My City**’ initiative, to coincide with the **UN Climate Action Summit** in New York (R4). UN-Live aimed to “use the untapped potential of culture to drive social change” (S5) and in order to develop new projects it established a Creative Impact Lab, featuring “storytelling as one of the functions (...) throughout each phase” (S5) UN-Live now sees storytelling as a tool for communicating with its key constituencies. As Nikolaj Møller explained: “Let’s do more storytelling. That seems like a good way to engage people, ordinary people, in the work of the UN (...) When we do stuff as a museum, we want to tell people and partners and funders.(...) And I think storytelling is brilliant for that. So, we think that storytelling should be part of our internal development, because of the value it has for the kind of learning and sharing that we are trying to do.” (S5)

Fig 4: My Mark: My City, performance in Korogocho, Nairobi, September 2019

The Atlas Foundation incorporated storytelling as part of their work across Kenya as a result of their engagement with Loughborough researchers. This emerged directly from their learning of the research with Hope Raisers which led to a request to run a pilot workshop in Nyambani in November 2019 with orphaned and disadvantaged young people enrolled on their programme. Storytelling became a key component in their Atlas Challenge 2020, which delivered a double decker ‘digi-bus’ to the Kibera slum in Nairobi (population c.1.5 million in an area of 2 Km²), converted into a mobile classroom with digital storytelling facilities for use by 960 children per week. Sally Pettipher talked of how Loughborough’s work enabled them to use young people’s voices to shape working practices:

“It’s something that becomes intrinsic to the way that we do what we do. It’s really important for my board that it’s not just numbers (...) and when we want to tweak what we do to make it better, you’ve got children’s voices saying, ‘this is what matters.’ (...) It’s become so important that now I’m wanting it everywhere.” (S2).

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

S1 Paul Hammett, National Specialist on Water, NFU (edited interview transcript, 16.10.20)

S2 Sally Pettipher, CEO, Atlas Foundation (edited interview transcript, 6.3.20, and contextual video documentation)

S3 Daniel Onyango, Director, Hope Raisers (edited interview transcript, June 2020, contextual video documentation and social media)

S4 Future Yetu, (website and social media, 2020)

S5 Nikolaj Møller, Programming Associate and Monitoring and Evaluation Lead, UN-Live (blogpost and edited interview transcript, 18.12.20)