

# StoryFutures

National Centre for Immersive Storytelling

## Towards Story Trails 2.0

**An exploration of what might follow-on from the 2022 StoryTrails project which put public libraries at the heart of local, mixed-reality storytelling**

By

Prof. Amanda Murphy  
Helen Scarlett O'Neill

Part of a research fellowship supported by:



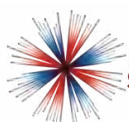
April 2025

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# StoryFutures

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**Acknowledgements:** Neil Smith, Miles Bernie, Rich Hemming, Destiny Lawrence, Andy Woods and Johnny Johnson for their work on the Blackpool prototype, Prof. Helen Nicholson for her mentorship, Dundee Library, Brixton Library, Lambeth Archives and Black Cultural Archives, Blackpool Library/Council, Showtown Museum, House of Wingz, United Youth Alliance, The Grand Theatre, North Shore Business Group & the Be Who You Want to Be initiative, the StoryTrails/StoryFutures colleagues especially James Bennet, Kylie Bryant, Maruša Levstek, Laryssa Whittaker and Nina Molly Brown for their input and support, and the StoryArcs team at Bath Spa University.

ISBN: 978-1-8384779-6-7

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This project has received funding from: AHRC-UKRI Creative Industries Clusters Programme. Grant Ref:AH/S002758/1

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**This report can be cited as:**

Murphy, A., and O'Neill, H. (2025) Towards StoryTrails 2.0: An exploration of what might follow-on from the 2022 StoryTrails project which put public libraries at the heart of local, mixed-reality storytelling. Egham, UK: StoryFutures, Royal Holloway, University of London.

## About the Authors



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Professor Amanda Murphy is a multi-award-winning Producer, recognised for her pioneering work fostering innovation in the UK's creative sector and founder of Supernanny and UK's Big Brother. She was Executive Producer of UK largest immersive storytelling project, StoryTrails, reimagining history in bringing stories to life using augmented reality.

Her current research includes developing new interactive storytelling forms, driving a more democratic and inclusive approach to digital media, and establishing a skills framework for the adoption of new technologies.



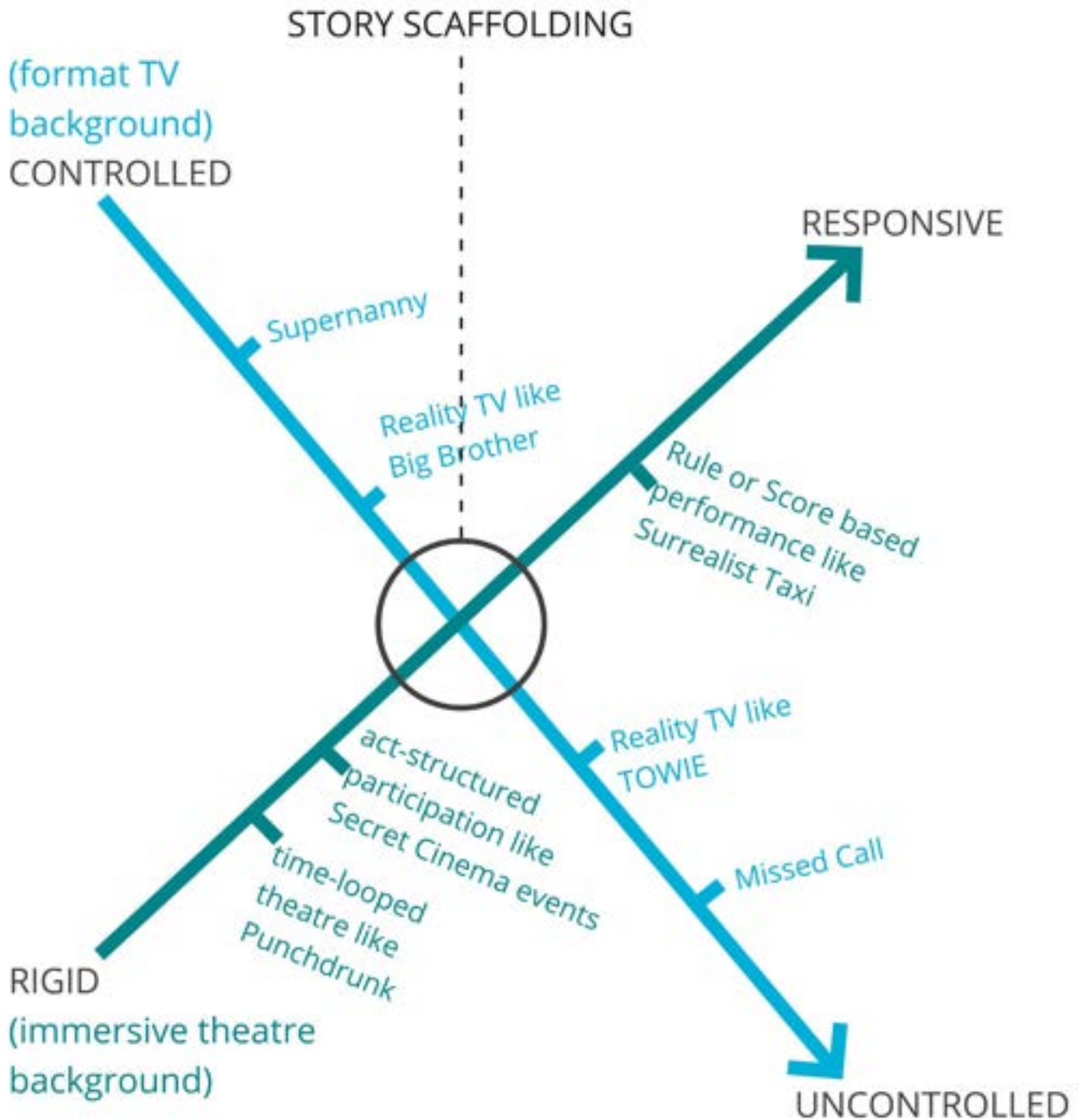
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Helen Scarlett O'Neill is a site-responsive and participatory arts specialist utilising game theory and spatial storytelling to create immersive experiences. Helen was Senior Immersive Mobile Augmented Reality Producer on StoryFutures' 2022 StoryTrails project, bringing history to life in public spaces across 15 UK cities. Helen has a track record of pioneering interdisciplinary immersive formats, including notable works for Secret Cinema, London Contemporary Orchestra and the National Trust.



**Story Scaffolding** emerged as a key term for us during this period of research, reflecting the desire to strike a balance between shared meaning and participatory interpretation. Below is a sketch showing where Story Scaffolding intersects with our respective industry backgrounds.



# Introduction



StoryTrails 1.0 was a large-scale and award-winning immersive storytelling project that was showcased in libraries across the UK in 2022.

Creatives were trained and mentored to make Augmented and Virtual Reality (AR and VR) pieces on the theme of identity and belonging, using 3D visuals and archive to surface local stories about where history happened. These pieces were showcased as a national, library-based touring experience in 15 towns and cities across the UK in 2022 and reached 1.3 million people.

The project unearthed a great appetite within many communities wanting to learn how to use this new technology and to be able to contribute and tell their own stories in some way.

In our StoryArcs project we set out to investigate if and how it was possible to achieve this. Over a 12-month period, we developed the framework for a possible second iteration of the StoryTrails project, referred to as StoryTrails 2.0.

StoryArcs is an AHRC (Arts and Humanities Research Council) strategic programme run by The Story Society at Bath Spa University. It looks to uncover new insights into how we understand and use storytelling. Story Fellows are appointed to tackle storytelling challenges within host organisations. Its overarching aim is to articulate the value of Story Skills as pivotal transferable skills across a range of sectors and contexts.

In this report, we share our process and the resulting recommendations for StoryTrails 2.0 as a more participatory, mixed-reality storytelling model, enabling partners and audiences to reimagine their local stories and heritage as part of the metaverse.



## Develop a more participatory model



# Introduction

## Background - what was StoryTrails 1.0?



Led by historian and TV presenter David Olusoga's call for a "radical appraisal of the parameters of history"\*, StoryTrails harnessed the disruptive potential of new, mixed reality technologies to reveal, elevate and share untold stories about people and place.



**15 UK locations**

## StoryTrails 1.0 snapshot:

**40%**



of audiences had never experienced these kinds of technology before

over  
**900**



Librarians trained  
In immersive tech

**1.3  
million**

people engaged live across  
**15 UK locations**

\* Arifa Akbar, "David Olusoga: 'There's a Dark Side to British History, and We Saw a Flash of It This Summer,'" *the Guardian* (*The Guardian*, November 4, 2016), <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/nov/04/david-olusoga-interview-black-history>





StoryTrails offered Augmented Reality trails...



... 3D Story Maps, and VR experiences



# Introduction

## Background - what was StoryTrails 1.0? (continued)

The project had **3 key strands** of work. **50 creatives from diverse backgrounds** were employed and trained as mixed reality storytellers across these strands:



**Story Maps:** The Story Maps were created by curating a selection of audio stories from people in each town or city and attaching these to a series of 3D LiDAR scans of different places, objects, and people from the locations. The maps were produced and rendered as a fly-through experience, projected onto an immersive curved screen, and through a browser-based iPad experience. These spatial maps can now be viewed on the BFI Player.

**AR (Augmented Reality) Trails:** The AR Trails was a town or city-specific trail produced using a combination of 3D LiDAR scanning, spatial audio, archive photos and film, and audio stories, to tell the hidden or lesser-known histories of each place. Additionally, StoryTrails app users could access a one-stop national experience, A Moment Across Time, and a one-stop experience, Virtual Cinema. Further details can be found on the StoryTrails website.

**VR (Virtual Reality) Experiences:** Six VR Experiences were commissioned reinterpreted by StoryTrails with the aim to our national media archive, in partnership with the BFI and BBC. The SMEs selected for the commissions prototyped new narrative VR experiences and storytelling approaches. Further details of each VR Experience can be found on the StoryTrails website.


There was also a separately produced documentary entitled **People's Piazza: A History of Covent Garden** and two subsidiary activities, **StoryBooth** and **BigMeLittleMe**.

## StoryTrails 1.0 awards:

Best in Heritage  
*IMAGINES*  
Project of Influence  
2024 

Museum & Heritage  
Awards  
Best Use of Digital  
2023 

Focal International  
Best Use of Footage  
on Innovative  
Platforms  
2023 

The Webby Awards  
AI, Metaverse & Virtual  
Diversity, Equity &  
Inclusion  
Honoree 2023 



# Introduction

## Aims & Vision - *Why focus on greater participation for a new iteration?*

There were **3 key factors** in our decision to focus on participation:

- 1. A People's Metaverse** – we wanted to stay true to the original vision behind the project – the opportunity to use technology to disrupt the way we tell stories about place and shared heritage, challenging traditional curatorial and authorial roles. And to serve our StoryFutures commitment to improving inclusion and diversity.



### A People's Metaverse

Acknowledging a recent award for the project, StoryFutures Director, James Bennett stated:

**"It's a small step to building a *"people's Metaverse"*** where digital public space enables us to come together as citizens and communities to share stories that matter and start a conversation about who we are, and where we're going."

Given that this comment was made during a time in which the term "Metaverse" was an inescapable buzzword - heralding a new, undetermined yet inevitable, public space of the future - it seems logical to read his comment by comparison. For Bennett, the difference is one of governance vs rampant free-marketeerism. Who do we want to shape this public space of the future? StoryTrails seemed to say – "the people" – with creatives and technologists supporting public libraries as the conduit.

Although some might be surprised to see public libraries as the natural fit for this role, others might remember the "People's Network", a project which brought the World Wide Web to the public via libraries.

### **"The democratisation of the internet WAS libraries."**

-Tim O'Dell, Brixton Library

Those who create our public spaces shape who we are as a society, which is why it is critical to democratise creative access at formative stages

- 2. Appetite for interactive storytelling and digital skills development and a collaborative approach** – responding to the needs and desires from government, councils, librarians and audiences
- 3. Demonstrations of technical and logistical possibility** – building on successfully simplified creation pipelines

Viewing StoryTrails 2022 as a prototype, we can reasonably imagine that a people's metaverse born out of it would be rooted in physical place, prioritising unheard perspectives and fostering new ideas of belonging. This also chimes with the views of Bennett's StoryTrails collaborator, historian and television presenter David Olusoga:

"Who knows where the metaverse is going, but it does feel that our physical worlds and this virtual world are going to intersect, and that geography is going to be one of the triggers in those transitions."



# Introduction

## Aims & Vision - *Why focus on greater participation? (continued)*

### **Appetite for interactive storytelling and digital skills development & demonstrations of technical and logistical possibility**

The images on the previous pages show StoryTrails' main offer within and around the library space, but there were also two subsidiary elements which were critical in catalysing subsequent work.

#### **Story Booth**

A 3x3m booth was erected in each library bearing the words "StoryBooth" on the exterior. The booth was designed with the intent to record audience feedback – but there was strong anecdotal evidence of interest in one which could record longer form audience stories as per the Story Maps and AR Trails. Further [reflections on the Story Booth\\*](#) are detailed in our colleagues' report cited below.

**"I moved to Swindon when I was 4 years old, and I didn't really feel like this is where I was meant to be. I always felt like an outsider, at school, at home, everywhere I went, I didn't feel like this is where I belonged. Until I moved to Penhill and actually found a community."**

- 41-64 year old female Story Booth respondent, Swindon

**"[Interest in more] Resources for people to get into immersive media at the event beyond the 3D scanning applications."**

- 35 year old male survey respondent, Swansea

#### **BigMe LittleMe**

Originally devised as a way of training librarians in 3D scanning, it involved Librarians 3D scanning visitors – or a visitor scanning another – and creating a screenshot/photo of the virtual and physical person together, as shown in the pictured example below. This taught basic 3D scanning and Augmented Reality to audiences through a simple creative pipeline, or workflow. During the legacy period, several of the 909 trained librarians became interested in exploring ways of taking the 'Big Me Little Me' idea further (see page 19).



\* Levstek, M., Whittaker, L., Woods, A. T., Verhulst, I., & Dalton, P. (2025). StoryBooth: Automated Video Technology for Qualitative Research [Manuscript submitted for publication]. StoryFutures, Royal Holloway, University of London.

# Introduction

## Methods - *How did we investigate towards StoryTrails 2.0?*

There were 2 main phases to the StoryArcs supported research:

Phase 1 – analysing feedback from audiences, librarians, project partners and funders

Phase 2 – pursuing the following lines of enquiry: Storytelling Model, Democratised Tech, Infrastructure

### **Phase 1: Analysing StoryTrails 1.0**

This primarily involved reviewing existing feedback in the form of audience surveys, notes from project review sessions with partners (both libraries and creative industry partners) and feedback from potential funders.

Further interviews were conducted with three librarians in Brixton who had been working with the Easy Diorama storytelling pipeline (established in StoryTrails 1.0's legacy phase), and with two Librarians in Dundee who had been investigating their own pipelines.

From analysis of the above, and thinking towards Phase 2, we also considered the theoretical underpinnings of a potential StoryTrails 2.0.

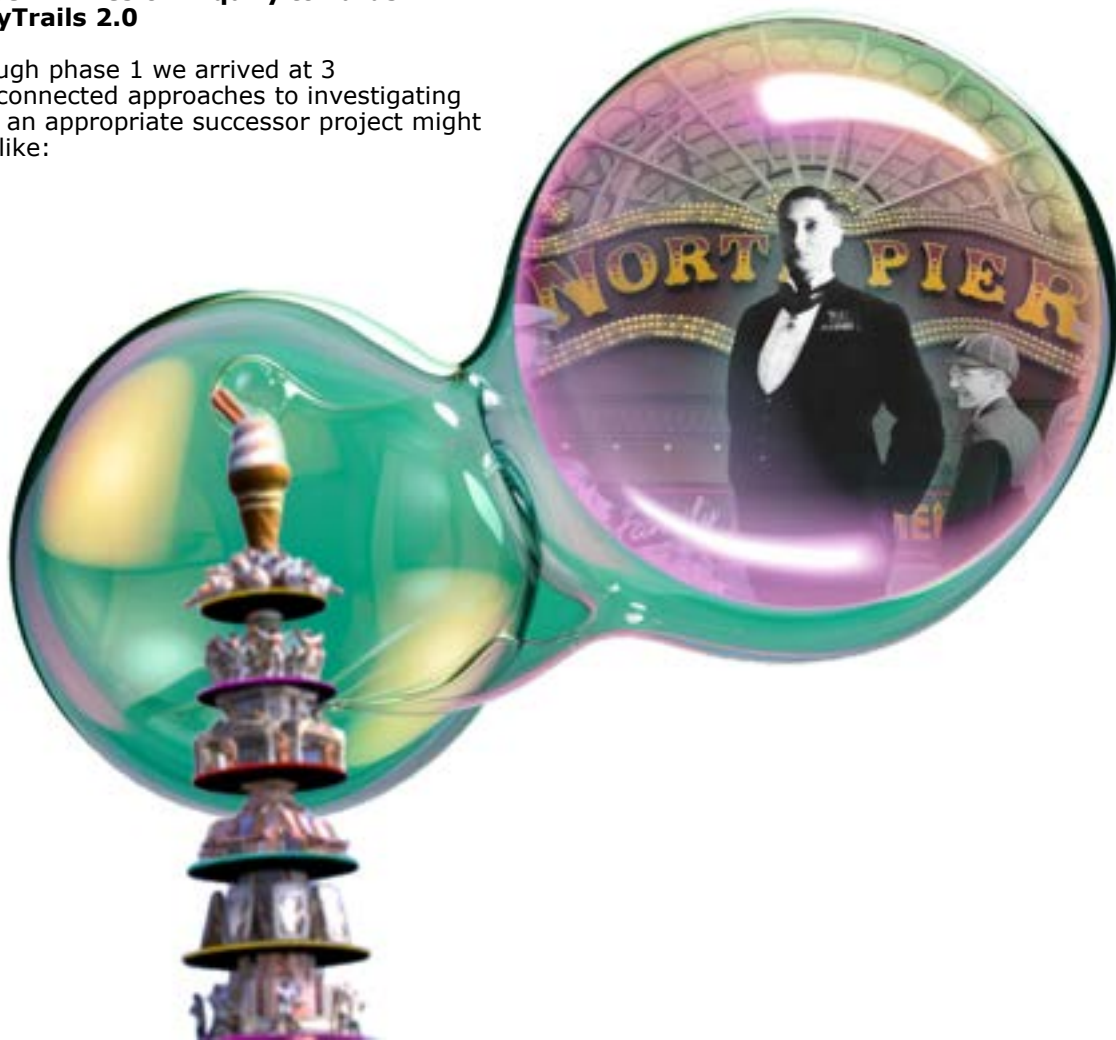
### **Phase 2: Lines of Enquiry towards StoryTrails 2.0**

Through phase 1 we arrived at 3 interconnected approaches to investigating what an appropriate successor project might look like:

**Line A – Storytelling Model** – drew together conversations with cultural partners, theoretical research into different approaches and analysis of StoryTrails 1.0 in relation to other local storytelling initiatives.

**Line B – Democratised Tech** – focused on experimentation with mixed reality and AI technologies to understand how they might impact the possibilities of more participatory StoryTrails-like project in the next 2-3 years. It involved collaboration with the CoSTAR/StoryFutures prototyping team to devise a new AI assisted pipeline culminating in a demonstration for/with partners in Blackpool.

**Line C – Infrastructure** – an evaluation of library resource involved in supporting StoryTrails 2022 and capacity for further projects like it, followed by a series of meetings with wider arts & culture/GLAM sector representatives in both Bradford and Blackpool testing a proposition around a more collaborative partnership model. This involved analysis of the likely funding landscape and alignment with wider regional goals.





# Executive Summary

## - a concise overview of this report

The StoryTrails project In 2022 was considered a huge success; it reached over 1.3 million people around the UK, received great reviews, and won several awards for its innovation particularly for its approach to end-to-end inclusion bringing in diverse creatives to create a range of virtual experiences, then delivering the project as a unique touring showcase in libraries across the UK.

It was pioneering in the way it enabled local stories and hidden histories to be unearthed and experienced in 3D, through the use of augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), and mixed reality, offering a unique blend of digital and physical worlds. Locally relevant stills, audio and video were layered and experienced in the places where history happened, providing a community-led view of the Metaverse

StoryTrails became an exemplar project highlighting the public appetite for engaging with new technologies around storytelling, and from library teams all around the country as a creative way of addressing digital literacy and as a dynamic way of engaging with communities. Once the legacy period of StoryTrails came to an end though, libraries outlined the need for ongoing help with funding applications, for ongoing training in the use of these technologies, and for resources to ensure a broad and sustainable benefit.

It was clear that while StoryTrails was truly trailblazing, a next stage project would need to address a number of challenges; it needed to explore ways of building partnerships within the local and cultural ecology to bolster support and alleviate pressure on libraries; to address rapidly evolving and more democratised access to technology, and the potential this creates for wider community participation in storytelling. While StoryTrails celebrated the stories gathered or told by 30 new creatives, it was clear that many of the 100,000 people who experienced the project live had connected stories they were keen to be able to share. Our new research therefore includes the proposition of a new 'scaffold' storytelling framework that can support both authored and participatory story contributions.

These three key areas of exploration-technology, infrastructure and storytelling model -formed the central focus of the StoryArcs StoryTrails 2.0 research work discussed in more detail in this report.

On next two pages you will find a summary of our findings and recommendations.

**By Prof. A. Murphy & H. S. O'Neill**



For an audiovisual alternative to this summary, try watching our accessible, in-depth visual explanation of StoryTrails and how it used technology, which also covers some of the findings presented in this report. It was presented as part of Architecture Media Politics Society's 2024 conference in Barcelona:



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zg6uJsrFHKM>



# Executive Summary

## Findings & Recommendations (page 1 of 2)

### **Exposure to new accessible technologies to support broad participation in storytelling:**

New technologies are making creative tools more accessible to previously marginalised groups and enabling people to tell their own stories. In support of broad public participation in storytelling, we are advocating for widespread creative use of accessible 3D scanning and mixed-reality tools which run on familiar mobile devices, such as smartphones and tablets. Our research and testing showed that use of AI-enhanced tools and pipelines made it simpler for communities to contribute their stories and easier for facilitators to support the curation of contributions.

### **The need for a new storytelling model to support wide community participation, and to ensure diverse representation and inclusive narratives:**

In addressing the intersection between culture, technology and place, our research highlights the limits of existing storytelling models and principles that have not fundamentally changed in light of rapid and evolving possibilities enabled by new technologies, and are this not best able to support such wide community participation as we see it. Through our research we propose a more adaptive and inclusive 'scaffold' storytelling model that emphasises 'connection' over collection. We propose the **establishing of design principles** and a design framework to service multiple locations and stories. Repeatable story formats and modular principles can streamline training and production, and support navigability for audiences. In creating a dynamic public space through scaffolded interactions, the public can situate their own story in relation to the story of at least one other. Funding is needed to further test this model.

### **Ensuring diverse representation and inclusive narratives:**

To ensure the inclusion of under-represented stories by making it a priority to engage creators and communities from varied backgrounds. Support audiences to contribute and link their stories to those of others, shifting discourse and creating an evolving "People's Metaverse" of shared histories and experiences. This emphasis on connection over collection will help foster community interaction and cultivate a sense of shared belonging.

### **Support through cross sector partnerships:**

It is essential to help develop an infrastructure to support democratised access to new technologies and more participatory storytelling. Our research suggests that creativity can be decentralised across a broader cultural ecology when partners come together.

A sustainable ecosystem approach can offer shared resources, shared knowledge, align local objectives and broaden reach while intertwining project activities with wider initiatives and strategies in support of wellness, prosperity and sustainability.

Our Blackpool case study highlights a local example of where formerly more siloed organisations see the benefit of joining forces in a partnership around a participatory storytelling project such as the one we are proposing in this report, to engage more meaningfully with their visitors, with local archive, people and places enabling a more collective celebration of local history and heritage.

Diverse teams and perspectives lead to more innovative and original creative output. Different viewpoints challenge conventional thinking and lead to breakthrough ideas.



# Executive Summary

## Findings & Recommendations (page 2 of 2)

### **Inclusive Innovation on the research, funding and policy agenda:**

We consider it vital that 'intentional' Inclusion is at the heart of our experimental mixed-reality public spaces, or we risk inadvertently perpetuating harmful stereotypes, misrepresenting or omitting narratives. Inclusive content resonates with wider audiences, creating new economic opportunities. People naturally connect with stories that represent their experiences and identities.

Those who create our public spaces shape who we are as a society, which is why it is critical to democratise creative access at formative stages. Ensuring 'inclusive innovation' is on the research, funding and policy agenda places it front and centre for next stage development.

### **A skills-first agenda and empowerment through hands-on development of future facing digital skills:**

We believe it is important to put people at the heart of technology advancement particularly AI transformation, and we place a strong emphasis on the importance of a skills-first approach. This is not just critical in lowering barriers to uptake for creative application, but also in how future facing skills, and access to jobs and roles evolve and where lifelong learning and reskilling are key.

Our model and infrastructure supports training and mentorship to local creatives, libraries and community leaders with **skills leaders identified and embedded training Strategies** to cascade skills throughout the partnership ecosystem. This investment in skills development will deliver greater sustainability.

### **Importance of next-stage Funding:**

Long-term success requires supportive policy frameworks and funding streams for prototype development towards multi-locational digital storytelling initiatives. Aligning with broader social goals, such as skill-building, wellness and cultural inclusion, will reinforce the societal value of these projects.





# Analysing StoryTrails

## Analysing the participatory successes and failures of StoryTrails

When we set out to make StoryTrails, there was great intent to make the project as participatory as possible. To this end, we embedded **four key inclusion strategies** detailed below.

While broadly successful, these strategies were not without their limits, which we will analyse over the following pages under the broad categories of infrastructure, technology and storytelling.

### Pride of Place

We put UK libraries at the heart of the project. There were 15 library locations involved (through our partner, The Reading Agency) both as a centre for our creatives and their story collecting, and as key venues for the StoryTrails national showcase and touring experience. The project highlighted how libraries are more than just a cultural centre, they have a longstanding, vital role as community hubs for information and technology. StoryTrails transformed the way 3D experiences are distributed, which are traditionally limited to exclusive arts and culture festivals. Over the summer of 2022, 15 libraries opened their doors to their communities, showcasing the StoryTrails experiences for free to 1.3 million people.

### Local Storytellers

When looking to platform perspectives underrepresented by mainstream media, it is critical to consider who will be mediating them. Storytrails recruited 50 creatives from diverse backgrounds and trained them in mixed reality storytelling techniques. For those working on the location specific Maps and Trails strands, a key factor in recruitment was their having a strong connection to the region covered by their assigned library. Their training also included guidelines on how to prioritise unheard voices and authenticate through both oral testimony and archival evidence, focusing on hyper-local stories of belonging and identity, with a clear hook or narrative entry point for audiences.

### Access to Technology

We trained over 900 library staff, underscoring the importance of upskilling within local communities to bring cutting-edge technology to a broader demographic that might otherwise lack access. For 40% of library visitors, this was their first experience of Virtual Reality, Augmented Reality or 3D scanning. The impact of this training and exposure is evidenced by the ongoing work undertaken by librarians, which you can see a snapshot of on the next page.

### Building a Legacy

Following the StoryTrails live tour – we made a commitment to help libraries take the work forward if they wished. Participating libraries were provided with kit, further training and resources. 14 out of our original 15 libraries took part. Some libraries showed huge dedication to the new storytelling techniques and a real appetite for developing digital literacy, as well as new ways of working with and engaging their communities. The aim was to encourage a knowledge-share, collaborative infrastructure that in some instances might help libraries overcome issues around workforce capacity and funding. What emerged from this StoryTrails 'legacy' period was clarity on the power of this tech-forward, participatory way of gathering and sharing community stories, coupled with the project's approach of embedding libraries into the heart of their community's stories.



# Analysing StoryTrails - Library snapshots

## Brixton Library

have found multiple ways of applying the new technologies we've provided to suit the library's remit. They think about projects differently now, utilising the tech to help continue to tell local stories. Their new library archive opened in 2024 featuring 3D scans of Windrush generation objects combined with interviews. This was achieved using our Easy Dioramas workflow (see Appendix A on page 35), with the support of a StoryTrails creative Naresh Kaushal.

"In this borough, there is a necessity for this project. Definitely these stories will be lost otherwise – the riots, the uprisings – these stories do need capturing."  
- Abibat Olulode, Brixton Librarian



## Dundee Library

have a dedicated Library and Information Worker whose technical skills and remit have enabled them to pursue technically complex projects in the wake of StoryTrails 1.0.

"We've bought an Insta 360 Camera to record footage of LGBT spaces around the City. The V&A Dundee has already created a map such spaces and I'm planning to work with local dancers to record choreographed pieces and upload them to Youtube 360. It would be great to be able to then experience our content on VR headsets as it is easy to produce and drawing from past experiences this sort of content is really immersive and could be used for future drama and other theatre productions."  
- Alistair Wilson, Dundee Librarian

## Blackpool Library

have in their words "put VR front and centre of what we do".

They've developed relationships with StoryFutures' affiliated VR Production Companies who feature in the Library's successful Arts Council England bid to further integrate workshops around VR and new technologies.

"StoryTrails really gave us the impetus and understanding that libraries have an extremely important role to play in making technology and digital experiences accessible to our communities, and how vital it is that the communities we serve aren't left behind."

- Vicky Clarke, Blackpool Librarian



# Analysing StoryTrails - Infrastructure

## What we learned about Infrastructure from StoryTrails

By working with libraries as venues, StoryTrails benefitted from a safe community space with few barriers to engagement. Appealing and reachable, most participants found their engagement with these technology enabled stories enjoyable and inspiring, creating a desire for more.

However, it was clear throughout that most libraries struggled to make the most of the project's opportunities due to 2 main infrastructural factors:

- **Internet capacity**
- **Staff capacity**

One of our most engaged libraries, Brixton, was also one of the most infrastructurally challenged. We conducted a formal interview with three of their librarians to get a picture of the challenges they face. We also conducted interviews with two librarians in Dundee. A key difference between the two was that Dundee has as dedicated Library and Information Worker whose role is somewhat ringfenced against plugging gaps in the service. Brixton librarians agreed that having someone in this role would help, but funding for the role would need to be sought.

**"What you are talking about seems a million miles away from where we're at at the moment – we are incredibly challenged as a service - just keeping open is a struggle - unless there was a funded post to do it."**

- Tim O'Dell, Brixton Librarian

When asked if this specialised role might be vulnerable to further library sector cuts, Brixton librarians replied:

"That'd be getting rid of the future." Tim O'Dell

"I can't see how any forward-thinking organisation can do that now – you need to be doing more of that stuff, you've got to be existing in this new world." Abibat Olulode

Seeking funding may also be the only way forward for improving internet capacity. We supported a bid led by Blackpool librarians to gain funding for the project mentioned in the snapshot on the previous page. Part of this bid included a budget line for improved internet capacity – a necessary provision as learned from their experience with StoryTrails. During the 2022 tour, we ended up reliant on our own portable internet provision in all 15 library locations!

**"We don't have the bandwidth to download the stories." "We have to take them home – and download them on our own WiFi." "The stories are here, the history is here, but we're sort of on the floor as an organisation."**

- Abibat Olulode, Brixton Librarian

From legacy period and library feedback, it was clear that the pressure to be both centre of creation and place for the public to experience new tech, and the skills demand on library staff was too much. It was also clear that this was just one way of reaching communities, many from each towns' arts and cultural centres were also fascinated by and interested in the StoryTrails potential. And importantly, many were holders of great archive treasures that could contribute to a meaningful representation of the stories of the people, places and heritage of the town.

This would lead us to explore a more collaborative model, with a broader group of partners from a single cultural ecology. We talked to many organisations across a number of cities, but focused more specifically on Blackpool as a case study, driven by the capacity and appetite of the team there (see page 29 for details).



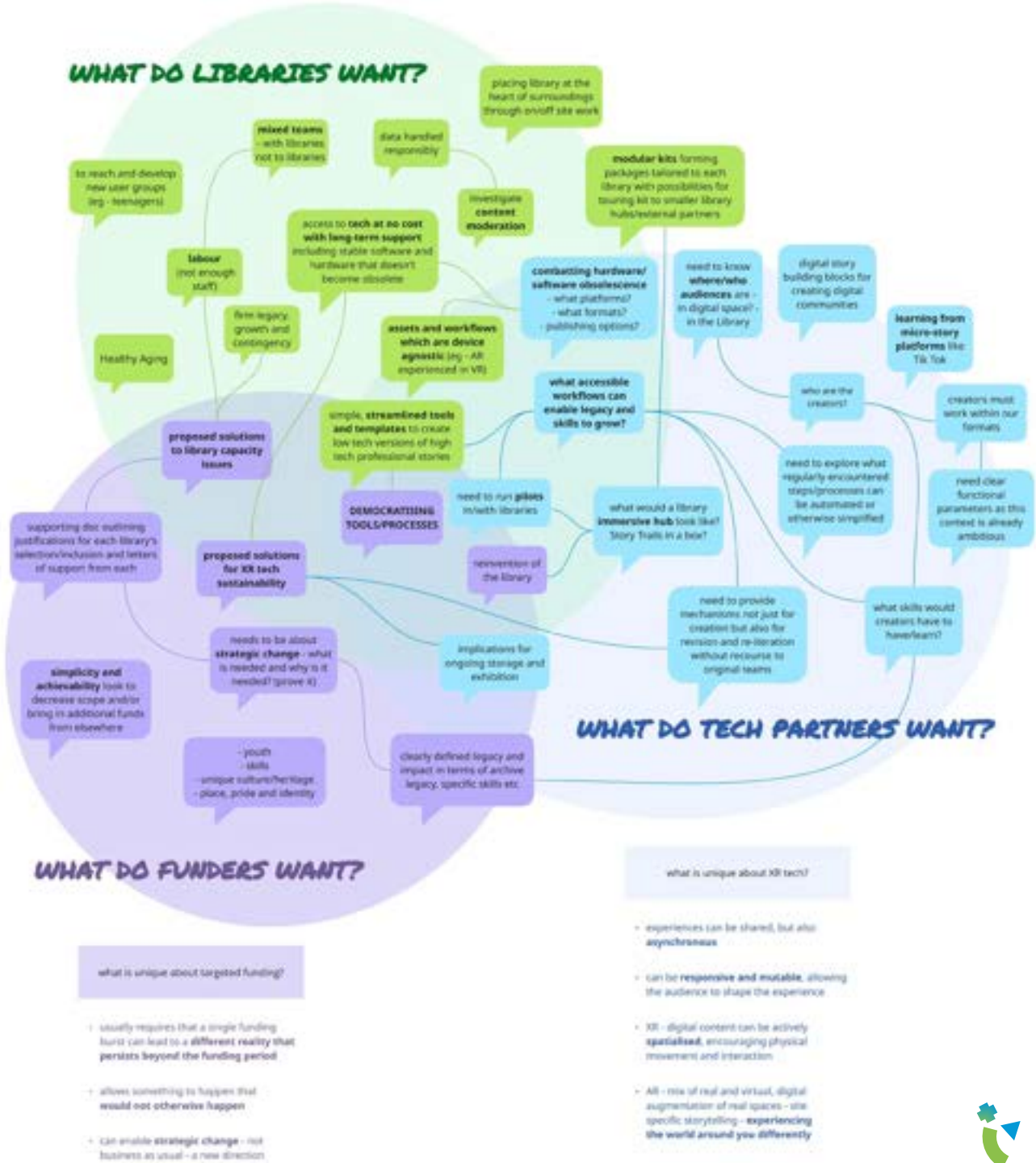


# Analysing StoryTrails - Infrastructure

## What are the likely synergies between project partners?

Part of our early analysis involved mapping any shared priorities within library, tech partner and potential funder feedback.

The below feedback from StoryTrails 1.0 partners and potential 2.0 funders had already been gathered by the outset of this investigation, but mapping it in this way helped us better understand what to prioritise.



# Analysing StoryTrails - Technology

## What we learned about Technology from StoryTrails

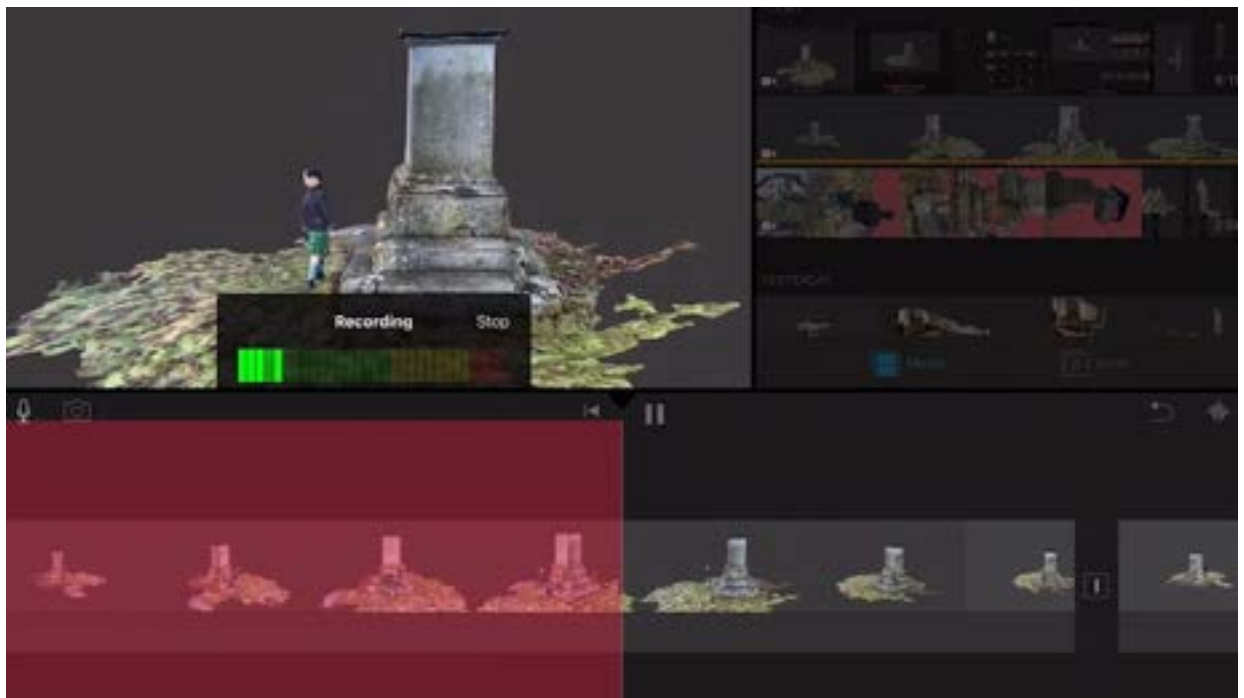
Finding accessible workflows that could enable impact and skills to grow was a key priority identified during StoryTrails' legacy phase.

BigMeLittleMe was the stand-out activity when it came to participation. Librarians were confident running it themselves and visitors to the library found they were able to learn the basics of 3D scanning and Augmented Reality in a few short minutes, using software accessible for free on most mobile devices.

The next logical step was to figure out how librarians could use iPads and skills they already had in relation to running **BigMeLittleMe**, to create their own 3D stories in the style of the **StoryTrails Maps\***.

**"It's not just telling the stories, it was the way it was being done. It was so interesting and engaging – something they had never seen before. A way of collecting stories and memories and history in a really different way."**

- Brixton Librarian



It was important that the workflow was:

- Quick (30 mins per story)
- Little additional technical proficiency required
- No additional cost
- Portable
- Outputting in a format which is durable and easy to share/integrate (mp4)

Our solution was the **Easy Diorama** workflow (described in the "Have a go!" guide, Appendix B). It was successfully tested with libraries in Brixton and Swansea, with the support of creative practitioners Naresh Kaushal and Jay Bedwani.

Feedback from librarians highlighted its potential to connect people through group activity.

This experience with the participatory potential of technology during the legacy period gave a firm steer as we began to look at what new tools and pipelines might empower the next wave of creators in a future StoryTrails-like project.

\* For examples of the StoryTrails Maps, visit: <https://www.story-trails.uk/>



# Analysing StoryTrails - Storytelling

## What we learned about storytelling from StoryTrails

Through the above analysis of technology use within Storytrails' legacy period and through interviews with librarians, we built a picture of the desire of libraries and their communities to add their own stories to any "people's metaverse".

The limitations of our StoryTrails 1.0 storytelling approach became clear:

**Despite the new voices, editorial principles and the disruptive power of new technologies, we'd still managed to replicate the formulae shared with the majority of digital community storytelling projects since the 1960s. That of individual stories being collected, curated and then shared back to audiences as a finite collection.**

Forging a new model to challenge this formulae was key, but before attempting this we conducted the opposite/overleaf analysis of what we learnt about storytelling in mixed reality through our experience as producers of StoryTrails 1.0. The logic of this was that knowledge of storytelling techniques specific to those used by creative practitioners within the workflows of StoryTrails 1.0 would stand us in good stead when considering the practicalities of a new storytelling model.

"The teenagers we were working with, they wanted to see more of their own kind of content. There's a whole host of other stuff that we could be doing, natural history, drama, personal stories..."

"That's what I hope to explore with our cinema club - how can we combine the filmmaking community in Dundee with the 360 technology and the VR stuff to tell their stories."

- Alistair Wilson,  
Dundee Librarian

### Unfulfilled plans for Interaction

The original vision for StoryTrails did include ideas for interactivity that would have fulfilled some of this desire had they transpired as planned. The Easy Dioramas created with Brixton and Swansea libraries during the legacy period fit very closely with original plans to offer opportunities for visitors to have their stories or artifacts scanned during workshops and live events.

The other semi-realised plan for greater interactivity was the "hope notes" function within the StoryTrails App – which was intended to offer a way of adding your own thoughts or stories in relation to the Augmented Reality Trails. This was done via a typewriter object (pictured below), with the idea that your comment would be visualised in a 3D word cloud at the end of each trail. The reality was that the word clouds were fairly inaccessible, being only visible having reached the final trail stop in one go (without the app crashing or your phone running out of battery).





# Analysing StoryTrails - Storytelling

## What we learned about storytelling from StoryTrails (continued)

### Harnessing the power of place and moment

StoryTrails was all about geolocated moments in time encountered through new technologies such as 3D scanning, VR and AR.

Whether encountered spatially or as representations of place experienced on a 2D screen, we found that each story "episode" (the individual stops on an AR trail or a single Map story attached to a 3D diorama) made best use of the medium and most fully achieved our project aims when it centred on a particular moment in place and time.

During the legacy period, when we began thinking about how to create the Easy Diorama workflow for librarians, we found the greatest potential for mass participation in doubling down on this micro "episode" format grounded in a specific memory. For example, the Brixton library team invited members of their local Windrush community to each bring a significant object into the library. Each person and their object were 3D scanned and then asked to recount one simple memory relating to that object. Focusing on a visceral, personal perspective offered benefits both practically in terms of time efficiency, and materially in terms of producing authentic individual perspectives given by participants who were able to avoid the risk of getting caught up in macro narratives which they may not have full knowledge of (at least to hand or in the moment of telling).

## Adapting documentary form and format within the AR trails

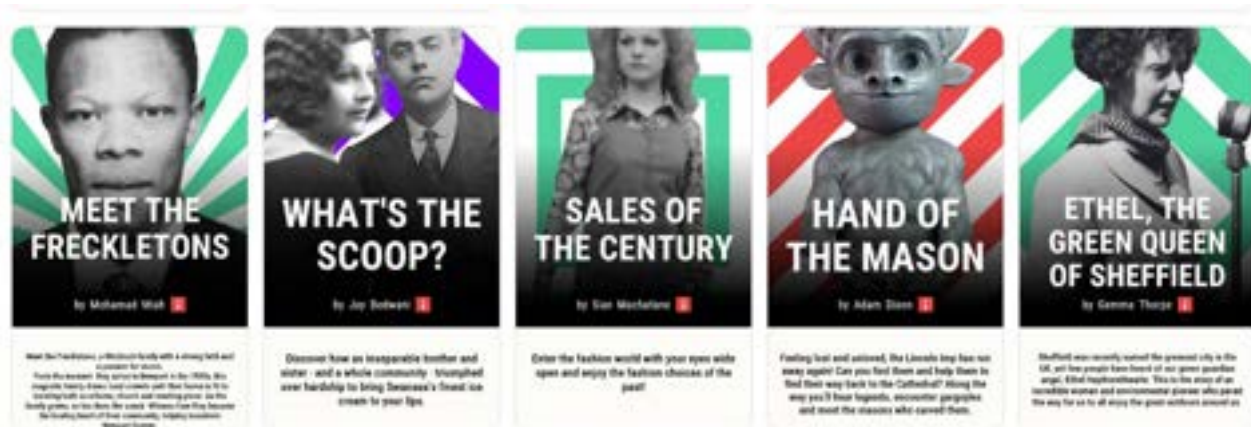
With no precedents for using augmented reality storytelling at this scale and knowing that this would be a first-time experience of the medium for many of our audience members, we drew from established media and arts practices to build our approach. A three-act structure framed both each trail and each stop, creating a compelling story arc across the experience.

Six-stop trails were designed using format television principles following the "three R" rule — Relatable, Recognisable, and Repeatable — to maintain consistency and work at scale across 16 locations. Each stop offered a **2–3 minute modular "episode"**, ending with a cliffhanger to motivate visitors onward.

Training focused on documentary storytelling: building authentic narratives from real people and events, supported by testimony and evidence. Research skills emphasised finding and verifying stories, building trust, and sourcing archival materials.

Audience interaction was crucial in order to dive engagement with the medium. Inspired by immersive theatre techniques, visitors assumed active roles in the story — from roadies to royalty — guided through first-person scripts.

Careful layering of archive, visuals, music, and site-specific storytelling created an unfolding experiential documentary. Rather than authoritative perspectives, the trails amplified multiple voices, bringing underrepresented stories to life and pioneering a new form of place-based AR storytelling.



# Lines of Exploration

## towards a possible StoryTrails 2.0

This next chapter outlines more clearly our approach to three particular lines of exploration:



### A/ Storytelling model

This line of investigation focused on building a new approach to storytelling which could break the traditional formulae of individual stories being collected, curated and then shared back to audiences as a finite collection.

Our approach was informed by the Theoretical Positioning in Appendix B and forged through conversations with members of cultural organisations in Blackpool.

The resulting **"Catalogue as a Catalyst"** model uses in initial catalogue of curated stories as provocations for subsequent storytelling which in turn might forge their own connections, allowing interaction over time to potentially shift the centre mass or focus of the catalogue as a whole.

### B/ Democratised tech

This line of investigation focused on exploring the possibilities offered by emerging technologies, workflows and technical infrastructure which might support greater participation.

Investigations drew on experience working with libraries on Easy Diorama's during the legacy period to inform new prototyping and testing.

The following points were considered:

- Accessibility, portability, and time between engagement and realisation
- Opportunities for accessible pipelines to mimic high-end pipelines
- Possibilities offered by rapidly developing machine learning potential for both curation and visualisation (including generative AI)
- Ways of forging connections between stories (e.g. through metadata)
- Robustness and interoperability of formats, and storage of digital outputs

### C/ Infrastructure

This line of investigation focused on building an infrastructure which could support the kind of participatory, ongoing and growing storytelling project proposed by the new storytelling model.

Knowing that libraries alone could not bear the burden of this, we began working with Blackpool Library in particular to put together a wider network or local cultural partners with some shared goals and audiences. This case study formed the basis of a new infrastructural model which also took wider digital skills-development goals into account, drawing on the principles of **"Train the Trainer"** to a solid skills development programme within the proposed project.



# Lines of Exploration

## towards a possible StoryTrails 2.0

### LINE A – storytelling model

The future of digital storytelling  
should be about connection  
– not collection.

This line of investigation focused on building a new approach to storytelling which could break the traditional formulae of individual stories being collected, curated and then shared back to audiences as a finite collection.

#### Connection – not Collection

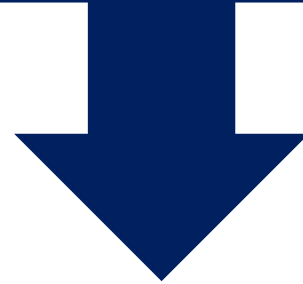
In respect of our aim to consider how any future iterations might work in support of Bennett's idea of a People's Metaverse, it is important to consider the difference between collection and connection. For example, the catalogue of stories presented as Emotional Maps within the StoryTrails 2022 project was a finite collection of stories with each storyteller having been approached individually by the creative, having their story captured in isolation of other stories collected (see diagram overleaf). The basic practice of collecting stories from members of the public is one which is well-established. In heritage sectors, this often involves a professional storyteller and/or historian putting out a call, gathering stories from members of the public, curating them and presenting them back to the public. We propose using technology to implement a method whereby audiences can contribute their own story responding to, or in dialogue with, other stories on display, or starting a new story branch. So it's about building connections between stories, not just a collection of stories. We believe that interaction between members of the public is a key design principle in the production of public space.

Whereas "see your town differently" was a good tagline for StoryTrails 1.0 - highlighting the presentation of a novel, curated collection of stories from perspectives not usually present within mainstream media, StoryTrails 2.0's tagline might be "discover your town differently" – highlighting the participatory invitation to discover perspectives which are new to you through reciprocal interaction with the stories of others.

#### Co-Creation vs Public Space

Co-Creation principles, such as those proposed by Jansen & Pieters (2017), would certainly apply to how we would work with partner organisations but would not apply to how we would engage participants as they add their stories. This is because we want to leave room for difference and potentiality.

Read more about our views on Participation and Multiperspectivity in Appendix B.



In designing for this, we looked to avoid strict principles of Co-Creation in favor of an approach where contributions could be greater or lesser and where neither a knowledge of the whole nor alignment of intention was necessary for interaction with and response to any individual story node.

In terms of what kinds of stories might be provoked or contributed, we drew upon learnings from the **Easy Diorama** workflow trailed during the legacy period, as well as the **AR trail "episodes"** and **Maps dioramas** – short tales about places, objects or moments in time lasting 3 minutes or less. Shared story through authentic, individual moments seemed a likely course to achieving mass participation with limited oversight, and to achieving that "people's metaverse" goal of mixed-reality (the merging of our physical realities and the invisible knowledge of those spaces we carry) through interconnected, people-led storytelling.

We also learned from the value of having existing stories as examples, as provocations and so we developed the **Catalogue as a Catalyst** storytelling model seen in the diagram overleaf and explored in more detail on the following page.





# Lines of Exploration – storytelling model

## Side-by-side comparison: StoryTrails 1.0 vs Storytrails 2.0

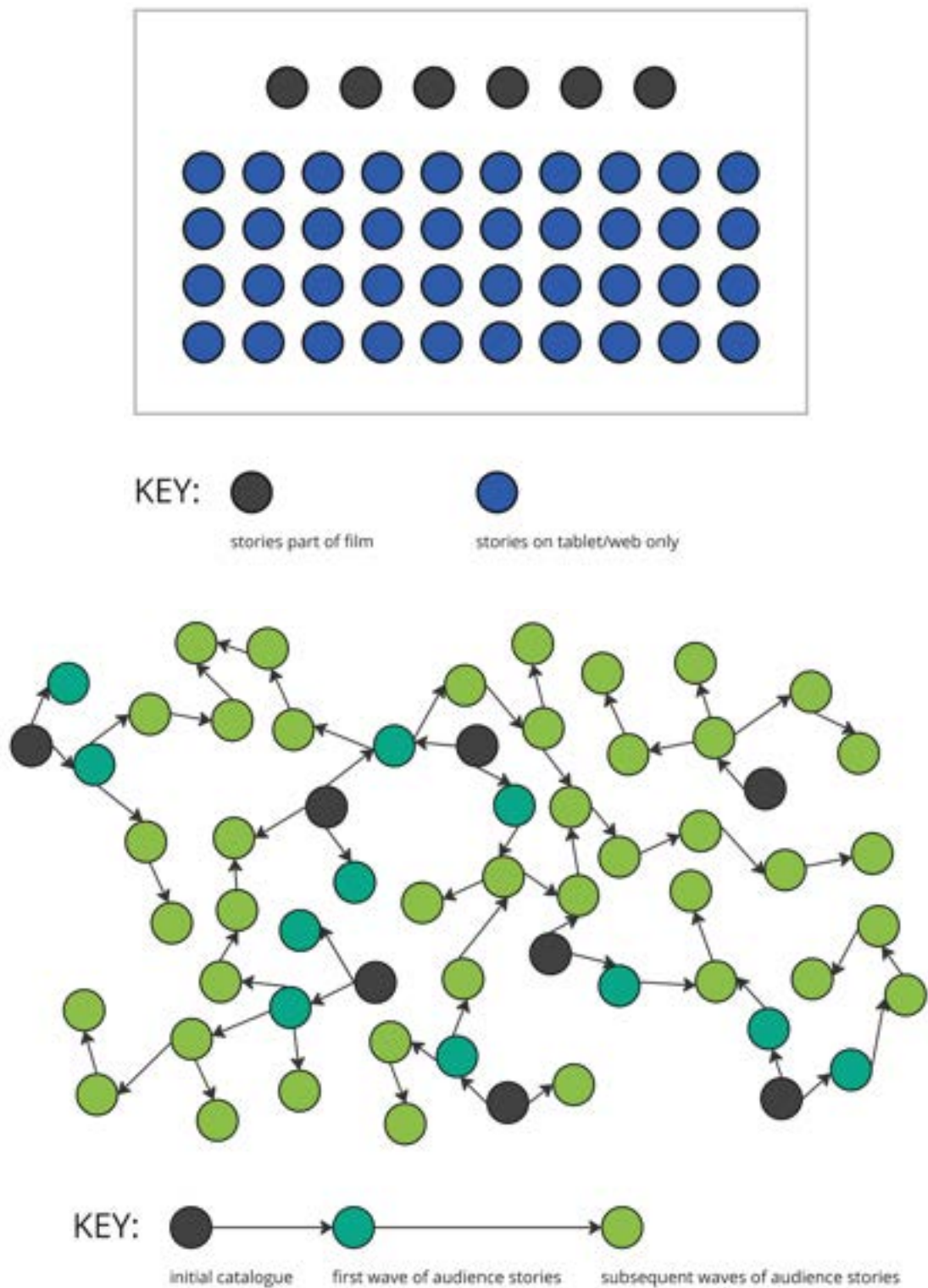


Figure 1. StoryTrails 1.0 model showing individual stories being collected and exhibited as a representation of a geographic location

Figure 2. Proposed StoryTrails 2.0 model showing stories connecting to the catalogue and to each other over time, by theme and content as well as geographic location



# Lines of Exploration – storytelling model

## Catalogue as a Catalyst

Moving away from a finite collection of stories does not mean that we do not value professionally authored works such as those crafted by our creative practitioners for StoryTrails 1.0. Such works can and do act as excellent provocations or inspirational connection points for others.

The new model we are proposing, relies on some kind of starting point as inspiration and provocation. A seed catalogue of stories – much like the original StoryTrails collection – except open-ended, with a connection point inviting new stories to plug-in.

These stories could be specially chosen and crafted to be good conversation leaders, valuing their ability to inspire response.

We shared this proposed storytelling model with a prospective partnership group in Blackpool (see LINE C, Infrastructure, on page 29 for more detail), focusing on a story theme of interest to them – that of LGBTQ+ heritage at risk. It was met with excitement. Museum partners and archive holders were inspired by the potential to pioneer a new approach to participatory archive building. Local council representatives and affiliates saw strong potential for synergy with wider aims around digital inclusion and specific cultural strategies aimed at amplifying the visibility of LGBTQ+ heritage. Partners representing LGBTQ+ groups were excited by the potential to situate their own archive and stories as part of the town's shared story and loved the open-ended dialogic nature.

They were keen to know more about the technical processes which might be involved, leads onto the next line of investigation.

## A catalogue that acts as a catalyst

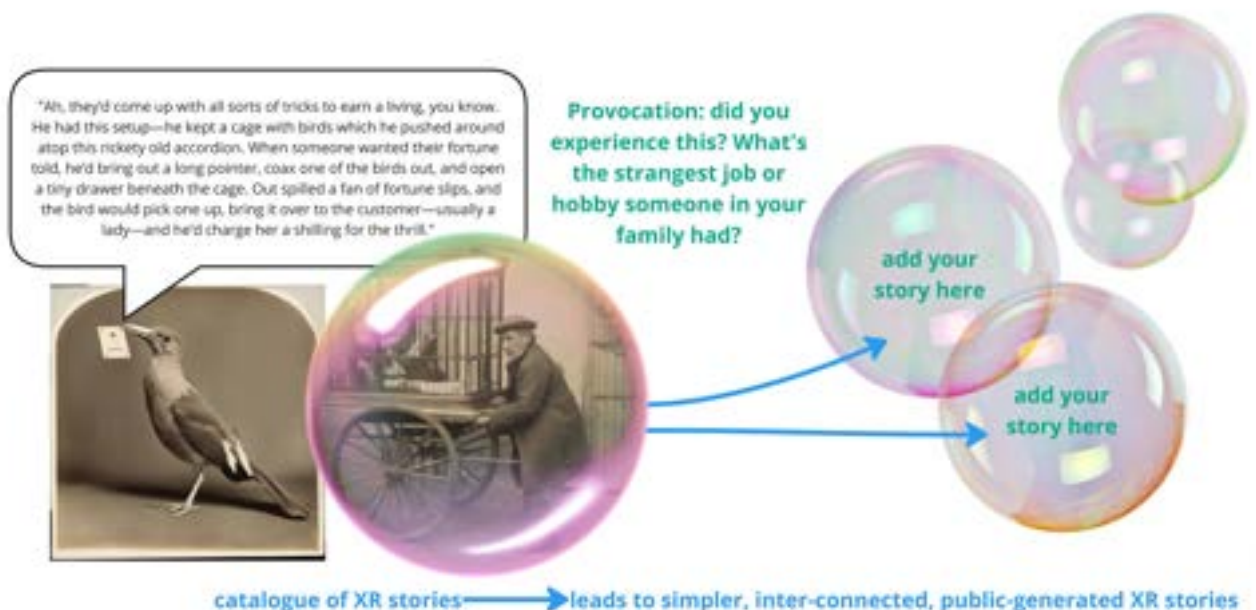


Figure 3. An imagined example of how one catalogue story, which could be made with high production values, could act as a jumping-off point for others to add their story in relation to it using a simpler production pipeline.



# Lines of Exploration

## towards a possible StoryTrails 2.0

### LINE B – democratised tech

To support this model, we needed to be confident of the potential of more participatory creation workflows for users with little or no prior skills required in the use of new tech.

What we learnt from StoryTrails was that the **BigMeLittleMe** and the **EasyDiorama** pipelines were a hugely effective way for the general public to participate and that this active participatory element was a key highlight and legacy of the project that the librarians could take forwards themselves to reach new communities and gather new 3D stories.

We were therefore clear that StoryTrails 2.0 needed to build on this and focus on pushing the boundaries of possibility with participatory tech, while considering practicalities of exhibition, activation and storage.

#### AI for Digital Media Inclusion

After exploring mobile tools such as Polycam, which uses generative AI to support 360 degree environment capture, and Volu, which uses AI algorithms to create a 3D person from a standard video recording, on mobile devices (both pictured overleaf), it was clear to us that AI-enhanced tools and pipelines are likely to be critical in both making it simpler for people to contribute stories and making it simpler for facilitators to support the curation of contributions.

There is therefore huge potential for AI to not only make participation in digital storytelling more accessible, but to change how we approach storytelling in the digital space. AI assisted curation and creation of metadata could allow for mass, asynchronous participation while maintaining standards for metadata and connecting story submissions across regions and countries. We were inspired by findings related to the *Towards a National Collection* UKRI initiative which discussed the problems and possibilities of storing and linking digital collections. We also took inspiration from workflows and exhibition mechanisms which cause stories to intersect in ways beyond just layers on a map, looking at the connective possibilities of thematic metadata and at projects like *The Congruence Engine* and *YARN* (2022), which look to enable users to connect data through narrative.

We were fortunate to have the support of our in-house prototyping team to investigate possibilities and put together a bespoke workflow, or pipeline, which could enhance audience storytelling through the chaining of AI tools. We trialed this prototype in a workshop with a prospective partnership group in Blackpool. You can read about this prototype and the conversations it provoked on the page after next.



**“The lidar scanners for example are dead easy. The kids are just astounded by the fact that they can just do this. Easy hands-on equipment that they can just use. Simple easy ways to upload it and share the content, that’s the way to go.”**

**- Alistair Wilson,  
Dundee Librarian**





# Lines of Exploration – democratised tech



Figure 3. Screen capture of a 360 degree background with inlaid 3D scan made using Polycam

Figure 4. Screen capture of a 3D, moving and talking person created and then viewed in augmented reality using Volu



# Lines of Exploration – democratised tech

## Blackpool Prototype

Exploring what pipelines might be technically possible using AI assisted technologies, our StoryFutures tech team built an AI assisted prototype that involved uploading personal photographs associated with a memory to a pipeline. It offered options to quickly upscale, colourise, and/or animate photographs in sync with oral testimony. It also used AI to assist with the creation of metadata (a key consideration for future searchability and curation) and mapped stories to location.

This prototype wasn't intended as a perfect representation of the proposed storytelling model, partly because there was no catalogue to act as a catalyst and partly because the connectivity between stories was only implemented mechanically (through location and metadata) rather than narratively. It also did not involve 3D or mixed reality elements because, although that would be the ultimate aim, the open-source tools required were not available or reliable enough at the time. Confident that these would be available in the near future, the more pressing need was to test how AI processes might be chained in service of the telling of a simple story about a moment in time.

Perhaps most usefully, the prototype enabled us to enter-into a conversation with our prospective cohort of partner organisations in Blackpool (see LINE C, Infrastructure, overleaf for more detail) about the potential practicalities associated with supporting the public to create their own mixed-reality/3D content, including storytelling aims, data ethics and governance, curation and metadata, longevity and future use of any stories submitted in digital formats.

## Combatting Media Bias

The prototype interestingly presented something of a paradox when it came to elevating perspectives underrepresented in mainstream media. On the one hand, evidence of untold narratives, in this case photos, is often of a lower quality than those considered either important in their time or important by someone with the means to document to a high standard. Upscaling, adding colour to and bringing to life through animation or 3D can make a huge difference to how those narratives are engaged with, especially by audiences. This could have a positive impact on visibility of diversity in our history, however there were some notable drawbacks. The AI tool we used to upscale photos, unsurprisingly given the bias inherent in most datasets used to train, tended to guess details that took images noticeably closer in appearance to people and objects already overrepresented.

Here's a look at the prototype from the participant's perspective:

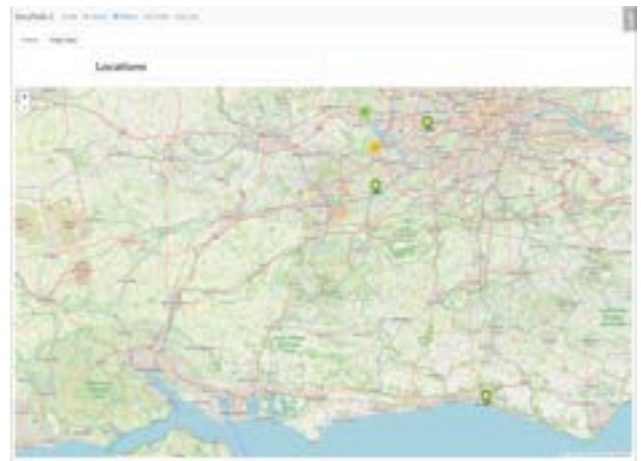


**STEP 1** – upload photo, adjust the auto-generated location/description data and select processes for the image to undergo



**STEP 2** – review the resulting upscaled and/or colourised image and add an audio recording describing the moment or memory context of the image

**STEP 3** – review the resulting animated image with audio



**STEP 4** – search for related stories using the map interface or keywords



# Lines of Exploration

## towards a possible StoryTrails 2.0

### LINE C – infrastructure

Through our interviews and analysis around the live events and the legacy period of StoryTrails 1.0 we became very much aware that a new model that encouraged greater public participation in the creation and exhibition process, would need the support of a wider ecosystem. Libraries alone could not carry it. We set out to investigate a new StoryTrails 2.0 model which might harness a broader cultural ecology.

#### Blackpool Case Study

We centred our investigation in Blackpool the Library team had identified a clear appetite to take the idea of StoryTrails further in collaboration with local organisations and initiatives. Together we engaged local partners including Blackpool Council, Showtown Museum, House of Wingz, We're Still Here, United Youth Alliance, The Grand Theatre, Grundy Art Gallery, North Shore Business Group & the Be Who You Want to Be initiative around an initiative to celebrate the city's LGBTQ+ stories.

They were excited, highlighting the benefits of access to cutting-edge academic research and new technologies, from knowledge share and skills development including 'trainer' skills and importantly, the ability to develop innovative ways of reaching new audiences critical to business growth.

They talked about the power of collaboration in the use of new technologies not just as a better way of serving their town and communities, but also as a more accelerated route to creating scalable creative works. Within this new model we also discussed the prospect of de-siloing existing archive, of developing an open access system that would allow communities to activate and celebrate archive in new 3D interactive works.

These works would be made up of the stories that matter to communities in the here and now and would therefore forge "connection" within and between communities, rather than being just another archive collection for a dusty drawer!

Pulling it all together would be a 'Train the Trainer' model that could create a buzzing and sustainable advanced digital storytelling skills ecosystem.





# Lines of Exploration - infrastructure

## Cascading skills

One of the great potentials for our new proposed framework was the integration of a town or city wide 'Train the Trainer' model, whereby a number of culture and arts leaders and community workers could be trained in the use of this new tech (not just librarians) with each cascading the skills down to other workers and community members, visitors and audiences, meaning digital skills development could be both rapid and far more inclusive creating a much more sustainable advanced digital storytelling skills ecosystem.

Having run a Train the Trainer programme with 19 HEI's for StoryFutures in 2019, we were able to have first-hand experience of testing this model and cascading skills through over 300 educators in HE around the UK. They reported on the value of developing a shared language and new skills together, and a positive and sustained way impacting the teaching of over 3,000 students a year.

The train-the-trainer model has been applied in various creative and technological settings, with several key researchers and organizations advocating for its effectiveness. In Cascio and Aguinis (2019) Applied Psychology in Talent Management, they examined how organizations can effectively manage technological transitions in creative environments. They found that identifying "creative technology champions" within teams resulted in:

- 67% faster adoption rates compared to direct training approaches
- Higher levels of innovative applications of the new technologies
- More sustainable knowledge transfer as champions continued evolving practices

Our Blackpool case study group, acknowledging the need for a new way forward, welcomed this **"train the trainer"** model.

**"Capacity to do this sort of thing is a bit of a problem – especially if it means learning new skills."**

- Abibat Olulode,  
Brixton Librarian



**"The term 'Train the Trainer' evolved from the international women's movement in the developing world since the mid-twentieth century.**

It can be defined as a structured design for building the capacity of trainers creating a chain of knowledge transfer within an organization or community, commonly used in various programs worldwide. Trainers are equipped with the resources they were taught with, and the skills to train others." (Femnet, 2013; Wetzels, 1993).



# Lines of Exploration - infrastructure

## Side-by-side comparison: StoryTrails 1.0 vs Storytrails 2.0

The original model, even during the legacy period (pictured below), put too much pressure on libraries as the sole conduit for reaching audiences. Even though there was positive skill share and shared learning between library teams, the individual teams had no local support beyond the creative practitioners charged with making the story content. In this place-based project, libraries received little or no organised support from local groups and organisations.

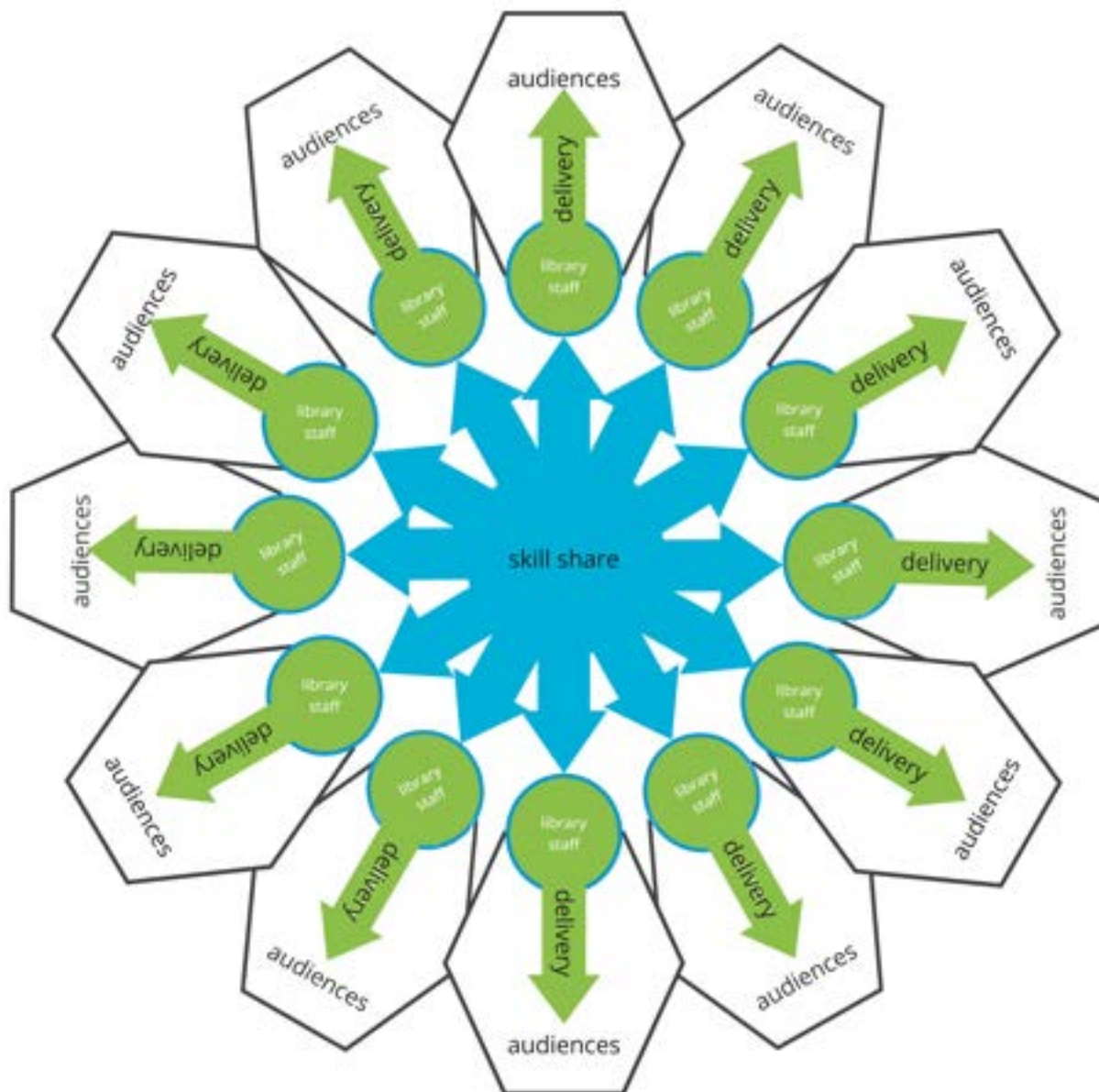


Figure 4. StoryTrails 1.0 legacy infrastructure showing positive skill share between libraries, supported by StoryFutures, but still very limited local delivery support for reaching audiences



# Lines of Exploration - infrastructure

## Side-by-side comparison: StoryTrails 1.0 vs Storytrails 2.0

Through discussion with Blackpool Library, community stakeholders within Blackpool and other library partners we arrived at the below “train the trainer” inspired model in which each local partner organisation has a dedicated individual forming an initial cohort to which StoryFutures could deliver training. They in turn would be well placed to train both their own staff members and audiences, with ongoing support from StoryFutures and each-other.

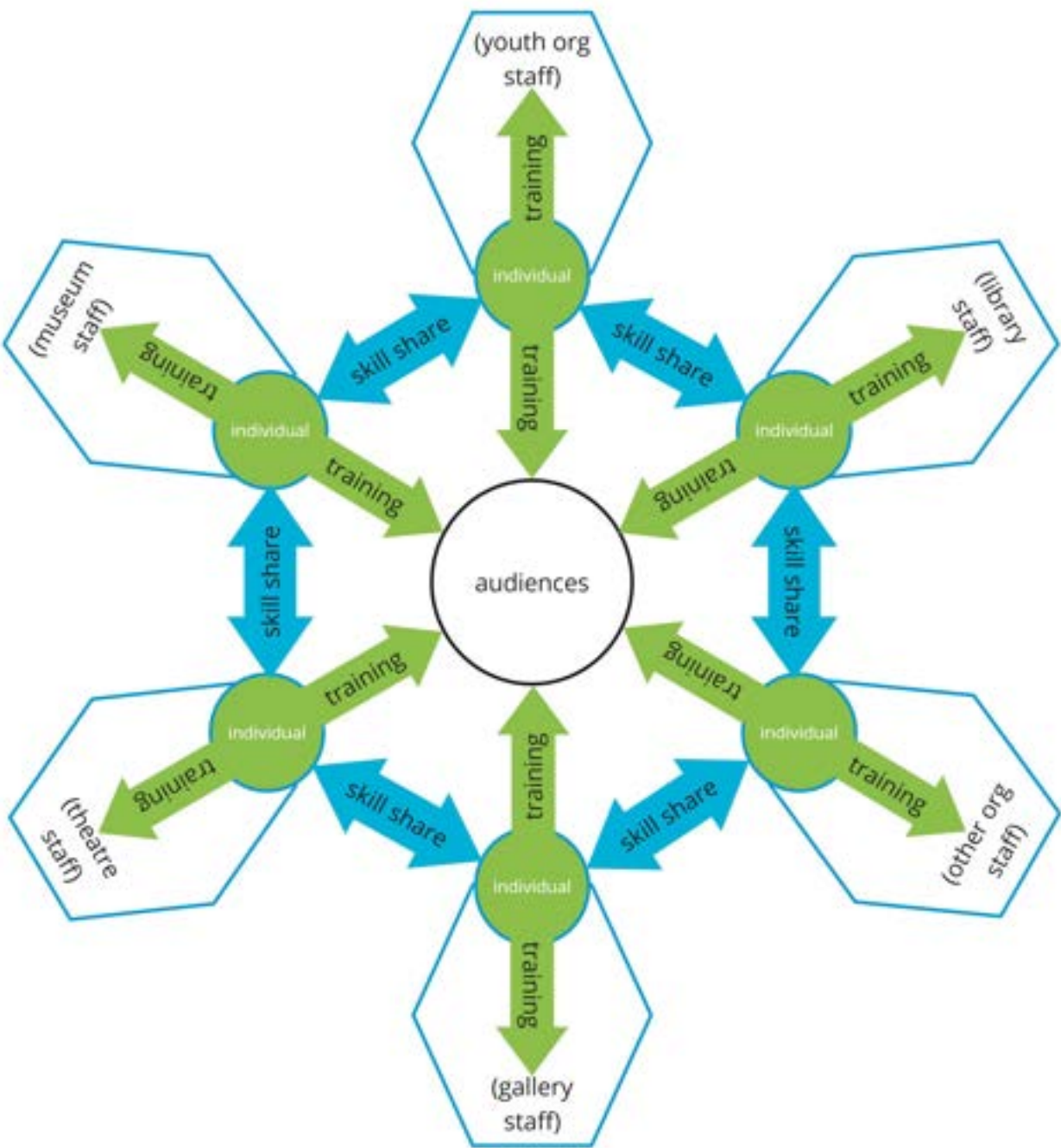


Figure 5. Proposed StoryTrails 2.0 model showing skill share between individuals identified within organisations which share some audience overlap, enabling joint or supported delivery and ongoing training for both staff and audiences





# Lines of Exploration - infrastructure

## Bringing it all together

To get a sense of how this new model might more directly relate to the creation and activation of the initial catalogue required for the proposed new storytelling model, we created the below diagram showing how decisions about catalogue content could be shared, alongside sharing the burden of exhibition/activation. Audience contributions could be made with a simple smart device or at a dedicated kiosk, supported staff at partnered locations, building upon the train-the-trainer participatory infrastructure.

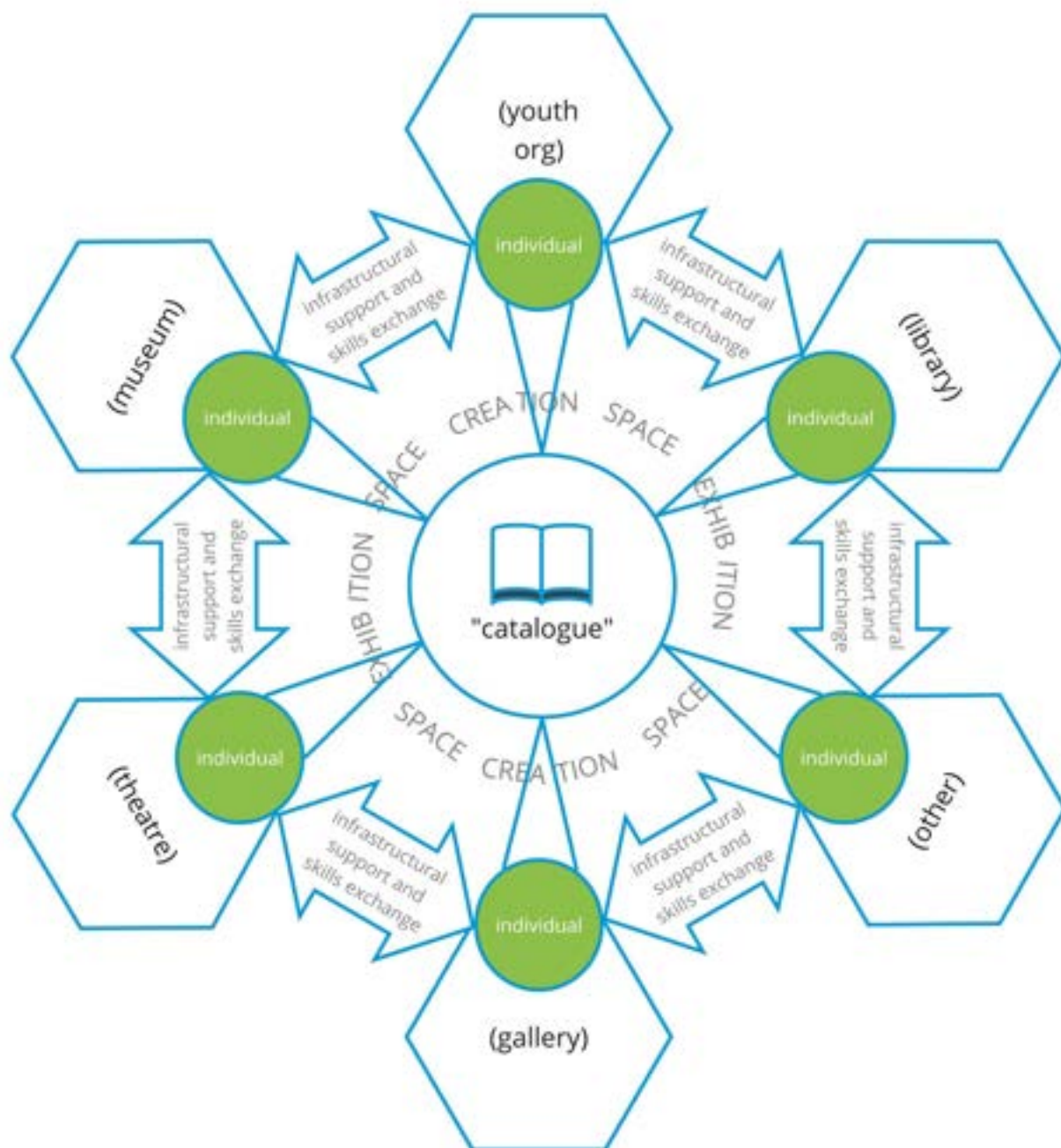


Figure 6. Place-based partner cohort supporting development of catalogue and onward engagement.



# Conclusion



We believe it's a really exciting time to be a **Scaffolders of Stories**.

AI is opening up more opportunities to tell stories with room for **audience improvisation** and choice-making; there is increasing ability to play with the **malleability** of digital media for personalisation, but also for audience-driven **growth** over time; and the increasing visibility of non-physical layers within our shared physical spaces has great potential to increase our awareness of the **perspectives** of others.

We have applied for and are seeking funding to take this thinking and prototype into next stage development, hoping to build on the momentum and support from a broad range of potential partners. Promoting **inclusion** and enabling wider **participation** in digital media is central to our work at StoryFutures and we see this as a critical moment in time to drive this project on. Those who create our public spaces shape who we are as a society, which is why it is critical to democratise creative access at formative stages!

Thank you for taking the time to read our report. We hope you've enjoyed it, and we look forward to joining forces on this participatory storytelling journey with emerging technologies — and perhaps one day, catalysing a "People's Metaverse."

**Amanda and Helen**

*"Regardless of what form the digital public space may finally take, it will never be just a technical solution but will itself be a cultural creation, where the process of forming it brings together a wide range of organizations with different interests and perspectives"*

- Stainforth & Ruiz, 2019



# Appendix A – Have a go!

## Easy Diorama in just 7 steps

While waiting on StoryTrails 2.0, we thought you might like to try the below workflow to create your own 3D stories! This was devised by the StoryFutures team during the StoryTrails legacy period and provided a great jumping-off point for this research.

**Step 1/** Recruit and brief participant to draw out short, personal story



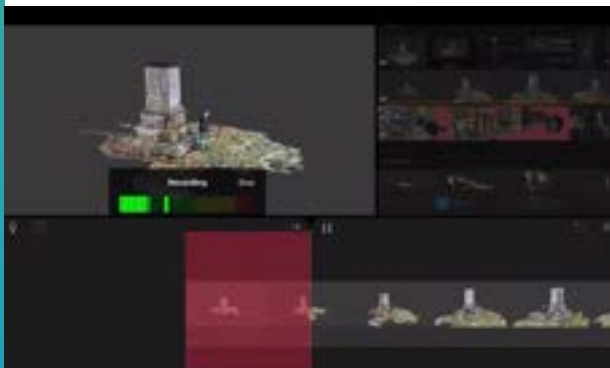
**Step 2/** Scan the subject, object & environment using the free Scaniverse app (available on any iPhone or iPad model since iOS 12)



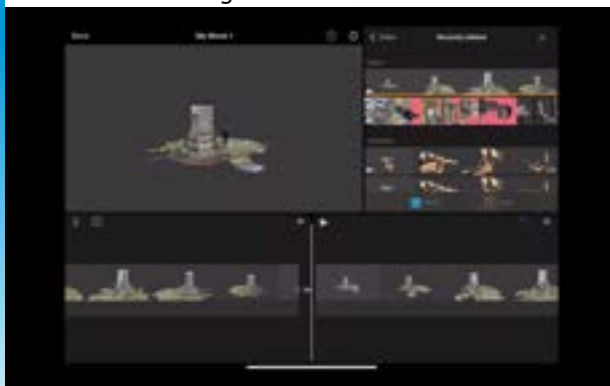
**Step 3/** Click "share", then "video" to export the scan as a fly-through video file (mp4)

**Step 4/** Import the video into iMovie

**Step 5/** Record participant's short, personal audio story on top of the video within iMovie



**Step 6/** Loop the fly-through video to cover the length of the recorded audio



**Step 7/** Export the final video file (mp4)

Check out the below video for a walkthrough guide:

<https://youtu.be/MIMvwVVSy8I>





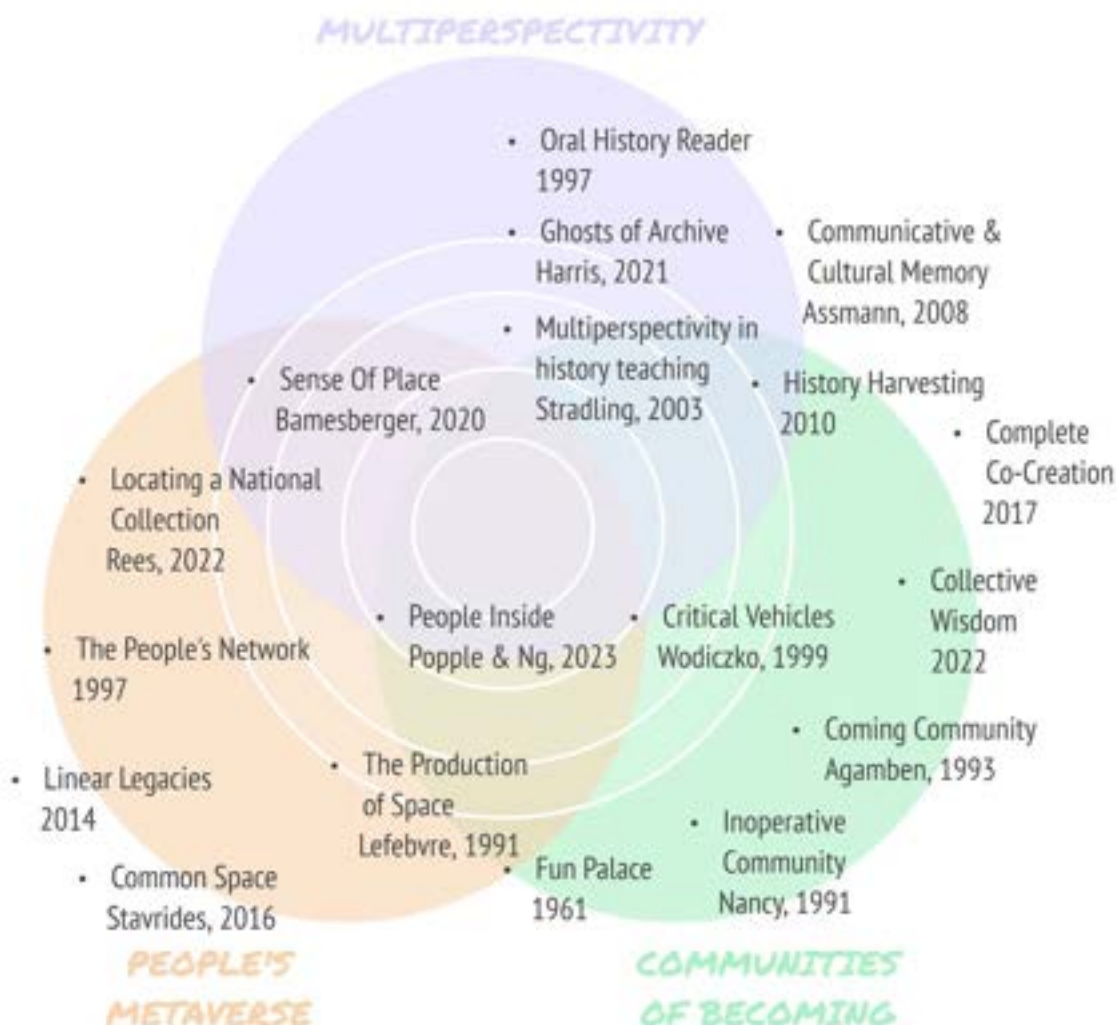
# Appendix B – Theoretical Framework

The below diagram gives a sense of reading done during the analysis phase to give a theoretical positioning to this research. Reading centred around 3 key terms:

**1 - A People's Metaverse** – Bennet's term used in relation to Storytrails (see page 9 for context).

**2 - Multiperspectivity** – a term which deserves re-examination in the context of XR and mobile technologies. (see overleaf for more)

**3 - Community Of Becoming**, a term used by participatory public space artist Krzysztof Wodiczko which suggests alternative interactivity approaches to co-creation which may be more in line with public space dynamics. (see overleaf for more)



# Appendix B – Theoretical Framework

## Multiperspectivity in XR

Multiperspectivity is broadly understood to mean engaging with multiple related perspectives. It is a term which we thought might merit re-examination in the context of mixed reality and mobile technologies. It has been approached different ways in different fields, but we found most traction with how it is discussed in the field of history.

For K. Peter Frizsche, multiperspectivity is “a strategy of understanding”. Ann Low-Beer goes further to say, “[it] means to be able and willing to regard a situation from different perspectives”. For both, multiperspectivity applies to the historian, to the student or professional.

From the perspective of an immersive or participatory practitioner, and with specific consideration of the advances in XR mobile technologies, it can be interesting to consider multiperspectivity as a tool for the audience.

They use it in two ways:

- engaging with the perspectives of others
- positioning their own perspective in relation to them

StoryTrails created scenarios in which physical environments (or representations of them) became layered with multiple histories, multiple perspectives. Using mixed-reality tools free from the constraints of physics and permissions, there is theoretically no limit to what our familiar geographies could ‘contain’.

This content could also be interacted with, added to, and could grow or morph over time. The properties of interactive mixed reality not only allow for this, but offer this as a unique feature of the medium. We believe this is a key consideration when choosing to work with new technologies – choosing them not to do something differently, but to do something that could not be done any other way.

## Community of Becoming approaches to Participatory Storytelling

When it comes to ways of getting the ‘audience’ to participate, there are many considerations and approaches. The 7 Principles of Complete Co-Creation (Jansen & Pieters, 2017), for example, provides a practical guide to fair and equal co-creation. The problem with applying these principles to a potential ‘People’s Metaverse’, where that Metaverse is seen as a form of public space, is that it is hard to see how public space could be co-created without losing its characteristics.

For participatory public space artist Krzysztof Wodiczko, public space is transformative and transform-ing – never fixed – “a communicative cross-stratum based on shared multiplicity of identities in an unstable process of becoming a community or, better, a community of becoming, the only commonality of which will be its communicated uncanny strangeness” (Critical Vehicles, 1999).

Once the production of public space is too clearly defined, it is no-longer public space. Furthermore, the more defined something is, the easier it is for audiences to come to the conclusion that it is “not for them”, resulting in a narrower range of perspectives.

Wodiczko also argues that not all perspectives are of equal import when actively trying to disrupt social norms through new technologies. He argues that a “rebirth” of public space “will be constituted on the site of the newcomer, who is the stake of the society to come and the new mentality to be born”. This focus on outsider stories is also in-line with the StoryTrails project in which “hidden histories” and unheard voices were prioritised. He goes further to say that “if the stranger is a prophet who interrupts history, today’s artists and designers should help the prophet by designing special equipment for such an intervention” - a clear call to action motivating our focus on accessible mixed-reality creation pipelines.

