# Starting point

• Human beings as meaning makers who use narratives to interpret, direct and communicate life and to configure and constitute their experience and their sense of who they are. These narratives are passed down from people's social and cultural world.

• Developing a story about oneself affects the overall functioning of a person - it allows them to organize their experiences cognitively and emotionally by giving them meaning, and thus discover the meaning in the story and shape motivation

Key features of storytelling

- Draws on culturally universal elements: topoi (e.g., the journey, Arcadia), archetypes (the Trickster, the Guardian, Mother Earth, etc.), classical narrative structures.

- Built upon socially shared values and cognitive frameworks.

- Requires minimal differentiation of the message.

- Ensures coherence and consistency in audience interpretation.
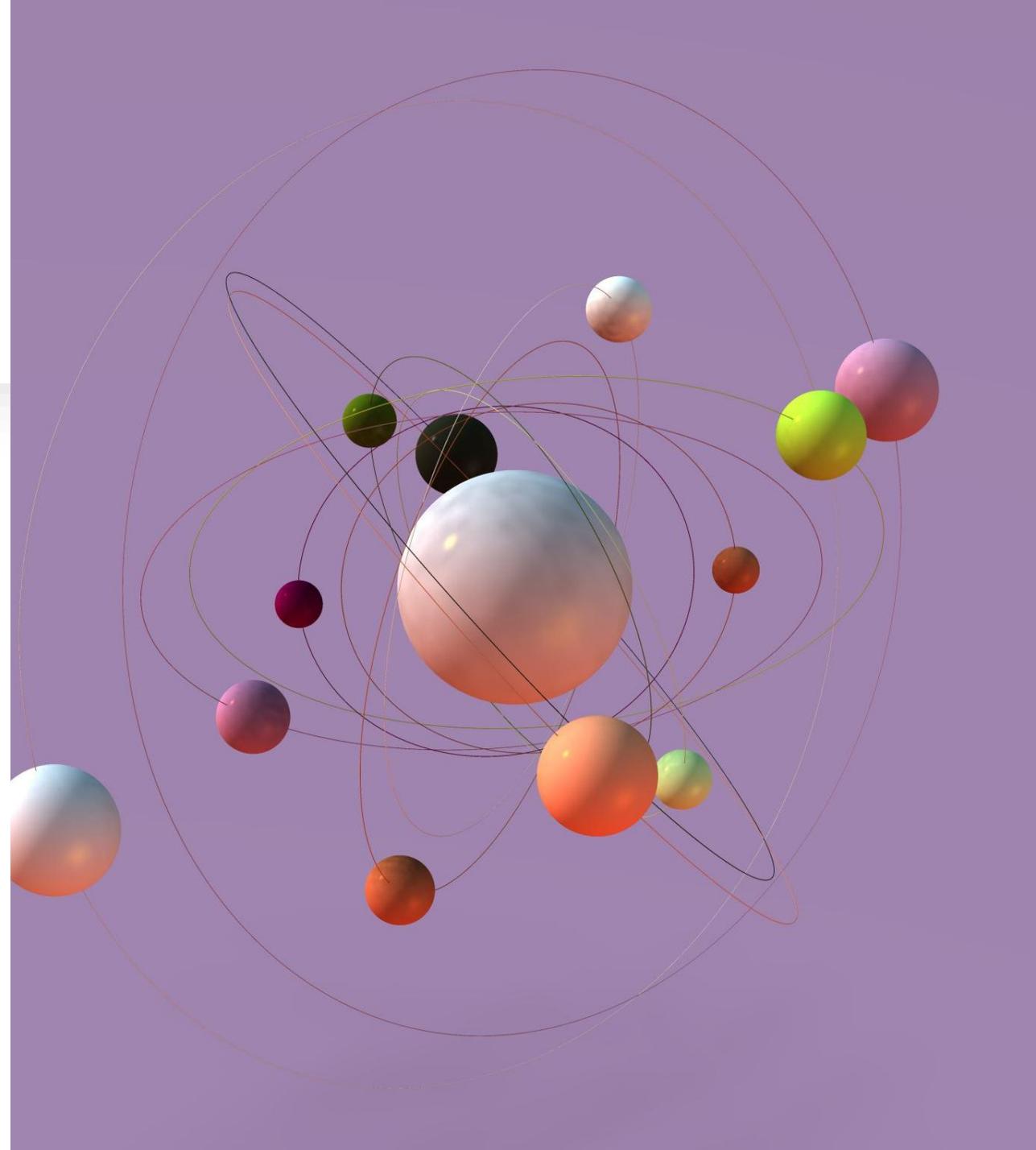
5 Cs of storytelling

Character

Context

Conflict

Climax

Closure

STORY / NARRATION (Labov and Waletzky's (1967) model)		
Structural Elements	**Content**	**Identifying Questions**
Abstract	Summarizes a story in advance and is an optional element which states a general proposition or point which the following story will illustrate. In a longer story this may indicate the meaning.	What was this about?
Orientation	Gives details of the time, persons, place or situation of the characters. Such background information may come at different points in the story, especially if there are changes of location or character.	Who? When? What? Where?
Complication	This gives the main event sequence and shows a crisis, problem or turning point, which later parts of the story will remedy or change. It suggests tension in a plot.	Then what happened?
Evaluation	Shows how to understand the meaning; it reveals the teller's attitude by emphasizing parts of the story. Evaluation can be signalled by the voice (different pitch, intonation, pausing, etc.) or grammar (repetition or exclamations for emphasis)	So what? So, what is the point?
Resolution/Result	Shows the resolution to the complication, but it may be followed by another complication which in turn leads to another resolution in a cycle.	What finally happened? Or How did it all turn out?
Coda	A short optional section which simply brings listeners to the end and returns conversation to normal talk.	

Dual layer of interpretation

The reserach participants (storytellers) interpret their own lives through narrative

The resercher inteprpetes the construction of that narrative

Narrative inquirers don't "study lived experience; rather, we examine lived textuality" (Denzin, 1995, p. 9)

„We are already in the midst of language and narrative form; our lives and experiences in society have been written, formulated, theorized, analyzed, categorized, presented, and represented in the various media, print and electronic; they have been verbalized and represented visually to the point where we apparently can no longer have a "pure" experience that has not already been textualized for us" (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2005, p. 35)

The dignified storytelling principles

1 IT'S NOT MY STORY.

2 I DO NO HARM.

3 WE ARE ALL MULTI-DIMENSIONAL.

4 CONSENT IS MORE THAN PAPERWORK.

5 I AM BIASED (REPEAT).

6 I DO MY HOMEWORK.

7 I AM EMPATHETIC.

8 I PROTECT OTHERS' DATA LIKE IT'S MY OWN.

9 TRUTH OVER HEADLINES.

10 A STORY CAN CHANGE THE WORLD.

(Dignified Storytelling Handbook, 2021)

Irresponsible storytelling

"Why can't we sell Brotherhood like we sell soap?" (Gerhart Wiebe, 1952)

- perpetuates stereotypes (showing only one aspect of a person or community)

- furthers bias, discrimination, and social stigma

- runs the risk of putting contributors in mental and physical danger (i.e. through re-traumatisation in the sharing or a failure to protect identities).

- when depicting contributors as passive recipients or only victims, it limits their rights and agency;

- if using overly simplified, sensationalised, or formulaic narratives maintains uneven, status quo power dynamics and stereotypes

(Dignified Storytelling Handbook, 2021)

What makes it hard to share stories?

- Power imbalances and lack of trust
- The complex nature of the story/situation being told
- Low skills, resources, and capability
- Lack of readiness to receive stories
- The limitations of language
- Cultural differences
- Individualized stories without context
- Bias

„Storytelling and systems change", 2023 (https://i2insights.org/2023/02/07/storytelling-and-systems-change)

How we relate to stories that are told

Identifying "emotional triggers"

What triggers emotions in the story's protagonist?

What triggers emotions in the audience?

Which words, images, gestures, or contexts are the most "active"?

Pay attention to: avoid projecting your own emotions onto the protagonist; focus on *emotions within the narrative*.

"Negative" Emotion–Value Pair

Fear/Anxiety
A threat-response emotional state characterised by the anticipation of potential harm or danger, manifesting either as acute reactions to immediate threat (fear) or as persistent concern about future uncertainties (anxiety).

Security
safety, harmony, and stability in society, relationships, and the self.

Positive Emotion–Value Pair

Happiness/Enthusiasm
Positive emotional state characterized by feelings of joy, contentment, and satisfaction. Enthusiasm is an intense form of happiness, often accompanied by excitement and eagerness toward a particular activity or goal.

Benevolence.
Preserving and enhancing the welfare of those with whom one is in frequent personal contact (the "in-group")

Empathy mapping

- what the protagonist feels (visible and hidden emotions),

- what they fear,

- what they hope for,

- what they see and experience in their environment.

Attention points:

- distinguish between primary and secondary emotions,

- detect unspoken tensions (e.g., shame, sense of injustice, ambivalences

Desired "emotional responses" in the audience:

- Do we aim to reduce fear? Increase understanding? Open perspectives?

- Which emotions are risky (e.g., moral anger)?

- Discuss communicative intentions: narratives are not neutral descriptions, they are *actions on emotions*

Evaluations of narratives

How does a set of stories function in communities of learning?

What is the personal and cultural stance of the teller on what is narrated?

How does a narrative analysis fit with other information, data or other research in the context?

What images of participants are presented in narrative analysis, and how do they feel about such images?

What is the personal stance of the audience/researcher in interpreting narratives?

What are the standards or criteria to judge narrative analyses?

(based on Cortazzi, Lin, 2012)

How to make stories actionable?

- Determine what kind of action you want people to take.
- Mix struggle with success.
- Create "pathways to action."
- Make your stories sharable.
- Give people a way to meaningfully participate.
- Offer hope and a sense of efficacy.

https://narrativearts.org/article/action/
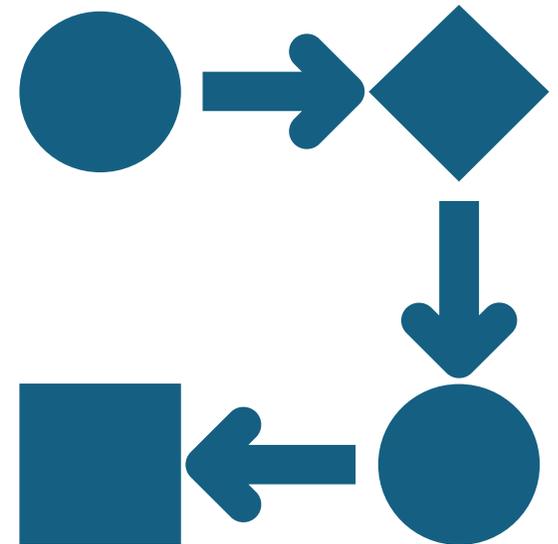
„There's really no such thing as the „voiceless". There are only deliberately silenced, or the preferably unheard".

Arundhati Roy