

ifa Edition Culture and Foreign Policy

Digital Crossroads: Civic Media and Migration

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Foreword

“In digital media, the ways in which migration is represented can significantly shape associated political agendas, social policies, and popular opinion,” state the authors of this study, Paul Mihailidis, Liat Racin and Eric Gordon.

Media literacy is the ability to access, analyse, evaluate and communicate information. It relates to a wide variety of printed and electronic media and is increasingly recognized as an essential skill for today’s wired and mobile world. How do we examine online content and sources today? How can digital media be used to connect migrants and receiving communities? What tools exist for effective and meaningful storytelling? What constraints still remain?

The authors of the present study explore the role of media literacy in enabling citizens and public bodies to engage critically and skilfully with information and communication in digital spaces. They use the case of migration to explore how media frame issues, set public agendas, and engage in cultural meaning-making in the digital public sphere.

The study forms part of ifa’s Research Programme “Culture and Foreign Policy”, in which experts address topical issues relating to culture and foreign policy with the aim of involving academics, practitioners, policymakers and the public. The main findings of this report were presented and discussed at a workshop during the tenth meeting of the Salzburg Academy on Media and Global Change in July 2016. The report benefited from the invaluable input of participating media researchers and experts from four continents.

Salzburg Global Seminar, an international non-profit organization founded in 1947, challenges present and future leaders to solve issues of global concern. Its multi-year programmes are designed to forge breakthrough collaborations to bridge divides and accelerate transformation. Salzburg Global’s annual Media Academy, directed by Paul Mihailidis, puts this into practice. It connects universities, researchers and students across the world to foster cross-cultural understanding and generate practical media and communications tools to tackle shared challenges.

We very much thank Paul Mihailidis, Liat Racin and Eric Gordon from the Engagement Lab, Emerson College, Boston for their excellent work and commitment to this research project. Special thanks also go to three ifa colleagues: Odila Triebel for her invaluable

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Social media can play a pivotal role in building positive connections between migrant and receiving communities. Better understanding of social media use and literacy of different communities is crucial to reach out to migrant communities and include them in mainstream discourse and framing narratives.

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Abstract

This report examines the uses of digital media among non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working with migrants and refugees primarily in Europe. Based on interviews with leaders at over 20 NGOs, this report documents how organizations are thinking about digital and media literacies for combating xenophobia. NGOs are strategically leveraging various storytelling techniques to build effective communication campaigns that identify and respond to discriminatory messages and racist sentiments prevalent in public discourse. This report highlights seven key strategies for digital storytelling that is current practice as well as a five-part framework of emergent practice. The report concludes with a series of recommendations for the management of digital media programs and projects.

Executive Summary

This report provides a practical resource for civil society organizations seeking to use and better understand and utilize digital media for combating xenophobia as well as promoting social cohesion between once-separate communities. Specifically, it focuses on the recent upturn in migration, especially refugees and migrants arriving to Europe from countries in the Middle East and North Africa, and the capacity of digital media to ease their initial integration and support long-term positive interactions between native residents and newcomers in Western democratic societies.

The research is informed by interviews with more than 20 representatives of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)¹ dealing with migration-related issues. The interviews lasted approximately 90 minutes and were conducted via Skype between March and May 2016. Interviews were recorded and excerpts were later transcribed. Each interview consisted of 18 questions.² Interview participants were working in different European and North American democracies, and across a diverse group of organizations, allowing us to explore a range of work and experiences of migration and forced displacement.

This report, entitled “Digital Crossroads”, focuses on how organizations and individuals use digital media tools to help communities think critically about issues of migration. For receiving communities, decreasing hurdles to relationship building with groups whom they perceive as ‘different’, often requires constructing narratives that run contrary to mainstream media messages. In this report we ask, “How can digital media be used to help overcome negative stereotyping and how can it help people recognize the value of cultural diversity?” As such, for many of the participants in this study, the use of digital media to foster empathetic connections between people is a central part of their programmatic goals.

“Digital Crossroads” is divided into four sections. The Overview section introduces the work through a broad context of contemporary migration trends and patterns, with particular attention focused on the influx of migrants and refugees reaching European shores. It reviews how media representations are shaping popular perceptions of migra-

¹ We interviewed a diverse range of NGOs, selecting both large, established organizations, small grassroots groups, and individual projects. The sample provided us with a wide spectrum of perspectives and voices to help us understand the ways in which digital media and media literacy is being used to communicate and exchange migration-related knowledge with host communities.

² See Appendix C for the Interview Protocol.

tion. These representations, either positive or negative, may influence the reception of migrants and refugees into receiving communities. One important observation is that the heavy reliance on statistics and numerical representations may evoke polarization and a de-personalization of the issue.

The Framework section provides theoretical and conceptual foundations by which readers can begin to approach issues of digital media and migration. It provides an overview of the ways in which popular media represent the issue of migration, and then offers ‘civic media’, which we define as the technologies, designs, and practices that produce and reproduce the sense of being in the world with others toward common good (Gordon/Mihailidis 2016: 3-4), as an alternative framework, comprised of the deliberate civic uses of media practiced by organizations working with refugee and migration initiatives. Within the framework of civic media, the report elaborates on the skills and dispositions- or literacies-needed for organizations to effectively engage in digital media communications.

In the Findings section we elaborate on forms of storytelling highlighted by those with whom we spoke. We identify two dominant storytelling modes: epistolical and journalistic. The report provides examples of both styles with a description of how they are being used to generate and promote positive interactions between host and incoming populations. We then explore how digital media can ‘bring to life’ the stories of people settling in new countries. The report generates a digital storytelling toolbox, based on the identified gaps in capacity of organizations, that offers seven strategies to help promote and manage digital media and communication initiatives. The different strategies for working in the digital realm are discussed with consideration given to situations of rising xenophobia. The ‘toolbox’ is structured to help organizations cultivate and mobilize resources, and establish and sustain effective storytelling initiatives across various socio-geographical contexts. The section concludes by acknowledging some of the main challenges to implementing the strategies highlighted in the toolbox. Constraints include a lack of capacity of organizations to effectively tell stories (infrastructure and resources) and the particular challenge of confronting misinformation online.

Lastly, the Recommendations section offers suggestions for implementing digital storytelling initiatives. Here we propose a set of set of guidelines for digital storytelling, and practical recommendations for developing capacity in digital literacies, research, and collaboration. These recommendations are conceived as ways in which organizations, policy makers, and governmental structures can begin to think about effective communication practices in digitized social platforms.

Throughout the report, text and image-based examples from the research are provided to help readers reflect on their own experiences and practices and to better understand the implications of digital media for advancing cross-cultural understanding. Admittedly, the emphasis here is on the receiving community. Future research could also focus on migrant communities themselves and how their use of digital media corresponds or differs from the organizational strategies documented here.

1. Definition of Key Terms

Many key terms used in this report cut across disciplinary boundaries and lack concrete, singular definitions. For the sake of clarity, this section identifies the key terms and defines how they are used in this research.

Refugee – A person who, “owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinions, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country”.³ In addition to the refugee definition in the 1951 Refugee Convention, Art 1(2), 1969 Organization of African Unity (OAU) Convention defines a refugee as any person compelled to leave his or her country "owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or the whole of his country or origin or nationality". Similarly, the 1984 Cartagena Declaration states that refugees also include persons who flee their country "because their lives, security or freedom have been threatened by generalized violence, foreign aggression, internal conflicts, massive violations of human rights or other circumstances which have seriously disturbed public order."⁴

Migrant – A person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a State away from his/her habitual place of residence, regardless of (1) the person’s legal status; (2) whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary; (3) what the causes for the movement are; or (4) what the length of the stay is (ibid).

Receiving Community – The communities with native born and longer-term residents where refugees and migrants settle and have made their homes.

Digital media – Digitalized content that can be (re)created, viewed, transmitted, and stored over digital electronics including the Internet or computer networks. It is typically contrasted to traditional and print media, such as newspapers and books, and also to analog media including audiotapes and films. In general, it often implies a mode of communication that cannot be easily controlled by the state (Howard/Muzammil 2011: 35-48).

³ Article 1(A)(2), Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, Art. 1A(2), 1951 as modified by the 1967 Protocol.

⁴ “Key Migration Terms.” International Organization for Migration. 2015. <https://www.iom.int/key-migration-terms> [15 August 2016].

1. Definition of Key Terms

Civic Media: Civic media are the collection of digital tools, platforms and other technologies that are used to enhance or enable governance, civil society, public health, and social well-being. Gordon and Mihailidis (2016) define civic media as “the technologies, designs, and practices that produce and reproduce the sense of being in the world with others toward common good.”

Media and Digital Literacy: The skills to think critically about media and the ability to communicate and interpret ideas using the media as evidence. With respect to public engagement, this form of literacy allows the public to obtain, interpret, and generate positions for social change by developing media-based arguments that can then be disseminated through digital technology (ibid).

2. Overview

In 2014, Italian photographer Massimo Sestini worked with the Italian government's *Mare Nostrum* Operation. *Mare Nostrum* was designed as a rescue operation, assisting refugees in failing boats crossing the Mediterranean. Sestini was assigned to document the operation with his camera.

Sestini captured the plight of refugees from the sky, documenting their cramped and harrowing journey through images that he later published online and in major print magazines. His photography captured the stark reality of the refugees' plight, and earned Sestini numerous awards and public notoriety for his work.

The photos, while impactful, were distant portraits of migration. They detailed not human stories but abstracted the subjects to numbers on a boat, reflecting an unidentifiable whole. Sestini's images failed to articulate the living reality of the people on the boats being rescued: who they were, where they came from, whether they were alone or with family, and where they were going. After receiving contact from one of the people photographed on the boat, Sestini realized there was a lack of personal connection to the refugees in his work. He understood that he stopped telling the story at the point of crisis, and left the human implications up to interpretation. Sestini launched the "Where Are You?" initiative, where he asked subjects of his photographs to contact him and conduct follow-up sessions with him where they could have the opportunity to complete their stories. He wanted to tell a 'living story' that could capture, and with their active participation. For Sestini, the connectivity afforded by digital media allowed him to interact with the refugees on the boats he photographed and to continue to tell their stories in meaningful and compelling ways.

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Picture 1: Operation Mare Nostrum by Massimo Sestini.

Source: <http://www.massimosestini.it/wru.html>

Mare Nostrum, which will be discussed in detail in the findings section of this report, presents a compelling example of the potential for telling stories of migration that are meaningful, evolve over time, and that leverage digital media to form human connections between refugees/migrants and receiving societies. There are significant challenges to telling compelling and ethical stories of migration. This report explores the ways in which organizations are using digital media to communicate and engage with refugee and migrant communities, and the societies that receive them. Sestini's example is one of promise, but it is, in fact, embedded in a complex and contested environment where organizations struggle to find avenues for effective digital storytelling.

The Context of Contemporary Migration

Few topics in the West have received as much public interest and scholarly attention in recent years as migration. With upwards of one million people reaching Europe in 2015 alone (OECD 2015), it is increasingly clear that inter-cultural tolerance is a central facilitator for the creation and sustainability of social cohesion in Europe. It is also becoming clear that digital media are playing an influential role in shaping both the consequences and effects of population movements into Western democracies. The intermingling of migration and media flows raises important questions about the capacity for digital media to help or hinder efforts to minimize discrimination and polarization in increasingly diverse societies.

‘Economic migrant’ and ‘refugee’ are two distinct terms used to catalogue transnational migrants and each carries different international responsibilities and legal rights. The former refers to people departing one state to seek employment and a better life in another. There is often little universal agreement as to what defines the legal rights of economic migrants. The latter pertains to people who can prove they are fleeing war and persecution, and according to the normative framework of international migration (the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 protocol)⁵, they have special rights in the states that have signed on to the treaty. This includes, among other things, the right not to be forced back to their home country into harm’s way, the right to work, and the right not to be punished for illegally entering the country.

Although the two distinct classifications ultimately determine a person’s legal entitlement and access to humanitarian assistance, it’s important to recognize how people can be both an ‘economic migrant’ and ‘refugee’ at the same time. Indeed, the UK-based think-tank on humanitarian issues, Overseas Development Institute (ODI), emphasizes the blurring of these two categorizations. They point to how the substantial increase in the number of people now entering Western democracies is due to an interrelated combination of conflict, political instability, and lack of economic well-being (Cummings et al 2016). One common underlying motive of this population shift, nonetheless, is the universal search for secure livelihood opportunities. As such, rather than create a refugee/economic migrant binary, this report uses both terms, refugee and migrant, when broadly referring to people now entering democracies through irregular means and in

⁵ The 1951 Refugee Convention. United Nations Refugee Agency. 2001-2016. <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/1951-refugee-convention.html> [15 June 2016].

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order to seek a secure livelihood (outside the regulatory norms of the sending, transit, and receiving countries).

The current trend of population flows is certainly unique to global migration history. In Europe, for instance, it is the first time the region has faced such a mass influx of people from North Africa and the Middle East. Syria is the predominant nationality of these Mediterranean Sea arrivals, and many of them have Islamic (Sunni) cultural backgrounds.⁶ Afghanistan is not far behind (*ibid*). In general, Islamic societies tend to be conservative on such issues as sexuality and gender equality, and, partly for this reason, some recent studies suggest that refugees and migrants from these societies can experience difficulty in culturally integrating into more liberal, secular societies (Bisin/Patacchini/Verdier/Zenou 2008). In addition to differences in lifestyle, cultural heritage, and religious faith, demographic differences also exist. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) draws attention to how the majority of refugees and migrants now entering Western Europe are younger than 35 years of age (Hackett 2016). Newcomers are effectively bringing youth to many aging communities that may have been relatively socio-culturally homogenous before their arrival.

The flow of people into more developed regions of the world, however, is not a new phenomenon. Globalization and its associated macro-economic developments, including global economic competition, trade liberalization, and increased labor demands, guarantee an ongoing movement of people along with ideas, goods, and services. In the EU, a common border policy enables people and goods to move freely across the region. The illegal movement of service laborers has also been encouraged through large, informal economies (Baldwin-Edwards 2005). Moreover, the prevalence of inter- and intra-state conflicts, coupled with intensifying climate-related stressors (i.e. food and/or water shortages), has accelerated the displacement of populations (Schlanger 2014; Black 2011). With the rise of more affordable and efficient transportation and communication systems, one could, in theory, safely find refuge in once remote and inaccessible lands. However, a person's route into a desired country is dependent on his/her 'rights' to enter that country. With the scarcity of available legal channels and the growing professionalization of smuggling services, dangerous border crossings into Western societies are expected to continue irrespective of tough new border controls (Guterres 2015). Some reports, therefore, under-

⁶ "Refugees/Migrants Emergency Response – Mediterranean." United Nations Refugee Agency. <http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/regional.php> [15 June 2016].

line that irregular migration and massive population shifts are a 'new normal' and part of a permanent global paradigm (Zogby 2016).

Along this line, participants of this study emphasized the incorrect framing of the current immigration influx as a 'crisis.' They underlined how a crisis typically denotes a sudden, temporary event for which policy-makers often prioritize reactive, emergency, and short-lived responses that tend to violate liberal values. Yet, in our participants' view, there is nothing temporary about large population movements into Western democracies. The awareness of how large population shifts are likely to continue and even increase was, in fact, reinforced by the Council of Europe's 2012 guide for policymakers entitled "Building Migrants' Belonging Through Positive Interactions" (Orton 2012). In addition, even if the status quo ante is restored in such conflict zones as Syria, many refugees and migrants may not necessarily 'suddenly' and 'instantly' return to their homeland. One participant elaborated on this idea when she described the foolishness in applying 'short-term thinking' about the presence of refugee and migrant populations in her home country of Italy: "the reality is that they are here now, they are a part of our society...the idea that they will just pack up and go home one day is wrong...just foolish."

Thinking about large population movements as both short and long-term phenomena allows for the development of adaptive responses. Adaptive responses were defined by the interview participants as being more dynamic, multifaceted, and having more stakeholders than those merely reacting to 'crises.' The longer time frame afforded in such initiatives allows communities to think about ways to better communicate to receiving societies about the influx of socio-cultural diversity into communities. According to the aforementioned Council of Europe's 2012 guide, such adaptation strategies are not only integral for sustaining social justice and harmony, but they are also "the only appropriate policy choice in a democratic society" (Orton 2012). The logic here is that intolerance can manifest itself in support for extremist parties that support discriminatory policies and threaten democratic institutions and processes. Encouraging mutual respect and understanding between refugees/migrants and receiving communities is a necessary path to both preserve democratic values that receiving nations abide by and to attempt to reduce xenophobic sentiments that may arise in the absence of initiatives that attempt to bring refugee/migrant populations and host societies into communication and dialog.

Adaptation strategies, articulated in this way, are intrinsically connected to media and communication. In a connected digital landscape, the relationship between media, migration, and public perception is becoming increasingly apparent. How digital media strate-

gies, which address fear and apprehension that migration may arouse in receiving communities, are conceived, developed, and implemented, depends largely on the capacity of organizations to access and effectively use digital tools and platforms to engage and bring together diverse constituents.

Digital Media, Publics, and Democratic Society

Digital media allow for the sharing of information to large and diverse communities, often in real time. While this connectivity allows for greater communication and information flow, the fast and often uncontrolled flow of information can also lead to increasingly polarized representations of refugees/migrants among receiving communities, by conjuring xenophobic viewpoints that effectively ‘strip the humanity’ away from migrants and refugees. In digital media, the ways in which migration is represented can significantly shape associated political agendas, social policies, and popular opinion.

In this context, this report explores the strategies, dispositions, and competencies utilized in the creation, dissemination, and reception of media to support adaptive responses by organizations (i.e. combating xenophobia) to the migration influx in receiving communities. The skills and knowledge needed to use media to engage in such practices are commonly referred to as “media literacies”, defined broadly as “the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and create media in a variety of forms” (Aufderheide 1993). In this sense, media literacies are intricately tied to the systems, frameworks, and concepts that support contemporary democratic knowledge societies, where “media literacy, on this level, should be predicated on helping to advance civic engagement and the continual goal of a more open, diverse and vibrant digital culture” (Mihailidis 2014). How media are designed and used by organizations and governments can have significant impact on the public’s ability to contribute to critical and open discussion online.

Digital media pose both opportunities and challenges for organizations working with migrants. As we outline below, digital media have provided avenues for more connection amongst diverse groups, more participatory storytelling and innovative communication strategies for organizations and citizens alike. At the same time, publics are easily fragmented in a digital communication landscape that caters to hyper personalization of information habits. Transparency is often not prioritized online, where advocacy groups compete with journalism and news outlets for audience attention. And, public officials use increasingly reductionist means of communication, spread on social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, to promote positions of xenophobia, fear, and anger. As we learned from the results of Brexit, Britain’s referendum to leave the European Union,

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there may be reason to believe that some people voted to leave perhaps without full information or knowledge about the implications of that choice. In the wake of the vote, the top search term on Google in the UK was “What is the EU?” (Selyukh 2016).

This context creates some urgency to ask how organizations, public actors, and citizens can appropriate digital and media literacies to foster more engagement, empathy, and connection between receiving communities and refugees/migrants. Necessarily connected to these questions are how public administrators can build media literacy capacity in their constituencies and how they can assess the use of digital media to learn about migration issues, to critique public policies, and to communicate their opinions with their communities and the public.

“Digital Crossroads” articulates the concepts that are situating the relationship between digital media and migration. The findings and recommendations highlight the opportunities that digital media have to facilitate communication, dialog, and support for migrants/refugees and receiving communities. However, necessary to these recommendations are the digital and media literacies needed to engage in meaningful communication and dialog online. We conclude that fostering these skills and dispositions among the public is the responsibility of governmental and non-governmental organizations who interface with migrants/refugees. This report details precisely how this is happening now and what should be happening in the near future to meet the current needs.

3. Framework

Media Representations

Representations of refugees and migrants in the digital media ecosystem can influence the type of reception they are accorded in their country of destination. In particular, media narratives that identify migrants/refugees as threats to a receiving community's socio-cultural integrity may fuel hostility and serve as a context from which tougher immigration controls are legitimized (Sniderman/Hagendoorn/Prior 2004). As seen from Marian Kotleba's triumph in Slovakia to Marine Le Pen's rise in France, and the more recent Brexit, such coverage may contribute to or reinforce the popular rise of the far right as well as more exclusionary definitions of national in-groups. A recent Pew Research Center survey conducted in Europe found that views about Muslims are strongly tied to political ideology. For example, 36% of Germans who side with the political right give Muslims an unfavorable rating, while just 15% on the left do so (Hackett 2016). Reinforcing a scenario of 'us' vs. 'them', and the idea that a country's way of life is under threat, may promote ideas of an inherent clash of civilizations as well as profit right-wing leaders electorally as they position themselves to be protectors of national identities.

Media representations that exclusively focus on crime and threats to economic well-being may also contribute to hostile, ethnocentric reactions (Ha/Jang 2015). Fears about migrants/refugees were widely conflated with the New Year terror attacks of 2016 in Brussels, for example (Sakuma 2016). Refugees and migrants have also been linked to popular discussions on the root causes of home-grown extremism in the West. The intense scrutiny of Muslim refugees and migrants into Europe has recently come under intense debate and has made life difficult "not only for them but for their host societies" (Ezzarqui 2006). Fears prevalent and perpetuated by receiving communities are commonly conflated with concerns about economic security. Loaded terms that suggest economic hardships, such as 'burden' and 'bearing the brunt,' are widely used in narratives about how countries allocate funds to provide newcomers with basic social services (OECD 2015). The Information Center about Asylum and Refugees found a strong connection between media representations and hostile behavior toward newcomers, when the coverage specifically focused on the depletion of limited resources, such as housing and health care.

The growing recognition of the increasingly strong connection between digital media and public opinion has motivated many NGOs to rethink how they employ digital media for sharing information on issues of migration. This is particularly true for non-profit organizations, who rely heavily on their supporters, volunteers, and donations. In fact, in

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2015, the UNHCR, in an effort to mobilize public and financial support for refugee and migrant-related projects, referenced social media as central to their global communication strategy. This is the first time an item concerning digital media ever appeared on their agenda. The prominence of digital media initiatives was also highlighted during the second “UN High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development”, where the “Making Migration Work: an Eight Point Action Agenda” was created. This agenda underlines the importance of media as an effective tool for creating positive images of recent migratory phenomena.

It is important to note here that media representations can have immense social, economic, and political influence on the capacity for newcomers to culturally adapt to a new society. If a receiving community expresses negative sentiment toward newcomers, then adaptation processes may be hampered, especially as cross-cultural adaptation processes often occur in and through communication (Durham/Lindholm 2016). Digital media can provide useful avenues for cultural transmission, with potential broad-ranging effects on refugee, migrant, and receiving communities’ adaptation processes (King/Wood 2013).

One of the concerns about media representation in digital culture is the reliance on data and numbers to articulate a compelling story about refugees and migrants. The fixation on numbers, charts, measurable figures and statistics, according to the stakeholders interviewed for this report, was a central factor to refugees and migrants represented as a singular group with a uniform experience. This overly simplistic conceptualization of a homogeneous ‘out-group’ could then evoke negative stereotyping, contributing to the polarization of ideas and the sense of needing to defend against a hostile other.

This is not to suggest that numerical data is not compelling.⁷ Increased access to data has enabled the exploration and sharing of a range of dynamic issues on multiple scales and across different contexts. However, there are constraints that often stop organizations from using data in effective ways. Using data effectively often takes well-staffed and resourced outlets: resources that non-governmental organizations often do not have. Measurable facts often fall short of capturing the ever-changing subtleties and complexities of a situation, instead focusing on explanations that capture the stories told by data at a particular time. In effect, issues are susceptible to being depoliticized and easily extract-

⁷ Numerical-based data storytelling can be insightful and engaging. One example of compelling storytelling is CNN’s “Home and Away” data story, which articulate death tolls from wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. <http://edition.cnn.com/SPECIALS/war.casualties/>.

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ed out of the original context. Participants in this report stressed that data alone, whether it be the presentation of positive or negative information, fail to convey a strong, values-based perspective.

The emerging narrative in our interviews on the susceptibility of data to misrepresent refugee and migrant populations raises the question of the various ways that media are composing strategies that move beyond the often distant and neutral application of numbers to a particular story. How can savvy use of digital media play a central role in facilitating stories that combine measurable facts with human elements to create meaningful connections among refugees, migrants, and receiving communities? To explore this question, we turn to the framework of civic media.

Civic Media

Considering the context described above, NGOs are inventing and adopting civic media strategies to intervene in data-driven and top-down media discourses. Gordon and Mihailidis, in their book „Civic Media: Technology, Design, Practice“ (2016), define civic media as:

„the technologies, designs, and practices that produce and reproduce the sense of being in the world with others toward common good. While the concept of “common good” is deeply subjective, we use the term to invoke the good of the commons, or actions taken that benefit a public outside of the actor’s intimate sphere. To this end, the civic in civic media is not merely about outcomes, but about process and potential. It is about the mechanics of acting in the world with the tools and conditions available. Civic media, then, are any mediated practice that enables a community to imagine themselves as being connected, not through achieving, but through striving for common good.“ (ibid. 3-4)

Civic media is a useful framework for understanding the programmatic media interventions being taken up by NGOs. It is a term that extends media objects or individual media strategies beyond their outcomes. Its emphasis on “striving for common good” connects the work of all the people interviewed in this research. The complexity of civic media usage emerges in individual organization’s capacity to design, implement, and deploy civic media.

In Gordon and Mihailidis’s work, they identify four categories that facilitate media use towards the common good. “Systems and Design” focuses on design interventions into civic systems to impact the function and nature of that structure. This has particularly

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resonated with how organizations use data to engage their constituents and impact policy. “Play and Resistance” encompasses the ways in which digital media are used to experiment, reflect, and fail without the consequences traditionally associated with media campaigns. Play in this context allows organizations to expand the possibility-space and imagination of citizens and communities beyond the everyday status quo. “Learning and Engagement” embraces the dynamic ways in which formal and informal learning is enhanced by digital and connective technologies. This includes the ways that people of all ages embrace learning across institutions, communities, borders, and divides. Lastly, “Community and Action” explores the way that networked publics (Boyd 2014) leverage technologies to advocate and act on behalf of issues, policies, and ideas. The facilitation of daily actions taken by individuals along the spectrum of weak to strong can be seen as shifting the balance of action-taking from top-down to bottom-up.

Collectively, these categories provide a spectrum of approaches to engaging publics, and for bridging divides between local and refugee/migrant populations. Some involve the participation of citizens themselves, while others strategically deploy media for participatory engagement. These categories also require a certain set of skills and dispositions to develop practices, technologies, and designs for using media in support of a common good. We understand these civic media competencies as media and digital literacies.

Media and Digital Literacies

The ability for organizations to effectively use media is at the heart of what the interview participants understood as powerful storytelling. Leveraging digital media technologies to better understand the plight of refugees can allow for greater dialog among organizations and their constituents, while at the same time provide effective responses to the reliance on data and other de-personalizing narratives.

The skills and dispositions needed to effectively understand and create civic media are commonly referred to as “media literacies”, defined as “the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and produce both print and electronic media” (Aufderheide 1993). The capacity to understand and apply such skills and dispositions is central to enabling organizations and civic actors to harness the power of communication technologies to foster social ties across diverse communities in support of stronger civic inclusion in democratic society.⁸

⁸ For work on media literacy education as a central development strategy, see: Buckingham, David (2001) Media education: A global strategy for development. Policy paper prepared for the UNESCO sector for Communication and Information. London: Institute of Education.

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The participants saw media and digital literacy skills as essential to launching innovative, adaptive initiatives that can inspire support for and responsiveness to the needs of refugees, migrants, and receiving communities. These included a need to effectively train actors to harness digital technologies with low barriers to entry, to tell effective stories, and engage meaningfully with communities. We identified a series of core digital and media literacies that can respond to the needs identified by participants in this study. The literacies support:

- Engagement in effective and humanistic storytelling – This skill set, as elaborated on below, participants saw as central to the effectiveness of their work, and at the center of effective use of digital media. It focuses on multimedia storytelling, and harnesses various platforms and modalities to create engaging narratives.
- Avenues for participation and expression for communities – The more organizations and governmental bodies can provide avenues for refugees and receiving communities to have a voice and to share their stories, the more credibility organizations stand to gain, and the more responsive they can be to the needs of their constituents. This involves providing platforms and entryways for communities to express their views, and also providing training in multimedia storytelling so that such communities build abilities to tell their stories, and engage in dialog with organizations and peers.
- Critically monitoring online dialog and communication – Having the capacity to monitor media narratives, both as they appear in mainstream media and are translated into social outlets, was necessary to crafting relevant and meaningful digital content. This set of literacies focuses on critical inquiry skills that embrace evaluation, analysis, comprehension and deconstruction, to combat harmful rumors, hearsay and inaccurate information online.
- Navigating online social networks to provide relevant and helpful information to communities – Organizations stressed the need to engage in real time dialog, whether simply to help communities find information, to point individuals to resources, or to correct misinformation. Skills associated with this include establishing social media monitoring and curation tools, and also supporting the development of capacity within organizations to be fluid and responsive within social networks.

3. Framework

- Creating accessible multimedia content – the ability to create effective media content, in print, audio, and video format, and for the web, was a core necessity to effective communication in the digital media ecosystem. Literacies associated with this need centered on the ability to produce and share dynamic content in real time and to tell more engaging stories beyond print. Training in mobile storytelling and multimedia production was a necessity for organizations.

As mentioned in the previous section, the participants for this study emphasized how measurable facts worked in their experiences to desensitize people to the human side of refugee and migrant populations. Having capacity to counter such statistics-driven narratives with more humanistic digital media strategies was core to any impactful initiatives they undertook, and they continually felt the need to have more skills and support to conduct this work. The ability to tell dynamic, meaningful, and human stories was seen as central to organizations ability to reform unhelpful narratives perpetuated by mainstream and digital media.

Learning to create meaningful, engaging and human stories that are participatory and sustainable over time was central to the success of digital initiatives by NGOs. Digital and media literacies can be fostered through investing in professional development for organizations to learn how to tell effective stories and use digital media to engage with their constituents. At the same time, training for refugees, migrant communities, and receiving communities could help build connections.

4. Findings

This section presents an analysis of interviews with over 20 representatives from NGOs working on migration initiatives and campaigns (see Appendices A–C for a list of participating organizations as well as a description of the methodology and interview protocol). Storytelling was an overarching theme in the interviews. Everyone is looking to tell stories and beginning to understand the affordances and limitations of the media to do so. We highlight a number of tools and tactics practiced by organizations as they seek to tell dynamic, human-centered stories.

Storytelling

Whether by images, videos, or blogs, participants emphasized that stories catalyzed interest and galvanized communities across a wide range of areas relevant to their work in migration. This was mainly due to the understanding that stories were not merely an intellectual experience but a basic human need. In fact, nearly all participants made explicit reference to how every human ‘inherently’ depends on stories to understand and reflect on life. They particularly emphasized the lack of storytelling in the plight of refugees and migrants coming into Europe. The absence of stories served to compound the harmful stereotypes and divisiveness participants experienced in their work.

Rob McNeil, Head of Media and Communications at The Migration Observatory at the University of Oxford, emphasized that since stories were “what make us human”. People cannot intimately relate with measurable facts, thus numbers were ‘easy to forget’ (Borkin 2013). On the contrary, McNeil argued “the feelings that emerge from storytelling stay with that person”. He specifically drew attention to the tragedy of Alan Kurdi, whose image and story made global headlines after he drowned in 2015. He explained how people still remember this specific tragedy due to the feelings of grief and concern the story generated.

The memorable emotions that emerge from stories can also have negative implications. Stories with a negative message can arouse suspicion and reinforce harmful stereotypes. They can, quite easily, also be perpetuated and sensationalized through digital media channels that are shareable. One implication of this type of information flow is that misinformation can easily spread with great speed and reach. Many of the participants saw this as hindering their initiatives to build fruitful relationships. As such, finding ways to tell positive stories was reinforced as a proactive and ongoing goal for participants.

4. Findings

Stepping beyond numbers to focus on real-life characters can also humanize issues of migration. Stories bring the names, faces, and experiences of individuals into the limelight. They can also put seemingly abstract concepts into a specific context or situation that is easier for people to relate to or grasp. For these reasons, the best stories don't just say what happened, but they also underline why something is important and what it means for a person. In effect, stories can embed a sense of human connectivity into public discourses on migration.

In addition, Hajer Naili, Communications and Social Media Coordinator at the International Organization for Migration (IOM), underlined how every person has a story to share. This diversity can counteract common imagery that depict refugees and migrants as belonging to one cohesive and homogeneous 'out-group'. Naili explained how the recognition of this diversity can positively inform the development of policies and practices that affect both the lives of receiving communities and newcomers. In this way, though statistical data and forecasts may be an important part of understanding a current reality, they may not capture the complete picture through intimate and relatable narratives.

Stories have the potential to build new links between people based on shared identities, attributes, or lived experiences. Participants perceived these links as a type of 'social resource' that could make it easier for people to live, work, and play together. Shared human connections can also facilitate emotional bonds that create opportunities for valuing the other's differences and drawing enrichment from it. In effect, creating empathy on a personal level can be more effective than reason in uniting people around a common good.

Lastly, a core component of effective storytelling initiatives, according to many of the interviewees, involves empathy: the ability to understand and share the feelings of another. Empathy was understood by participants to imply feelings and a person's ability to identify and connect with others. Empathy helps people (re)imagine commonalities and make them more aware of falling prey to hegemonic narratives premised on 'us' vs. 'them'. In the experiences of the interview participants, two specific storytelling modes emerged from the interviews with the study participants: epistolical and journalistic.

Storytelling Modes: Epistolic and journalistic

Epistolic storytelling refers to first person storytelling, and journalistic pertains to third-person reporting. Neither storytelling mode is necessarily specific to digital media. Stories are made by organizations and adopted or adapted by people in different ways, depending on people's access to information and technology. While much of the work discussed here takes digital form, the goal of this report is to highlight the narrative techniques of storytelling that is influenced by, but ultimately independent of, technology or media platform. Organizations chose storytelling modes based on the communities they hope to reach and the capacity of the organizations to carry out a particular style of story. Participants also acknowledged that the mode of storytelling shifted according to how the stories were received.

Epistolic

Epistolic or personal storytelling involved informal accounts of ordinary citizens talking about their own thoughts and experiences of migration, most notably in the form of personal messages on popular social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. On digital media, epistolic storytelling can become an ongoing form of first person storytelling to a large public audience. According to Josh Webb, Director of Digital Products and Strategies at Viacom and participant of a Techfugee hackathon (a social enterprise coordinating the international tech community's response to the needs of refugees): "Personal messages can be a great way to initiate dialogue and interest from within your own community." Webb began writing a daily diary blog when he was in Greece and volunteering for an NGO based at a refugee camp. During this time, he openly shared his motives, thoughts, and feelings about his day-to-day encounters with people living in the camps. Webb explained that this personable style lent a sense of authenticity to the dialogue, which sparked the interest of people from his own hometown and social network of friends: "My personal views, the personal lens of all my stories, paves the way for connection." This connection was primarily due to his audience knowing that they shared a similar socio-cultural background. This knowledge could make his stories more relatable as audiences could say 'he's one of us' or 'I would also feel what Josh is feeling if I were in the same position'.

The process of creating an intimate storytelling environment that entices public engagement may start with a community's familiarity with the storyteller, through physical interaction or strong ties to social networks. As Webb pointed out: "knowing who I am, or at least knowing people who know me, can reduce people's intimidation to ask questions

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about the subject I'm discussing." The informal and personable framework applied by Webb made content more accessible and engaging to his readers.

It's important to note that epistolic messaging almost always involves revealing one's name and other core parts of one's identity. Acquiring 'notoriety' may be an unwanted consequence for some. Sharing opinions and thoughts about a sensitive topic can potentially isolate members of a particular community. This is especially true when exposing political views that can seem one-sided or controversial. Epistolic storytellers must carefully assess the value of this technique, and consider whether or not it is worth the possible risk. An additional challenge is monitoring posts and allotting sufficient time for answering questions, if the content is open to comments or there exists an associated message board.

Journalistic

Journalistic stories tend to have structured guidelines, premised on conveying the most important facts at the onset, and supporting information thereafter, so that audiences could easily and efficiently understand a story's 'main gist.' This technique often necessitates a more formal and detached storytelling, often invoking the third person to create professional distance.

Petra Becker, a Research Fellow at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP), explained how the stories she writes are mainly based on current events and aim for accuracy above all else. In addition to writing articles for the SWP on German-focused issues of migration, she also writes stories specifically on Syria in newsletters which she circulates to colleagues and partners inside and outside of the organization. Sources of information are cited, which derive from 'trustworthy' and on-the-ground commentary and archival information. She emphasized that conducting in-depth research to find reliable sources often takes time, along with the ability to effectively recognize false information: "it can take a lot of research and familiarity in the field to really know how to tell inaccurate information." The aim of this type of storytelling is to produce stories that are both accurate and factual, and find unique ways to engage audiences. The risk, of course, is that relying on the delivery of facts can lead to stories that are distant and that rely too heavily on numbers.

One of the strategies participants mentioned for journalistic storytelling was the importance of thinking as a reader or viewer. In Petra's case, she described her target audience as people who are already interested in the topic matter and who seek up-to-the-date

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information, but she still emphasized the importance of always tailoring a story to their specific interests. She also underlined the importance of looking for a unique angle or an approach to a story, such as talking about a topic that wasn't readily discussed in other media, to differentiate her stories from others.

No matter the style, the capacity of stories in digital space to engage audiences depend on tools and skills, which organizations can employ in order to tell inclusive and engaging stories. We identified a core set of tools and tactics for effective digital storytelling in our digital storytelling toolbox, which incorporate core digital and media literacies in their application.

5. Digital Storytelling Toolbox

Approaches to effective Digital Storytelling

A number of media-related tools and organizational approaches used for digital storytelling initiatives were commonly reported among participants, and we have collated these strategies into a “digital storytelling toolbox”. The toolbox is meant to provide a framework and guide for others wishing to pursue and/or advance digital storytelling programs and projects. As is the case in most initiatives, it is likely that a single tool is not enough. The strategies are meant to overlap and correspond, not remain entirely separate.

In addition, the toolbox is not comprehensive, but rather it reflects strategies discussed and employed by the participants: from more traditional advocacy campaigns to game design and participatory dialog. It is intended to facilitate an ongoing reflection of how digital stories can be produced, disseminated, and used as a vehicle to address xenophobia and promote positive connections between refugee and migrant populations, and receiving communities. It also prompts a discussion on which media literacies are needed to effectively implement such strategies for engagement with intended communities.

Digital Storytelling Toolbox Strategies

Strategy	Questions to Consider
Episodic	How can storytelling projects be tailored to provide opportunities for the sharing of stories about the past, present, and future? How can stories about different stages of migration be linked together? How can stories covering different periods of time be helpful for generating a sense of belonging in local communities?
Participatory	What opportunities are available for refugees and migrants to contribute to storytelling projects? How could you find out more about what inhibits people's participation in digital storytelling initiatives? How might you promote and support wider involvement in projects through the acquisition of digital media?
Advocacy	Who is your campaign audience? What action do you want them to take and do they have the capacity to take it? What campaign format and platform will deliver the most impact?

Games	How can play create meaningful points of interaction? Is your story best told through inhabiting character perspective and playing through scenarios?
Multimodal	How might offline forms of participation be linked to support digital initiatives? Which non-digital opportunities could you introduce to raise awareness for your project? What contribution might the combination of analog and digital initiatives make toward your goal?
Simplicity	How does the audience personally benefit by reading the story? What are your audience’s main interests and concerns? Can your audience understand the main gist of your story within seconds?
Collaboration	Who are the people and organizations that will support you and help you overcome challenges? What resources do you have to offer other projects with shared goals? How might partnerships increase the range and impact of your initiative?

Each strategy is described below using concrete examples from our research about how to leverage resources and utilize civic media tools for engagement.

Episodic

Stories acted out, taking place, and told across time and space can contribute to an improved understanding for receiving communities of what life may be like for migrants and refugees. Stories about a person or group that capture more than one particular moment or context can particularly help receiving societies recognize and respond to the ever-changing needs and concerns of refugees and migrants over time.

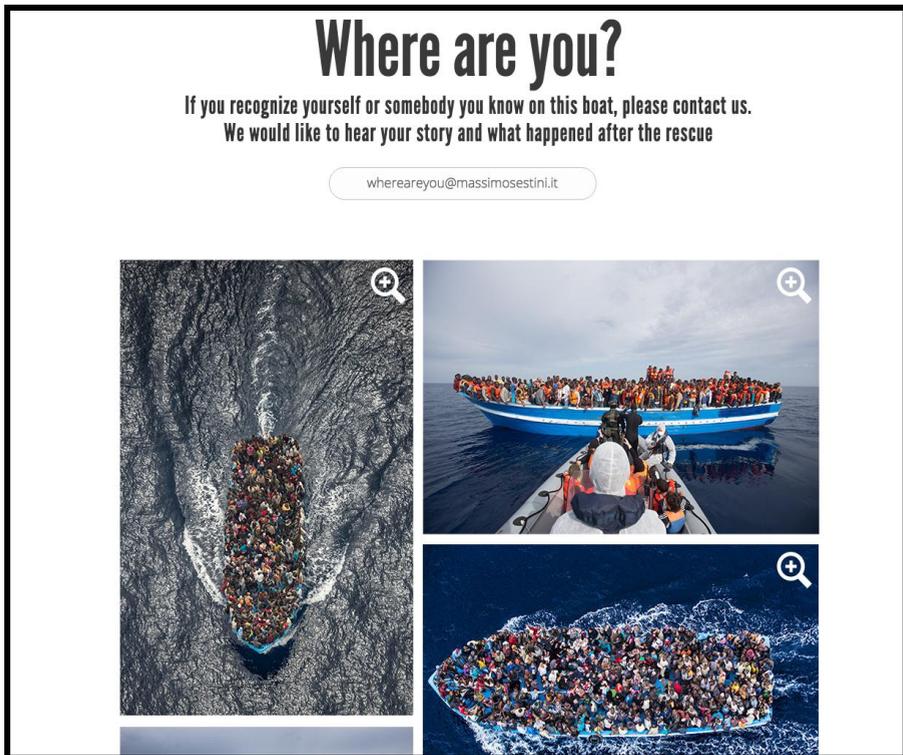
Livia Corbo discussed how the “Where Are You?” (WRU?) project, under her leadership, emerged from an image of the *Mare Nostrum* Operation, which was captured by photographer Massimo Sestini. The operation, which was organized by the Italian government, saved more than 150,000 people, a quarter of them Syrian, from drowning as they made their way to Europe. One of Sestini’s photographs, entitled “*Mare Nostrum*” (Our Sea), was selected as TIME’s top 10 photos of 2014, and won the 2015 World Press Photo Award, among its other achievements.



Picture 2: *Mare Nostrum* by Massimo Sestini.
Source: https://pvf.fi/en/team_member/project-where-are-you/

Mare Nostrum effectively captured the ‘emergency’ and ‘rescue’ segment of these people’s journey to Europe. However, Corbo confessed that it failed to tell a “living story” that was true to people on the boat. In other words, it didn’t recognize ‘the present’ reality of these people during post-rescue phases. When one person, who was captured in the photograph, contacted Sestini months later, the realization struck: “the image had not started living until we understood the people on the boat are also still living...they are still real after they get out off the boat, step on the land, and meet the people”.

In a quest to produce a realistic and present-day depiction of the lives of people in the image, WRU? recently made a call to action through social media channels, requesting that every person in that image contact Sestini.



Picture 3: The *Where Are You?* project's call to action.
Source: <http://www.massimosestini.it/wru.html>

Sestini then personally visited each person in his/her place of residence after the initial point of contact. During this visit, Sestini asks them to share stories that have occurred in their current locale as well as visions of the future. He then photographs him/her to capture this new, 'post-crisis' reality in the present. These new photographs and stories are shared online.⁹

The juxtaposition of *Mare Nostrum*, in the 'then', and 'now', delivers a message to receiving communities that migration is not a one-step journey defined by one particular time and place. This conceptual understanding pushes communities to wonder "what happens next?" and "how did things turn out?" as people start a new chapter in their lives and in unfamiliar settings. In effect, expanding the narrow, 'emergency-focused' stories so

⁹ For more information on the campaign, visit: "Where are You Now", <http://www.massimosestini.it/wru.html>.

widely circulated online can trigger ongoing learning and curiosity in receiving societies. Corbo underlines how such inquiry is often missing as receiving communities contemplate ideas about rebuilding a shared future.

Participatory

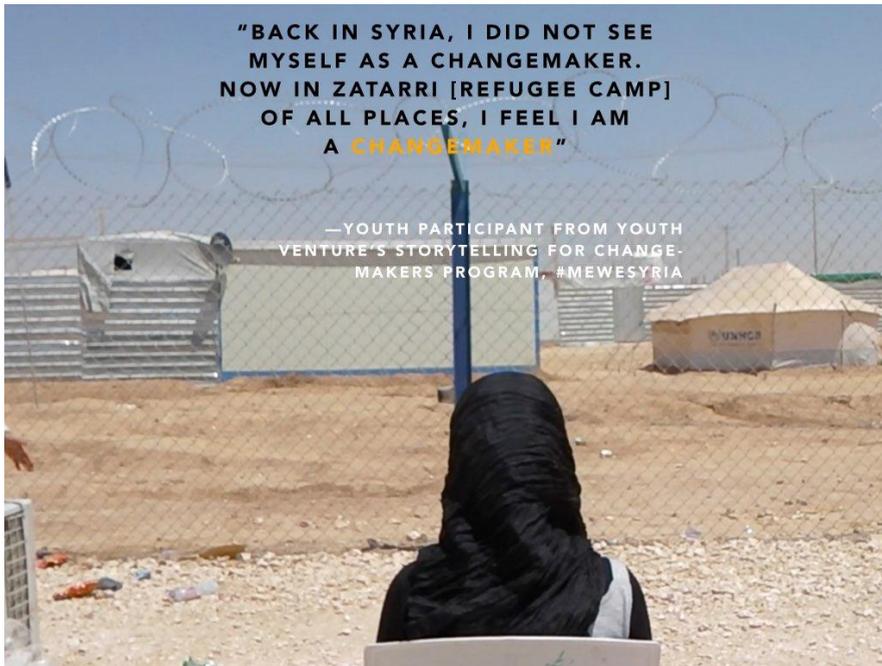
Participatory storytelling involves ‘democratizing’ the processes of story creation. This implies that refugees and migrants shift from passive audiences to more active partners and participants in the creation, telling and sharing of stories. This enables refugees and migrants to effectively join and contribute to a wider public narrative on migration, albeit with a light, directive ‘touch’ from NGOs in certain cases.

Vicki Hammarstedt, Media Director at the University of California Berkeley, emphasized how participatory storytelling captured an authentic reflection of the migration experience, resulting in powerful, nuanced stories. Hammarstedt co-organized an educational summit and hackathon in 2014 called the “The 19 Million Project”, which convened digital strategists, designers, journalists and humanitarians from across the world to explore how best to document and tell stories about migration around the world. At this time, Hammarstedt heard one story that left a lasting impression on her. It was captured by a journalist who allowed a Syrian child to talk about a topic of her choice related to life in a refugee camp. The topic she chose to share was one which Hammarstedt and the journalist didn’t expect to hear: shoes. The child expressed her pain of walking around the camp with shoes that were crumbling and falling apart. She had no funds to purchase a new pair. In Hammarstedt’s opinion, the subject of shoes pervades the lives of receiving communities to the hyper-local. It effectively generated feelings of frustration, pain, and despair with which anyone could identify: “we have all worn uncomfortable shoes so we can all create an image or imagine the same feeling.” This genuine story also provided Hammarstedt with a glimpse of the day-to-day needs and concerns of people not visible in mass media.

Some participatory storytelling approaches entail refugees and migrants capturing and creating stories themselves using digital media and modes of online communication. One such example is Migrant Voice, a UK based NGO with a mission to teach and mentor newcomers on media skills including how to speak on the radio, write articles, and conduct interviews. David Hirst, Regional Director of Migrant Voices’ Birmingham chapter, explained how stories produced by someone who has migrated will be very different than one told by a member of the receiving community. Newcomers have a distinct ‘voice’ that incorporates a unique rhythm, inflection, and use of specific expressions. Uninterrupted

by the thoughts and ideas of others, personal stories also represent a unique perspective, theme, and emotional atmosphere based on the narrator's depictions. These different viewpoints and creative forms of communication consequently add depth and complexity to stories, and represent a shift away from the typically consistent mainstream voice that so often reflects the cultural and regional background of receiving communities. As such, when migrants and refugees have the knowledge and skills to critique and create media, they can share these nuanced stories and contribute to public discourse.

Mohsin Mohi Ud Din underlined the significance of digital literacies in his project, "Me/We Syria". "Me/We Syria" trains refugees and migrants to design, capture, and share their stories using digital tools including mobile cameras, audio recorders, and personal computers. By integrating digital media into instruction, "Me/We Syria" provides an avenue for refugees and migrants to acquire digital literacy skills through a tangible outcome in the form of a personal film that can be shared with receiving communities.



Picture 4: Photo from *Me/We Syria*, Credit: Mohsin Mohi Ud Din

The educational component of "Me/We Syria" involves a 'train-the-trainer' methodology. This approach creates a pool of competent instructors who then go into their respective communities to teach and lead peer-structure activities that reinforce the digital skills

they learned. The fact that trainers reside within the same communities they serve means that storytelling initiatives can be tailored to hyper-local issues and adapted for different social contexts. As a result, training processes within refugee and migrant communities can be instituted in a relatively small amount of time and in a cost-efficient manner.

Participatory storytelling initiatives may also open social and economic opportunities for refugees and migrants in receiving communities. Maryam Ghofraniha, Head of Global Partnerships for “LinkedIn for Good”, co-manages a LinkedIn initiative in Sweden that teaches recent newcomers how to use the social media site for beneficial connections aimed at gaining employment. Ghofraniha explains how LinkedIn is unknown to many from developing countries. By teaching refugees and migrants how to use the site, they can share their professional life stories with diverse audiences. In particular, they can give meaning to and define the relevance of their skills to the local business community. Making stories readily available through LinkedIn can build connections and promote understanding between migrants and receiving communities, where the voices of both parties can engage in a shared networked space.

Advocacy

Advocacy campaigns gather a specific thematic range of stories to promote a certain message or cause. Hajer Naili of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) described her work on building advocacy campaigns to illuminate the economic benefits of migration to receiving communities. In her view, recognizing the economic contributions of migrants and refugees is a critical first step toward counteracting ‘bad news’ stories and negative impressions among receiving communities. Naili’s campaign is called “I am a migrant”. To guide campaign development, she uses a platform that enables refugees and migrants to document and share stories about life in new communities. Along with the (text-based) story of their choice, they also share personal information including their city of origin, occupation, and profile picture, often through personal social networks.

Although there are no structured questions, the campaign provides thematic framing. Each user must explicitly state his/her current occupation and perceived economic contribution to the receiving society, for example. By encouraging refugees and migrants to creatively describe their skills and professional strengths, their stories become a collective and cohesive voice for challenging stereotypes and popular perceptions that migration is solely a source of socio-economic burdens.

5. Digital Storytelling Toolbox

Another relevant example is the “No Lost Generation” project. This initiative aims to improve the lives of children affected by the Syrian crisis. Kynat Akram, a volunteer and student at George Washington University (GWU) in Washington DC, supports the initiative through a digital awareness campaign. Stories written about Syrian children are posted and shared on various social media platforms using the hashtag #nolostgeneration (and #nlg_GW for GWU students). The hashtag enables both her and her colleagues to be constantly connected to an international community of supporters and story contributors. This also significantly increased the number of photographs and stories that she and her colleagues at GWU could view on the topic at any given point, providing a ready stream of information and easy-to-access point of reference.



Picture 5: Picture uploaded through #NoLostGeneration and #NLG

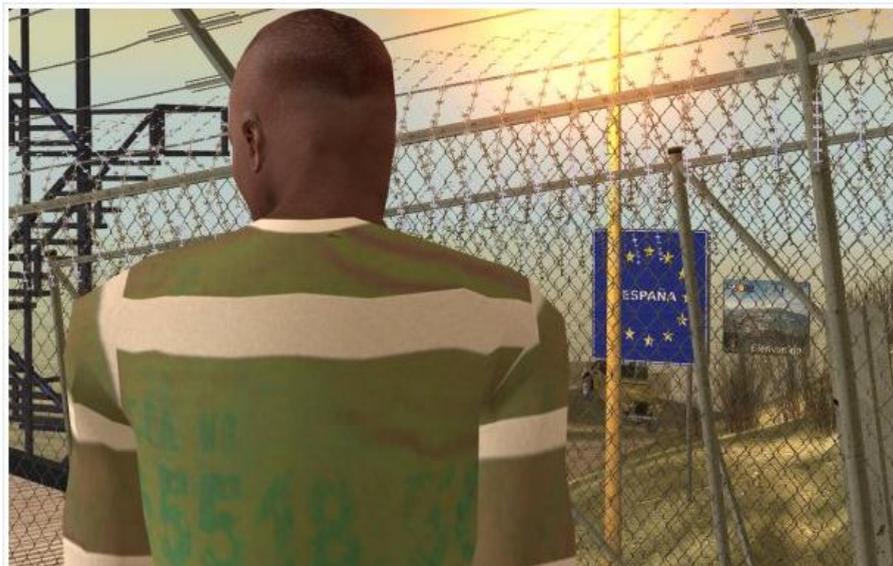
In general, digital advocacy efforts should articulate a main idea and message clearly. These themes can target specific issues and interests of stakeholders. As demonstrated in the two above examples, by aligning people under a unified banner, campaigns can amplify often underrepresented voices, and increase the capacity for people in various locations to support and convey a specific message in a synchronized and coherent manner.

Games

Stories that employ games provide an interactive environment for the ‚listener‘ or ‚player‘ to engage. In game-based stories, the theme or storyline is often not predetermined, but rather generated in real-time by the actions of the participating community. These games combine both ludic (play as the core of meaning making) and narrative elements. Pierre Catalan, Director of Engagement at the Red Cross, France, emphasized that when progressing in a game that involves gathering information and problem-solving, a fun, ‚built-in‘ learning environment is created. Catalan also made clear that empathy toward a game’s character is created when players put themselves directly in the shoes and minds of that character. Through the immersive experience of inhabiting a character’s position, roles, and perspectives, the distinction between the life of that character and the player can effectively become blurred (Iacovides 2013).

Georg Hobmeier has produced a number of games enabling receiving communities to experience the journey of refugees and migrants. Hobmeier was Head of Narrative Design at „Causa Creations“, a studio for the development of games and interactive media, at the time of this research. His first digital game, „Frontiers“¹⁰, simulated a refugee’s journey from sub-Saharan Africa to Europe. Hobmeier explained that for many of the 100,000 people who downloaded and played „Frontiers“, this first-person viewpoint of real life accounts created a space for players to think critically about related issues for the first time: „the game drew people into the migration discussion who otherwise would have no interest [in the subject]...who are interested in games purely for entertainment.“ He underlined how this was especially true for children and adolescents, who may have little knowledge or interest in related political matters.

¹⁰ Frontiers was conceived and produced by Gold Extra.



Picture 6: A snapshot of the online multiplayer game, "Frontiers".

Hobmeier is currently co-developing another digital game that is partly based on his partner's recent experiences of migration from Syria to Austria. The game, called "Path Out", requires players to travel across multiple borders, avoid the constant threat of looters, and trade items for food or medicine. In the process of choosing actions and virtually experiencing the consequences of these actions, players are actively exposed to a non-linear scenario of migration. That is, every time someone plays the game, different outcomes may manifest, and this variation can effectively provide a window from which to virtually participate in a wide spectrum of migration experiences. By immersing players in realistic settings and characters, the game is meant to add complexity to dominant migration stories, many of which fail to capture the depth of human experience and decision-making. Playful approaches to storytelling, particularly those embedded in game design, can foster empathy through immersive experiences that allow communities to engage in perspectives and the journey of others, highlighting the struggles of some to assimilate to new cultures, while leaving theirs behind.

Multimodal

All participants, to varying degrees, mentioned how their digital projects were supported by, or articulated through, parallel offline efforts. Such offline components ranged from organizing exhibitions at museums to meeting with communities face-to-face in related

educational workshops and events. Perhaps this idea was best captured by Rob McNeil, who stated that “there is no such thing as an exclusive digital world”.

Maggie Lemere, Senior Communications Specialist at Ashoka, explained how focusing on both traditional and digital media makes stories more appealing to wide and diverse range of audiences. She first learned about the significance of coupling analog with the digital in 2009, when working for “Voice of Witness”, a nonprofit book series. At this time, she conducted oral interviews with over 70 Burmese people, who fled their country and lived in Southeast Asia or the US. After conducting interviews, she then edited transcripts into narrative form for a printed book publication.

Lemere’s work, nonetheless, was “far from over after the completion of the book”. Upon the book’s release in the US, Lemere teamed up with the Magnum Foundation to digitize these stories and thus open broader modes of communication with audiences in the US and Europe. In this way, story contributors were photographed and their images, along with excerpts of their stories, were uploaded and made accessible online. A Facebook page was also created to generate interest and bring together an online network of support for the book.

To build greater momentum and readership, she reached out to Hollywood actors for collaboration and support. Lemere explained how stories had an even greater appeal when known actors, who were admired and well respected, acted out or read stories themselves. In addition to being a story’s spokesperson, short/full clips or audio recordings of their live performances were subsequently uploaded and shared across various social media platforms. Together with the celebrity’s stage presence, digital tools that captured and disseminated the stories helped increase the speed at which audiences attained knowledge and interest for the book.

Another example is IOM’s “I am a migrant” campaign. It features critical offline components that enhance opportunities for public engagement. For example, once a person uploads his/her information online, a customized printable poster that depicts submitted images and text is generated free of charge. The campaign encourages people to print the poster, and hang it in their schools, places of work, and other public places.

In the UK, 15 posters were selected by the national IOM office to be displayed for three weeks at various tube stations, national rail stations, and billboards across the country. Displayed in crowded public spaces, the poster could target a broader demographic of

people who wouldn't otherwise seek out such information or confront such messages online. These printed posters could also reach people who face barriers to accessing digital media, particularly among young children and the elderly.

Simplicity

Repeatedly, participants mentioned the need to break down complex and long-winded stories into simple ideas and messages. Digital media have created an information ecosystem where attention shifts from one story or web page to the next seamlessly. Online platforms are built to accommodate this movement and speed of user attention, from story to story and idea to idea. Storytelling within this environment thus requires a constant attention to clarity and simplicity.

Techniques that participants mentioned, on a strategic level, included focusing on a few keywords that convey a story's main theme. This also allows stories to be plugged into and shared fluidly across different digital platforms. In doing so, Stijn Aelbers, Humanitarian Advisor for Internews, recommended breaking down stories into various

The image shows a digital form titled "Participate (EN)". At the top, there is a "DATE OF BIRTH" section with three dropdown menus for "DAY", "MONTH", and "YEAR". Below this are three text input fields: "CITY OF ORIGIN", "CURRENT CITY", and "NATIONALITY" (which has a dropdown arrow on the right). There is a "MY CONTRIBUTION STRAP LINE" text input field and a larger "FULL STORY" text area. The bottom section is titled "UPLOAD YOUR PORTRAIT PHOTO *" and contains a "Choose File" button with "No file chosen" text. Below that is a "More information" link and an "upload an audio" section with another "Choose File" button and "No file chosen" text.

Picture 8: The first page of IOM's *I am a Migrant* Campaign Form. Source: <http://iamamigrant.org/>¹¹

¹¹ The campaign has since expanded and split into two platforms: *I am a migrant* and *I am a refugee*. These two campaigns have been endorsed by the UN, which IOM is joining September 2016.

‘bits and pieces’, which may not necessarily encapsulate the story’s complex overarching theme, but do relate to specific shared experiences with a person or group. Aelbers described this idea by drawing on an example of a story about a child’s life in a refugee camp. One part of the story involved how the person loved playing soccer (futbol). Narrowing down the scope of the story to this one particular fragment, and then matching the theme to an appropriate community (i.e. sport enthusiasts), can effectively draw more people into the larger conversation about migration.

‘Easy-to-use’ platforms also play central roles in guiding project development. Hajer Naili of the IOM reinforced this point by elucidating how people’s demographic background shape what stories could be told and how. In particular, she underlined the digital divide between young and elderly people: for young people, the digital tended to be an easily understood ‘native language’, while older people were generally less fluent with digital platforms. Thus, inter-generational inclusivity in digital campaigns entailed a simple interface with easy to read lettering and clear explanations whenever possible.

Similarly, when developing games, Georg Hobmeier emphasized the importance of steering away from complex mechanics. In his opinion, long tutorials could easily be a source of distraction from the main message of the game. Making advanced digital skills a requirement could also make a game seem daunting, rather than fun, and potentially isolate those with beginner level digital skills.

Designing with simplicity can extend the life, scope, and impact of a story in digital spaces. Petra Becker of the SWP explained how she keeps an archive of her older stories, so people could always ‘catch up’ on the latest events or read older stories for additional context and depth. This allows for deeper engagement, keeping audiences informed even if they had a shallow understanding of an issue.

Collaboration

The ability to leverage partnerships across diverse and interested constituencies can quickly and effectively increase the scale or impact of initiatives. Stijn Aelbers of Internews honed in on the potential of partnerships in discussing his work in a region of Greece for the News That Moves project. At that time, he encountered a large presence of volunteers and NGOs working in refugee camps. Rather than conduct his work in isolation, a “whole new world of possibilities opened” when he considered finding common ground on which to form meaningful partnerships.

He identified one goal he shared with another NGO, which was to provide the communities that reside around the camps with information about the major issues occurring within them. The hope was that improved communication could make receiving communities more receptive to migrants and the organizations helping them. Aelbers explained how this goal was especially challenging in Greece since “[many Greeks] are actually proud to tell you that there hasn’t been a mosque [in Greece] for hundreds of years!” demonstrating the depth of the cultural biases.

To explore this initiative, Aelbers embarked on a joint venture to launch a new public radio program. The program involved inviting local experts from partner NGOs to share stories - in Greek and in the local dialect - on current events in the camps. On every program, long-time residents of the receiving communities are encouraged to call in and directly ask questions or express concerns to the experts. As a forum for communication and learning, the program highlighted Aelbers work and the work of other NGOs while underlining the dire conditions in the camps. While reserving the right for communities to criticize, the simple and interactive broadcast lays bare the fears that “underlie so much of the hateful stereotypes”.

Mohsin Mohi Ud Din of the “Me/We Syria” project also described how the strength of his storytelling initiative comes from collaborations. He partnered with various local authorities to better understand the needs of story contributors in various countries: “I can’t be in 100 places at once...the people who live and are from the communities where we want to reach know more about the challenges or issues relevant there.” For Mohi Ud Din, local NGOs and grassroots groups provided him with access to localized knowledge that effectively addressed the concerns of his various stakeholder communities. In particular, working with people who already had established leadership roles within this target communities helped his project gain legitimacy and credibility from the bottom-up. Local actors simply had access to useful social capital that would be difficult, if not impossible, to obtain while managing a cross-regional initiative alone. In exchange, Mohi Ud Din could offer some tangible resources and access to a wider network of social supports to fund story creation processes.

It’s important to note that partnerships take time and effort to maintain. While digital tools can help partners stay connected, they were not effective substitutes for live conversations and in-person encounters, according to the participants. As such, participants underlined the importance of face-to-face or even telephone interactions to assure that collaborations remain useful and strong.

6. Constraints

Challenges To Effective Digital Storytelling

The focus on the telling of stories alongside the tools and tactics necessary to enhance digital storytelling provide a diverse framework of ways that organizations can begin to think about the competencies needed to be more effective in their communication initiatives. At the same time, in our research we found a series of structural and social constraints that often hindered participants from doing their work.

The challenges associated with the facilitation of effective digital storytelling initiatives fall into two main categories: capacity and misinformation. Exploring how these constraints hinder organizations' ability to engage in digital storytelling initiatives can help to identify ways to acknowledge, confront and overcome such challenges.

Capacity: Infrastructure & Resources

The two most identified challenges affecting the work of participants were, not surprisingly, time and money. In regards to the former, lack of time was an ongoing and ever-present obstacle that impeded the progress of participants' work. Many expressed having "too little time to do all the things I want to do". Three participants noted a lack of dedicated staff on their team. To varying degrees, the lack of time and resources influenced how they communicated information, conducted fieldwork or research, and committed to projects.

In particular, participants elaborated on the importance of responding to their constituents in the fast turnaround time that digital media demands. Without real time dialog and feedback, participants explained that audiences will cease to share their thoughts and ideas, or provide ongoing input, communication, and feedback. Keeping communication lines open with audiences is important and provides the basis for sustained engagement with time.

Gaining and maintaining access to funding was an additional problem. Many participants confessed that finding sufficient funds to create media "is and will always be a challenge". This was especially true for smaller organizations, who feared that funders tend to support projects organized by large and well-established organizations. It was also a hurdle commonly expressed by participants investing in projects that required advanced forms of technological and digital infrastructure. Inadequate funding was ostensibly found to threaten basic operations and project services.

Many organizations are beginning to understand media production as connected to their programmatic work. So, funding civic media projects is not simply a ‘nice to have’, but is core to effectively advancing an organization’s mission. NGOs, specifically the organizations that are working most closely with impacted populations, are feeling increasing pressure to lead in the work of ‘humanizing migration’. And yet, in most cases, they are working with a lack of appropriate resources, infrastructure, and capacity to do this work effectively.

Misinformation: Transparency & Fragmentation

Migration is a complex social, political and economic process. Thus, related information and discourses are confusing to follow for many receiving communities as they usually involve multiple and opposing groups on local, national and international levels. Also, as mentioned in the beginning of this report, policies on migration have varied according to international principles, and whether or not a person is ultimately categorized as a refugee or migrant. Such dynamics influence the capacity for communities to know when to believe or reject messages.

Nearly all participants expressed concerns about the potential of misinformation spreading on digital media and the impact this may have on their work. This often takes the form of online rumors and viral content. Participants explained that the lack of editorial scrutiny on most user-generated content and social media channels allowed for the widespread circulation of unverified, thinly sourced claims, and inaccurate information. The intentional promotion of misinformation could be self-serving, for the sake of provocation to drive and capture traffic to a website, for example. Inaccurate rumors were also said to be connected to the broader ideological battles between groups for various socio-political ends. The need for information to ‘spread’ often resulted in sensationalized stories and exaggerated narratives.

Misinformation and hearsay are normally based on an element of truth. According to Aelbers of Internews, rumors represent and highlight key trends in public beliefs, perceptions and attitudes. Aelbers manages Internews’ “News that Moves” project, in conjunction with “Translators Without Borders and Action Aid”. The project identifies misinformation and responds to it with relevant and factual information. In this case, responding to inaccurate information entails examining why people are talking about a specific rumor: “when you get closer to a community, you listen better and start to understand how

6. Constraints

to address the most important issues that people are dealing with". The project, unfortunately, does not track and respond to rumors circulated among receiving societies.

'Echo chambers' may exacerbate the threat of misinformation. In particular, participants explained that echo chamber environments tend to emerge in popular social media channels including Facebook and Twitter. These sites often group like-minded communities together with similar interests and opinions. As a result, people's opinions and beliefs usually 'echo' back to them, and fragment audiences. This selective exposure to ideas and information may limit one's opportunity to reconsider his/her stance and appreciate the diversity of opinions and informational resources on any one issue. Reinforcing a sense of truth - which solely resonates with a person's existing viewpoint - was believed to intensify ideological polarization. Correspondingly, some academic research also suggests that a person's ability to effortlessly bypass viewpoints that don't align with his/her position can contribute to social fragmentation (see Papacharissi 2002).

Participants spoke of the tendencies of echo chambers in the digital sphere to create a hero or a 'good-side', to the exclusion of others. One participant highlighted how, at the time of this report, the public discourse in Europe was largely centered around Syrian newcomers. The fact that many of them are educated and middle-class may be a contributing factor to this dominant narrative. On the flipside, nonetheless, this participant explained that the plight of people originating from other countries, and who had different interests and needs, was largely overlooked by mainstream public discourses: in effect, echo-chambers help create a tendency for huge imbalances on who and what is being talked about.

The constraints highlighted by the participants in our study were significant barriers for their work. While these constraints involve more than organizational capacity, they provide a realistic set of objectives for which responses can be built.

7. Recommendations

Digital Crossroads: Civic Media & Migration

No longer can we question the central role of digital media in facilitating meaningful engagement between and among migrant, refugee, and host communities. We call this work civic media, and we ask how organizations working with migrants and refugees in Europe are using "the technologies, designs, and practices that produce and reproduce the sense of being in the world with others toward common good" (Gordon/Mihailidis 2016).

In the face of rising xenophobia, humanizing the lives of refugees and migrants cannot be done by statistics and big data alone. There are stories behind numbers, and these stories are integral for forging deep, emotional ties between receiving communities, migrants, and citizens of all backgrounds. Empathy can cultivate a common sense of belonging and shared future. Especially at a time when large-scale population shifts are likely to continue into the foreseeable future, valuing and drawing enrichment from diversity is more important in today's world than ever before.

Telling, making, and sharing stories, which draw particular attention to the names, faces and experiences of individuals, can help foster feelings of empathy between once separate and culturally diverse communities. What measurable facts often do not elucidate are the personal connections that can exist between people.

To advocate for such possibilities in storytelling would be naive without acknowledging the tensions, or impossible situations, that NGOs face in their role around the current refugee and migration situation in Europe. The NGOs we spoke with for this report feel the burden of promoting and sustaining counter narratives to those perpetuated by mainstream media, and amplified online. The challenge is how to effectively engage in participatory and dialogic storytelling about complex and nuanced issues, where there is room to highlight positives and negatives, and bring communities together.

A Framework for Digital Storytelling

Digital technologies have the potential to speak to wider demographics. They allow for stories to move beyond stating facts to critically analyzing information to formulate new perspectives, and new knowledge. Ubiquitous mobile technologies also allow people to stay connected well beyond the physical, socioeconomic, and cultural boundaries associated with their plight. While we do not advocate for digital storytelling to replace traditional means of communication and advocacy by public and non-governmental bodies,

7. Recommendations

we do think that our findings can lead to recommendations for more training and capacity building to increase the literacies needed to engage in effective storytelling.

Returning to our civic media framework, two methods are particularly relevant to the context of digital storytelling. The first is “civic imagination”, defined as “the capacity to imagine alternatives to current social, political, or economic conditions” (Gordon/Mihailidis 2016). The concept of civic imagination aspires to give young people the ability to find ways to imagine a better world beyond the constraints provided in any given situation. The theory has developed from research that shows when citizens are inspired by something they can imagine, they can impact change in far more effective and concrete ways. The DREAMers movement by undocumented immigrants in the United States, employing superhero narratives for their own situations, was a popular and impactful campaign. The Harry Potter Alliance has been using the fictional world of Harry Potter to impact and reform social and civic causes. Such examples abound. Henry Jenkins articulates the use of civic imagination as a mechanism for tapping into the creativity of a population that can come together are the possibility of togetherness through the cultural avenues that connect (Jenkins 2016).

A second method particularly relevant to digital storytelling is what Eric Gordon and Stephen Walter call “meaningful inefficiencies”. This concept emerged as a response to organizations’ increased reliance on technology for cost saving efficiency, often at the expense of meaning making. Gordon and Walter “question the characterization of the citizen as the technologically compatible user, where systems are conceived as containing prescribed citizen actions instead of enabling citizens to explore and discover” (Gordon/Walter 2016: 243). In thinking through meaningful inefficiencies, they argue, organizations can allow citizens to become *players* that embrace creative and dynamic approaches to solving problems. Whereas the civic imagination represents the capacity for an individual or group to imagine what change looks like, meaningful inefficiencies describes how organizations can foster systems level change by re imagining how people interact with the systems they set up.

7. Recommendations

With these methods in mind, we present a five part framework to guide organizations' thinking about the design and implementation of civic media.

- 1) **Digital media are about potential, not about product** – The value of digital media is the ability for platforms, tools, and spaces to offer connections, to bridge divides, and to bring humans together. They offer a potential for exploration and discovery, empathy and caring. The potential drives use, not the product that results from potential.
- 2) **Tell stories from within, not from beyond** – Stories that document information are useful inasmuch as they provide content and context. Stories that relate experience, create understanding. Digital media open up the potential for this to occur.
- 3) **Stories are more meaningful than tools** – Tools might make things easier, but they alone do not make meaning. Tools must support the intentions of the story, and not the other way around.
- 4) **Reframing narratives means moving beyond dominant structures** – As much as large media outlets and platforms provide wider audiences to reach, they also reinforce the perspectives of the outlets themselves. Humanistic stories must emerge outside of these frames, or they risk be subsumed by the intention of the dominant structures within which they exist.
- 5) **Stories must be designed from the margins** – Refugee and migrant populations are almost exclusively on the margins of the societies they enter. Stories designed from the perspective of the dominant societies have the potential to further divide and dehumanize the plight of migration. Stories must come from the margins, not end at them.

In addition to the framework provided for thinking about digital storytelling, out of our research materialized a series of practical and applied recommendations about future directions in research and training. We have identified three practical application areas that we recommend NGOs, policy makers, and community stakeholders (schools, community organizations) focus on in the hopes of building capacity for digital media use and civic engagement:

7. Recommendations

- 1) **Digital Literacy Training** – There was a clear need for organizations to acquire digital storytelling skills and dispositions. This includes both the ability to use technologies more efficiently, but also to be able to navigate social networks and connective platforms to engage in dialog online. This type of engagement also relies on communities themselves having a level of digital fluency. We recommend both formal and informal educational programs to teach organizations, youth, and schools how to use digital technologies to create, tell and share stories, and also to be more critical towards information flows online. As we found, digital literacies were at the heart of the gap in organizational capacity.
- 2) **Applied Research** – Many of the organizations that we spoke to were working without much informed practice about how communities are using digital media, what other public organizations or NGOs are doing in similar situations, and what communication resources refugees and migrants are utilizing. We see a lack of research as hindering the ability for organizations to properly plan and scope their work. During our research and convenings to support this report, we found that many academics and practitioners were interested in helping to provide research in public facing formats to help create direction and build knowledge for public bodies and organizations involved in migration-related work. Much of the funding in this area is being directed towards more material support and resources. We recommend a focus on collaborative and applied research projects, where interventions are created and evaluated to set precedents for successful models that organizations can use to inform their own work.
- 3) **Capacity through Convening (online and offline)** – Lastly, we recommend a focus on convening organizations with each other, receiving communities, and refugee populations. There is a need for organizations to work with host communities and refugee populations, and not simply on behalf of them. This reflects the need for organizations, from schools and community centers to local governments, to share knowledge and resources in order to build capacity in communication and engagement.

It may be too early to effectively assess the influence of the initiatives discussed in this report on the processes of social integration of migrants and refugees into receiving communities. A number of related factors also need to be considered, including the duration of people's stay in receiving communities and the reasons for leaving countries of origin.

7. Recommendations

What this report has highlighted is the potential of digital storytelling to help people visualize alternative realities that result in a common good.

Social cohesion, though, is clearly not a one-way street. Positive interactions within increasingly diverse populations are subject to interactive processes that may include the extent to which newcomers are willing to adapt to the receiving society or whether they wish to return to their countries of origin. In addition, digital media clearly don't exist in a vacuum. Conditions that improve the interactions between groups are constantly being (re)shaped by the implementation of new immigration policies, laws, and other socio-political factors on both local and national scales. The range and impact of digital media initiatives are thus dependent on a broader, constantly evolving site-specific context.

Our report attempts to provide a nuanced investigation into the opportunities and constraints that organizations face in working within and among the media. We have identified a series of conceptual and practical strategies that we believe can impact how organizations interfacing with migrant/refugee populations do their work. This demands that we think seriously about the role of media literacies in helping organizations and communities better understand and participate in dialog on refugee and migration-related work. For as mobile, social, and digital technologies becoming increasingly central to how organizations work, the literacies needed by organizations, and the public at large, are paramount to the value of these tools for communication and engagement in the digital age.

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Appendix A: List of Participating NGOs and Civic Media Initiatives

International Organization for Migration (IOM)

Established in 1951, it is one of the leading inter-governmental organizations in the field of migration. The IOM works closely with governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental partners to promote the humane management and international cooperation on migration issues. It recognizes the link between migration and economic, social and cultural development as well as the right of freedom of movement.

<http://www.iom.int/>

Me/We Syria

Established by Mohsin Mohi-Ud-Din, who was at the time of this research the Director of Global Storytelling at Ashoka's Youth Venture. The initiative works to decentralize the power of narrative by training communities to use digital tools to create and share their own stories.

Causa Creations

A studio that develops games and interactive media. Games focus on political and social justice issues, and the studio has worked collaboratively with NGOs and other institutions on game development.

Ashoka

A global organization that has the largest network of social entrepreneurs, with about 3,000 fellows in 70 countries putting system changing ideas into practice. Ashoka helps establish connections to a global network across the business and social sectors to solve social problems.

<https://www.ashoka.org/>

Voice of Witness

A non-profit that promotes human rights through an oral history book series and storytelling projects.

<http://voiceofwitness.org/>

The Red Cross (France Chapter)

A humanitarian network that acts before, during and after disasters and health emergencies to meet the needs and improve the lives of vulnerable people.

<http://www.ifrc.org/en/what-we-do/where-we-work/europe/french-red-cross/>

German Institute for International and Security Affairs

Advises political decision-makers on international politics, foreign and security policies. Their services are oriented primarily towards the German government as well as relevant international organizations such as the European Union, NATO and the United Nations.
<http://www.swp-berlin.org/>

Where are you?

This project was launched to get in contact with as many people from the image, Mare Nostrum. A work in progress, it's main objective is to ask the people concerns to share their stories through images, writings and videos.
<http://www.massimosestini.it/wru.html>

Media in Cooperation and Transition

A German non-profit organization that implements media development projects in crisis regions. Activities focus on the interplay between conflict, media coverage, and reconciliation.
<http://www.mict-international.org/>

No Lost Generation

An initiative launched by non-profit partners in 2013 that focuses attention on the plight of children affected by the Syrian crisis.
<http://nolostgeneration.org/>

The Migration Observatory

Based at the Centre on Migration, Policy and Society at the University of Oxford, the Observatory provides independent, evidence-based analysis of data on migration and migrants in the UK to inform media, public and policy debates.
<http://www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/>

Techfugees

A social enterprise coordinating the international tech community's response to the needs of refugees. Techfugees organizes conferences, workshops, hackathons and meetups around the world.
<https://techfugees.com/>

19 Million Project

An educational initiative that brings together journalists, designs digital strategies and humanitarians from around the world to deepen the understanding of migration and develop innovative ways to tell the story of refugees that keep the world's attention on the issue.

<http://the19millionproject.com/>

LinkedIn For Good

An initiative to connect underserved communities to economic opportunities through the LinkedIn social media platform.

<https://linkedinforgood.linkedin.com/>

Internews Network

International non-profit organization with a mission to empower local media worldwide to give people the news and information they need.

<https://www.internews.org/>

United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHCR) Innovation Circle

An initiative to provide the UNHCR with strategic guidance in area of good practice, technical expertise, and the promotion of strategic private and public partnerships.

<http://www.ohchr.org/>

Appendix B: Methodology

The research is informed by one-on-one interviews with more than 20 people representing Non-Government Organizations working on migration-related initiatives, projects, and campaigns. The interviews lasted between 60 and 90 minutes and were conducted online through Skype between March and May, 2016. Interviews were recorded and transcribed. Each interview consisted of 18 questions. At the time of the interview, participants were working in different Western democracies, allowing us to explore a diversity of localized experiences of migration.

The NGOs were selected based on an extensive field scan of organizations-for profit, non-profit and non-governmental-working on the current issue of migration in various capacities. We worked to diversify the participants, selecting smaller organizations, individual projects, and large scale organizations working in various capacities in migration. Some in specific regions, others across nations, while others with women, minorities, and youth. The sample provided us a rich diversity of perspectives and voices in helping to understand the role of media and media literacy in how organizations are using media to communicate with publics, host communities, and refugees.

After transcription, the data was analyzed for emerging themes and narratives that showed similarities and differences among the ways organizations were working, and to isolate opportunities and constraints for their work. The interviews also focused on the successes, and failures, of the organizations in the hope of identifying resources and skill-sets that were needed for organizations to conduct their work successfully. We then identified, isolated and incorporated these findings into our report.

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

Part 1

Please describe your work and the current and most important project you are working on related to migration.

What are the goals of this work/initiative/project?

Who are your primary audiences/constituents/stakeholders?

It is becoming increasingly common to see the terms 'refugee' and 'migrant' being used interchangeably...Do you see a difference between the two. Does it matter?

What ideas and knowledge of migration are you expressing and promoting through your work?

Which digital media tools and online platforms have proven effective in communicating your intended message? Why?

What are the major challenges you have faced in using media and/or digital technology to communicate your message? How have you overcome them, if at all?

Besides the well-known fact that digital media allows for a potentially larger audience, what do you see as the greatest opportunity and advantage of using and engaging in digital media for your project/work?

What's the reason your work/project has been able to gain influence online/offline?

Are you having the impact you would like to have? How do you know this, and do you measure the impact of your work?

Have you experienced some low points in your digital media-related work including, for example, when you felt like you were not effective in achieving your goals? If you had and overcome this challenge, how?

Part 2

To what extent does your use of digital media facilitate a meaningful dialogue about migration within non-migrant communities?

How does your work, if at all, enable a dialog between non-migrant and migrant/refugee communities?

What knowledge and/or digital media skills does your target audience need to have or develop in order to effectively understand and engage with your work/project?

What kinds of action might communities impacted by migration take in response to your work?

How might your work make the experience of migrants/refugees more relevant to the interests and everyday lives of non-migrant communities?

Are there any things you would like to explore or continue developing related to digital media and your work/project x?

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Picture credits

Picture 1: Operation *Mare Nostrum* by Massimo Sestini, © Massimo Sestini. Source: <http://www.massimosestini.it/wru.html>

Picture 2: Picture 2: *Mare Nostrum* by Massimo Sestini, © Massimo Sestini. Source: https://pvf.fi/en/team_member/project-where-are-you/

Picture 3: Picture 3: The Where Are You? project's call to action, © Massimo Sestini. Source: <http://www.massimosestini.it/wru.html>

Picture 4: Photo from Me/We Syria, © Mohsin Mohi Ud Din

Picture 5: Picture uploaded through #NoLostGeneration and #NLG, © No Lost Generation Student Initiative, Source: <https://nlgoncampus.wordpress.com/>

Picture 6: A snapshot of the online multiplayer game, "Frontiers", © Gold Extra, Source: http://goldextra.com/sites/default/files/frontiers_-_gold_extra_-_ceuta02_0.jpg

Picture 8: The first page of IOM's "I am a Migrant" Campaign Form. Source: <http://iamamigrant.org/>

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Digital Crossroads: Civic Media and Migration

“No longer can we question the central role of digital media in facilitating meaningful engagement between and among migrant, refugee, and host communities.”

In the face of rising xenophobia, humanizing the lives of refugees and migrants cannot be done by statistics and big data alone. There are stories behind numbers, and these stories are integral for forging deep, emotional ties between receiving communities, migrants, and citizens of all backgrounds. Empathy can cultivate a common sense of belonging and shared future. How can NGO's and communities effectively engage in participatory and dialogic storytelling about complex and nuanced issues, where there is room to highlight positives and negatives, and bring communities together? The present report calls this civic media, and asks how organizations working with migrants and refugees in Europe are using these technologies and practices and provides a framework for digital storytelling.