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Introduction and personal stories for transformation

- Introduction to using the manual
- Why storytelling?
- Our journey and approach with storytelling

Introduction to using the manual

Please note that this manual is a work in progress!

This manual is for trainers using storytelling as a feminist approach to facilitate space for activists to tell their stories in their own voices. Participants' stories are not mediated through another nor are they (re)presented. Through the storytelling they represent themselves. Embedded in this module is how to create stories taking into account digital safety and understanding digital safety in activism. We have arranged the modules so that they can be used together or as stand alone sections.

The sections are:

- Personal stories for transformation
  - Why Storytelling?
  - Our journey and approach with storytelling
- The form of a story
- Representation and safety: Embedding safety in digital storytelling
- Producing and editing a story
- Creative commons licensing, distribution and attribution
- Storytelling from remote: Safety and care in online spaces

Why storytelling?

What is the first story that you remember that was told to you or that you told to someone, and how did you feel? Do you remember the voice wishpering in the evening before falling asleep, your favourite bed time story?

Stories are defining moments. They can bring intimacy, help clarify matters or bring more complexity. They are, like the internet, a mutual relationship between the teller(s) and the listener(s). They tell us about the world, the people, the culture, hopes, fears, knowledge, dreams and nightmares. Our memories are all made up by stories. They are the embodied sense of the lives we and the ones around us live. When a story is told and is listenedt to that story becomes alive, becomes part of a larger memory and that why storytelling is so deeply embedded in feminist practices.

If we move between stories we heard in our feminism and activism, we will realize how many stories populate them. We will realize how often we use storytelling to share reasons, practices, strategies, tactics and knowledge. So storytelling is not a methodology but more a practice and as such can be contextualized, located and shared from one to another.

Telling a story is an act of creation and a creative act in itself. So the more stories we share with each other and beyond our close and safe circles of activism, the more we name and populate the world with our own naratives. These narratives and perspectives all together hack, crash, transform and challenge mainstream narratives.

That is n itself, a deeply political act. The intention, will and desire to inflate the world with sounds, images, shapes that otherwise would not be seen or heard or touched. In the digital world, or better to say in this increasingly digtial time, stories become themselves digital, for the way they can be produced: podcasts, videos; for the way thay can be created: crowdsourcing, storytelling platforms, for the way they can be shared and disseminated online via mobile phones, to YouTube, vimeo and many other spaces.

We all have stories to tell.

Our worlds are created through stories. We are made of stories. Stories bring us together, enable us to explore our experiences and make sense of the world around us, our relationships to ourselves, to our loved ones, our activism – to our lives. Stories are ways of sharing, of learning of creating meaning, of finding a sense of place and belonging. It’s in the telling that we discover how much of our experience and learning we have in common with others. Stories are as powerful for the teller as they are for the listener. Stories break us open and stories heal us. Stories help us listen more deeply to our own hearts and to the hearts of others. Sharing stories in a safe and held space is an individual and collective reflective practice. It enables us to hear ourselves through the hearts and ears of others.

Our journey and approach with storytelling

The Association for Progressive Communications Women's Rights Programme (APC WRP), started their journey with digital storytelling for transformation in 2007. Since then we have collaborated with partners around the globe to use digital storytelling as a feminist methodology for personal and collective healing, for evaluation, for building stronger networks and to build an alternative knowledge commons of people telling their own stories, in their own voices. We have partnered with organisations and individuals working on disability rights, preventing gender-based violence, sex workers, trans* activists, sexual rights activists and evaluators. Stories.apc.org

We are clear that people should tell their own stories, in their own voices and on their own terms. The storytellers own their stories. We are taking the power back and women's stories should not be mediated by anyone else. Far too often women and gender non-conforming people have had their stories co-opted or told by others. We are claiming back our own stories.

We are now looking at storytelling more broadly and not just digital storytelling. We realised that in many of our spaces, it was the stories that opened people to a deeper and more embodied understanding of issues. In 2017 we we worked with a methodology called "The Museum of Moments" where we then adapted this to "The Museum of Movements" at our Making a Feminist internet convening.

What we are clear about is that this methodology is feminist, political and co-created in safe and inclusive spaces.