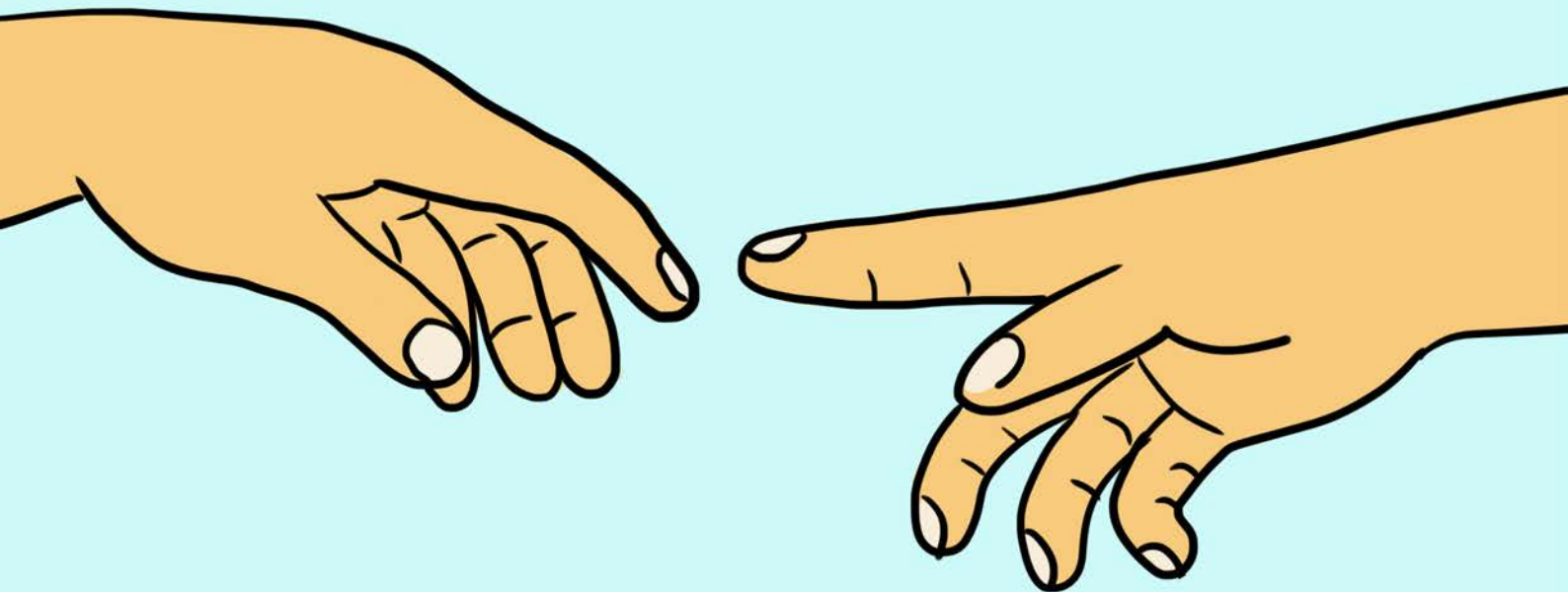


Meaning making  
during a pandemic

A new course on  
digital storytelling

Season 2  
Episode 4:

The digested read by  
Azam Masoumzadeh  
Andrea Geipel



our host for this series of meaning making are:



**Andrea Geipel**



**Abhay Adhikari**

our guest speakers are:



**Wana Udobang**



**Alastair Somerville**

our digital producer is:



**Jenni Mueller**

This episode of meaning making about accessibility and inclusion, was a powerful one and I got so inspired by participating and later turning it into a comic!

So let's start by our guest speakers, Alastair and then later Wana!

Enjoy!



Hi I'm Alastair Somerville, I work with users and clients to develop new technologies and techniques for making information more inclusive to people

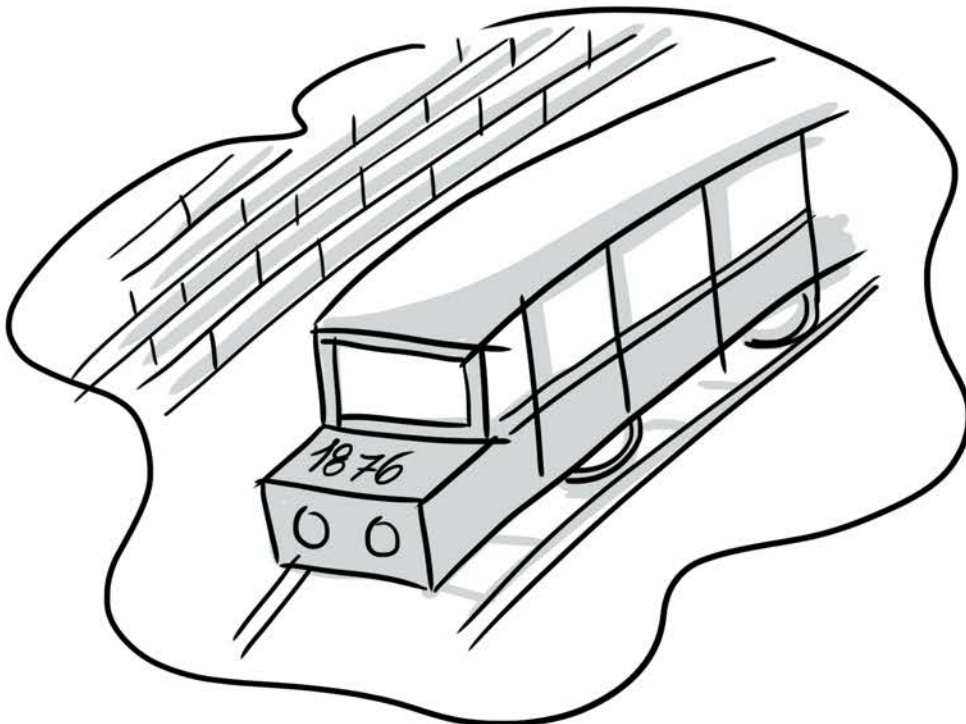


accessibility is about creating a place where everyone feels comfortable and welcome to share their stories!



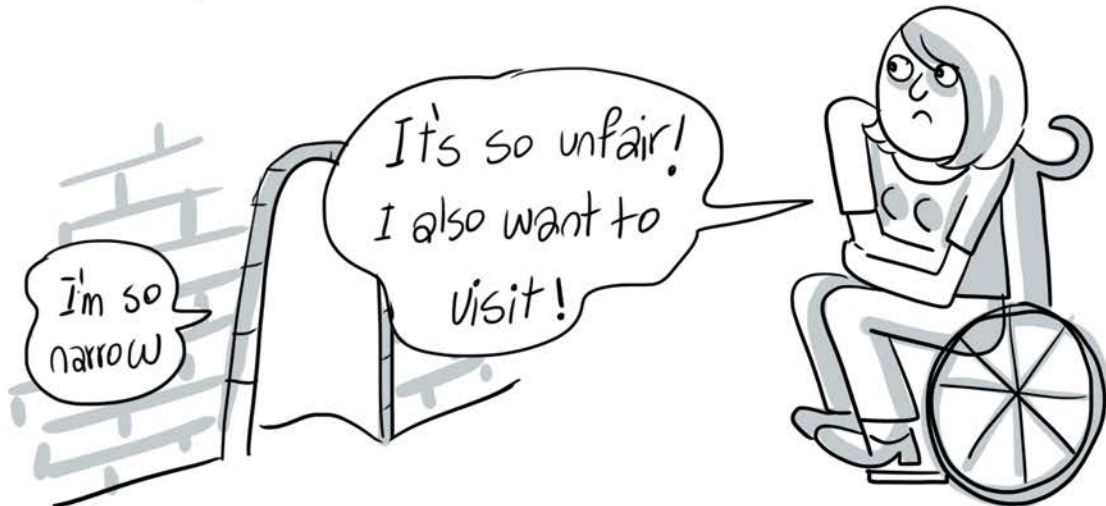
To make it more clear, I give the example of one of our projects in the City of London!

When we wanted to reopen the old underground railway for the public, one of our concerns was to make it accessible to everyone regardless of their physical and mental abilities.





one of our problems was that the railway tunnels were very narrow, so for example a wheelchair would not pass through it!



We came up with the idea of filming and creating a Virtual Reality application.



But there was one big problem!

VR would offer them accessibility but not necessarily a memorable experience...





So we thought maybe it's better to have a real person explaining in an immersive experience rather than a virtual character or voice over.



Abhay: do we need expertise to make sure that our stories are not offensive?

For example in the case of Virtual reality the way we introduce the person into the place and the way we take the person out of it is very important.



How are you feeling?!  
you can take it off  
whenever you want...



what we have observed when interpreting our evaluation of the VRlab is that visitors think it's their fault if the usability is not good enough.



I don't understand  
How it works. maybe  
I'm too old...



yes, visitors don't complain because they are afraid of not being heard!

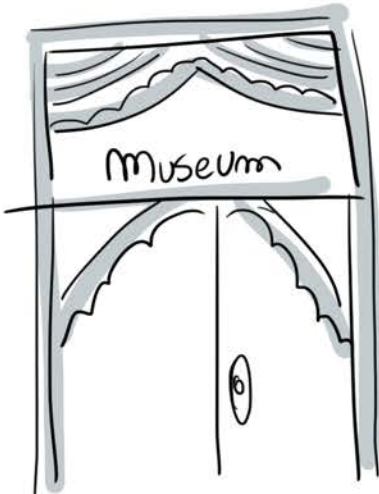


one of our participants

how can we be sure that the stories we tell do not reinforce Stereotypes?



That's indeed a problem when we have institutional hierarchy! When the institute has more power than individuals. So we have to let go and create a place where visitors can say "I disagree" or criticize!



I'm tired of others  
narrating my story!  
I disagree and I'm  
going to let them  
know





people are all storytellers, but sometimes they don't want or dare to confess!

With other women we created a club in 1972 ...



Oh grandma it's an amazing story ...



I love the idea of admitting that we are all storytellers!

one of our participants



What I love about this digital programme is that it has put us all on the same level!

this is so true! I wish I knew this long ago!  
Saying no to hierarchy for getting validation to narrate our story!





Our second guest speaker was wonderful Wana:

I'm Wana, I'm a writer, poet, journalist and filmmaker



When I moved back to Nigeria from England I met so many artists, poets and writers and I realized it's very hard to get to know them



So I came up with the idea of interviewing them



I made an archive of these interviews, and I published them on social media!



Because I like to rethink what an archive is!

We often think archives are about the past while they can also be about the present!

I wonder if you only ask about their artistic practice?



*one of our participants*



the artistic practice is how we get into a bigger conversation. We can not separate art from experience of life.



We started this episode of meaning making by asking our participants to write a sentence about an object around them that they are emotionally attached to...



Here are some of the answers



Box of traditional coconut cookies that my grandmother used to make



A wee clay owl that has been my good luck charm for over twenty years now

A mask! What can be more emotional in 2020! It symbolises so much pain, loss and disappointment, but also protection



It's a bag I bought many years ago on my trip to asia! It was cheap and I didn't like it, I bought it out of necessity! Now I live in asia and it serves me very well



With this exercise we wanted to remind everyone that we are all storytellers if we admit and believe it :)



And our takeaways from Alastair and Wana



Start from where you are



If people cannot understand the way you tell story, they will never tell a story about it



Thank you to everyone who participated in  
Episode 4 of Season 2  
of Meaning Making During a Pandemic



Illustrated by: Azam Masoumzadeh