



## **Introduction:** *Tomorrow's stories to be left*

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*Create, Act, Change* was the slogan for the 5th International Digital Storytelling Conference that the Hacettepe University Digital Storytelling Team organised in 2013 in Ankara, Turkey. Right after the conference, a milestone in the history of Turkey happened: the Gezi Park Protest created its own stories in the recent history of this geographical region.

Sometimes in this part of the world – Anatolia – it is not easy to define one's place. Does this land belong to Middle East or Europe or is it a part of Asia? Depending on the intersection of ideologies, all are possible and sometimes impossible. Living in Turkey means being in between various identities: cultural, religious, ethnic (and variations). Being 'in between' in most cases and being named as a Turk is challenging most of the time, although many of us have no idea about our ethnic origins, or for long meant not to know of them. This comes as a package just like in most of the multicultural geographical regions that are governed by the principles of the nation state. Declining Ottoman heritage and claiming a secular Turkish identity was what was expected in the context of post-World War I. On the other hand, that transformation to nation state brought its own burdens in this part of the world.

Some of the stories got lost; some of the identities went underground. That's where I remember the lines of Boori Monty Pryor from his book *Maybe Tomorrow*. It is one of those books that found me for sure, in Australia, miles and miles away from the place I was born and raised. Boori says: "To feel happy about yourself, you must feel happy about the place you live in. To feel happy about the place you live in, you must get to know that place" (Pryor 1998:7). This also suits really well my understanding about change and the connection I found to action through digital storytelling. Here I am talking about two aspects of change. First, the change through digital storytelling in various political climates in various geographical regions. Second, the change within digital storytelling movements around the world. Here I use movement in the plural as I feel there is variety in the paths in digital storytelling and it would be helpful for different parties to get involved with digital storytelling once we accept the fact that the oral and written

traditions of the land really matter in the way the digital storytelling movement flourishes in different regions.

This is where I find a strong connection to my own roots of storytelling in Anatolia, not particularly talking about the Ottoman or the connected Muslim heritage but more about the ancient heritages of Anatolia that have somehow seeped into the cultures of today. Maybe that's why Boori's book led me to think over some of the issues that I was hesitant to deal with, such as 1915 and its various sights and reflections in 2015. Aydın, in his article "Çanakkale Spirit 2015" [Çanakkale Ruhu 2015] underlines an important feature of the reflections of 1915 to 2015. The tragedy in Sarıkamış versus the victory in Çanakkale (known to English speakers as Gallipoli).<sup>1</sup> A nation rising out of the ashes of a ruined empire... or a land intentionally forgetting some parts of its histories.

Storytelling is about sharing and sharing provides the grounds for connections. The digital storytelling movement in Turkey, of which Hacettepe University Digital Storytelling Unit has been the leading driving force, alongside various education science-based implementations that are loyal to the understanding of digital storytelling as a means of developing digital literacy skills, prioritising the use of digital storytelling workshops and digital stories for the circulation of voices from everyday life. It also helped us as a team to connect to each other. Whatever the issue was, gender has been at the core of the discussion through the participation of more women, telling us about their own concerns with their own words and not necessarily through formulating their digital stories through written texts, but oral performances of voice-over recordings. This has all to do with the oral traditions in this land, as well as the issue of multiple languages.

The digital storytelling workshops with women from various non-governmental organisations that unite their power for women's political activism under the Women's Coalition,<sup>2</sup> had helped to make a strong statement before the national elections in Turkey in May 2015. The stories of the women in Women's Coalition make us think about the unspoken pieces of women's personal histories in this country that are highly political. The issue about personal engagement in digital storytelling workshops that we facilitate provides challenging processes for sure. Then transformations within the organisation of each and every digital storytelling workshop online or offline need care and attention. We as the facilitators need to keep our own passion about storytelling and develop a sense of floating. That is a challenge but a lovely way of discovering new storytelling engagements as well.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.gallipoli.gov.au/explore-turkish-memorials/canakkale-sehitleri.php>.

<sup>2</sup> Digital stories from the three digital storytelling workshops with the Women's Coalition are available on our website in Turkish, soon in English at: <http://www.digitalstoryhub.org/Kadin-Koalisyonu-DHAA-I-Birlikte-Yurumek>, <http://www.digitalstoryhub.org/Kadin-Koalisyonu-DHAA-II-Inatla-Hep-Birlikte>, <http://www.digitalstoryhub.org/Kadin-Koalisyonu-DHAA-III-Kadin-Ba-imiza>.

Once storytelling is seen as a good way of connecting to people, it's also a good way of connecting to other digital storytelling practitioners and hubs around the world. That has been the case for us in March 2015, with ACMI (Australian Centre for the Moving Image). The public screening of stories from a series of workshops that I facilitated in Melbourne in September 2014, with women migrants from Turkey living in Australia, provided us a site for experimentation with digital storytelling capacities in Turkey and Australia. In the first section of a concurrent event, at ACMI in Melbourne and Hacettepe University in Ankara, migrant women from Turkey living in Melbourne had the chance to meet 'virtually' with their friends and relatives living in Turkey. "My Life Here While You are There" was the name of the event. The Consul-General of Turkey in Melbourne, Mehmet Küçüksakallı, and the Australian Ambassador to Turkey, James Larson, were among the participants, sharing their own bit of the story of living away from their home countries. Talking over the digital stories that were created in the "Here and There" workshops triggered the sharing of other migrant stories, in addition to the expressions of thankfulness from younger migrant women who have been living the comforts that have been brought to their lives by the acquisitions of the first generation of migrant women. In the second half of the event, where the audience was made up exclusively of participants in the online workshop experience, a story circle was formed through videoconferencing: a semi-circle in Melbourne completed by a semi-circle in Ankara. This was a digital storytelling bridge. "My Life Here While You Were There" has built two bridges: One among the participants of the workshop in Melbourne and Ankara, the other one among the digital storytelling facilitators and tech people in ACMI and Hacettepe University. "My Life Here While You Were There" has a strong connection to my own experience. Being the daughter (not by birth but heart) of an Australian of Scottish origin living in Turkey has a few things to do with the stories I would like to leave for tomorrow.

The first personal crack in the mainstream narrative about Gallipoli for me was in 2009 when we attended the service in Robina in Queensland, Australia in memory of the ANZAC soldiers who fought at Gallipoli. While many Australians travelled to Turkey for the Dawn Service, I was in Australia, joining the march, trying to understand how my presence there is perceived.

Storytelling is about us as individuals whether we are facilitators or participants, both in and out of the workshop. Other forms of narrative are needed for today's Turkish-Australian connections, challenging the myths, as John Hartley reminds us in his article in a previous issue of this journal (Hartley 2013).

There are communities of people from Turkey living in Australia and, through the activities of ‘Australia Year’ in Turkey,<sup>3</sup> we have learned that many Australians live and work in Turkey. National identities in this digital era are contested as like most others living elsewhere with multiple cultural citizenships. The stories of survival and struggle in everyday life have high value and it seems that this is not bound to borders. Here I remember Hartley’s article again:

*Storytelling can be characterised as a carrier of information codes. As such they are designed for imitation, copying, sharing, emulation. They are a distribution mechanism for how to think and what to think. As mentioned, they are a resource for inductive reasoning. Stories also store lessons, allowing social learning to cross generational, language and geospatial boundaries, reproducing the sequence of inductive logic that teaches us not only what to fear but what to do about it: how to outwit duplicitous adversaries, how to test unknown characters for truthfulness, how to signal prowess to enemies and lovers, how to behave courageously ...and so on. Culture is the ‘survival vehicle’ for groups (demes); stories are the survival vehicle for culture (Hartley 2013:97).*

On the eve of the 2015 Dawn Service, at the cafeteria of the university, the menu was a so-called Turkish Soldier’s Menu in Gallipoli. A blogger on Çanakkale Wars, Seyit Ahmed Silay, suggests that there was never such a menu, in his blog called Çanakkale Müzesi [Çanakkale Museum].<sup>4</sup> It is most probably one of the sentimental tools of nationalist discourse. Here I recall Aydın’s thoughts about two dominant discourses about Çanakkale: one is the Kemalist nationalist discourse of the war of independence that constructed the nation state; the other one is the neo-conservative Islamist discourse of recent years, of the so-called New Turkey. What about the contestation of similar discourses in Australia? Discussion may be opened by the ABC’s “The G Word”.<sup>5</sup> However, more everyday-life perspectives are needed for the tomorrow of Turkey-Australia connections. In this context, digital storytelling workshops that we plan in cooperation with Curtin University’s Centre for Culture and Technology, with Australians living in Turkey and Turkish-Australians who migrated back to Turkey, may contribute to the discussions, broadening our understanding about histories and their survival in cultures.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/AustraliaInTurkey?fref=ts>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.canakkalemuzesi.com/defaultmain.asp?inc=readme&intTextID=35&intPoetID=3>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-04-08/the-g-word-gallipoli/6295464>



*My made in China enamel ANZAC's history lunch cup from South Australia, sitting on my kitchen bench.*

The papers in this volume clearly show that digital storytelling movements go beyond national borders and tribal in their own ways. This volume has come together mainly as a result of the *5th International Digital Storytelling Conference* (Ankara 2013) and the *Digital Storytelling in Times of Crisis Conference* (Athens 2014). Some of the articles joined along the journey of gathering the papers. The authors in this volume contributed to each other's work with their comments and suggestions in the peer-review process.

Most of the authors in this special issue are either PhD candidates or have completed that phase of their academic life very recently. Not all of them have focused on digital storytelling as a component for their thesis, but digital storytelling has been an important aspect in their lives during the PhD period. Sengül İnce , Gökçe Zeybek Kabakçı and Hatice Şule Oğuz from Hacettepe University Digital Storytelling Team have been involved in the facilitation of several digital storytelling workshops and have been keen on relating their own personal academic interests to workshop agendas.

Şengül İnce in her paper talks about one of our joint workshops, "I have food on the stove", where eight women get together to tell their stories about their life with dissertation. Ordinary kitchen objects and the narratives that the participants share, getting their inspiration from the object that they end up having in their hands provides a special collection of digital stories. İnce questions whether digital storytelling workshops can be a tactic to cope with the everyday life struggles for academic women.

Hatice Şule Oğuz, on the other hand, picks up another important component of everyday life especially for the women engaged with fieldwork in Social Sciences and discusses the potential of digital storytelling as an additional qualitative research methodology. Her discussion is mainly based on a workshop that we co-facilitated during her PhD years,

where her quest in her fieldwork with refugees and asylum seekers living in Gaziantep (a southeastern city in Turkey) was very fresh.

For Gökçe Zeybek Kabakçı, emotions are at the heart of storytelling. In her paper she points to the significance of self-reflection in the process of facilitation and maintenance of the storytelling workshop. She tracks the common points between digital storytelling and the sociology of emotions.

A participatory media practitioner for 30 years and a new PhD candidate, Tricia Jenkins gives an overview of her recent work with digital storytelling and ageing. Tricia puts self-reflection into the core of her paper that highlights the significance of the workshops with older people in *Silver Stories*. She raises some very important issues that we all face in our struggles to provide the necessary funds for the digital storytelling workshops with “disadvantaged” groups. Tricia underlines the fact that the definitions used by funding bodies such as the EU should be challenged. Terms such as “marginalised” or “groups at risk” are too linear. She also shows how digital storytelling can go beyond borders: organisations with similar interests joining forces for story sharing with older people and the people who support them as professionals, volunteers and carers.

The main focus of the paper by Daniela Gachago, Eunice Ivala, Agnes Chigona and Janey Condy is digital storytelling’s emotional engagement with and for the Other “without falling into the trap of sentimentality”, in the South African higher education scene. Applying “critical emotional reflexivity” as an analytical framework, they come up with a strong statement for digital storytelling to make something that all practitioners should think of: there is a strong potential for digital stories to lead to sentimentality where the privileged observer characterises it by pity and the storyteller with resentment. Part of the solution for sentimentality, for Gachago and colleagues, is to include a historical-political analysis of the previous stories told and through the process helping students to deconstruct positions and create opportunities to reflect emotions.

With the Yesteryear Jobs project, Eftalia Mouchtari, Michalis Meimaris and Dimitris Gouscos carry the “story circle” aspect of a digital storytelling workshop into the whole course of their research project, where primary school children learn from older generations about their everyday life from the past. Integrating the first person experience sharing into the learning environment, Mouchtari and colleagues invited the older members of the local community to the 15th Primary School of Piraeus in Athens, where they interacted with children. Creating digital stories was among the activities where intergenerational interactions were enhanced.

In her paper, Angelina Thas attracts our attention to the positioning of “I” in the stories, as well as the role of “mediators” in digital storytelling workshops, deriving her qualitative data from her fieldwork with facilitators of digital storytelling for human

rights advocacy around the world and in Malaysia in particular. She mentions that with the judgmental interferences of the mediators, the stories may lose the storyteller's meaning to the positioning of "I". Thus asks that once the stories are packaged to be more palatable to specific audiences and consumption needs, then "what change then are self-representational digital stories meant to bring about?"

Manolis Spanoudakis, Alexandra Nakou, Eni Meliadou, Dimitris Gouscos and Michalis Meimaris, in their paper about their online platform for Digital Storytelling, tell us about the idea of developing an online storytelling platform that they called *Milia-Apple Tree*, where the components of a digital story can be put together. Spanoudakis and her friends give an overview about the similar online storytelling websites and then provide the discussion about Milia's educational usages.

Similarly, Sasha Mackay and Elizabeth Heck in their paper discuss how the Australian public broadcaster, the ABC, is responding to the changing practices in media consumption through its online platforms, Heywire and ABC Open, that aim to engage audience storytelling. They point out that although these platforms have significant advantages to engage rural communities especially the young members, the personal content management can be tricky for participants whereas for the media institutions keeping the involvement of the participants could be challenging.

The papers in this volume will inspire new connections and help to broaden digital storytelling horizons. More digital storytelling workshops will be planned ahead, creating their own rituals, transforming practices, connecting people and reconnecting the ones who haven't known each other personally.

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