

REVIEWING THE INTERSECTION OF EPISTEMICIDE,  
AFRICAN DIGITAL PLATFORMS, AND DIGITAL  
STORYTELLING. A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

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**Abstract.** Digital storytelling emerges as a key ‘epistemic site’ for knowledge reclamation and narrative sovereignty, potentially challenging dominant knowledge hierarchies. This paper reviews the potential of digital storytelling to counter the so-called ‘epistemicide’. The review extends beyond traditional epistemological critiques to theorise about the role of digital platforms in countering epistemicide. The purpose of this paper is to propose a theoretical framework where digital storytelling acts as a vehicle for epistemic resistance and justice. This theoretical framework responds to previous calls for decolonial methodologies that prioritise lived experiences and counter the dominance of centric epistemologies. To support this framework, the review highlights the role of African digital platforms in fostering alternative knowledge systems and examines how participatory digital storytelling can contribute to social justice. This review paper, hence, claims that digital storytelling can be a site for narrative reclamation, sovereignty, and decentralisation. The paper advocates for an epistemic decentralisation model that reimagines digital media as a domain for inclusivity. Such inquiries about the systematic integration of digital storytelling in both global and local knowledge systems or settings and whether it constitutes a potential *site of epistemic dialogue* are recommended. An understanding of the role and effectiveness of digital storytelling in countering epistemicide and the intersection between digital storytelling and epistemic justice, mainly among Indigenous communities, necessitates such virtual ethnographies.

**Keywords:** epistemicide, African digital platforms, digital storytelling, theoretical framework

## INTRODUCTION

### **Epistemic Injustice / Epistemicide**

Epistemic Injustice implies the harm inflicted upon individuals in their knowledge capabilities, often manifested through prejudice and systemic biases that undermine their credibility or impede their capability to interpret their experiences. The term “Epistemicide” elaborates further on such Epistemic injustice through a combination of two root words, “Episteme”—knowledge, and “Cide”, which indicates killing or annihilation as it appears in words like “homicide” and “genocide”. Thereof, Epistemicide denotes the killing or annihilation of a certain system of knowledge, that is, the deliberate annihilation of a group’s knowledge system, often as a tool of oppression, hence, epistemic injustice.

Though Epistemic Injustice seems like a form of an unequal distribution of epistemic goods, be it knowledge, education, or information, it is not merely about access to knowledge but about how individuals “are wronged specifically as knowers”, as contributors to or interpreters of knowledge (Fricker 2007, 7). According to Fricker, there are two key forms of epistemic injustice: Testimonial Injustice and Hermeneutical Injustice. The former occurs when a speaker’s credibility is unfairly deflated due to prejudice. As illustrated by Fricker (2007, 23), if a black person reports a crime but is not believed by the police due to racial bias, their knowledge is dismissed because of prejudice in the economy of credibility, that is, the social system that determines whose words are taken seriously. The latter, on the other hand, happens when gaps in collective knowledge prevent someone from fully understanding or expressing their own experience. A clear example, as given by Fricker (2007, 149), is a woman in a society that lacks the concept of sexual harassment, who may struggle to articulate her experience because the collective interpretive resources, such as language and social awareness, are insufficient. Fricker here accentuates that both forms of epistemic injustice reveal ethical issues in everyday epistemic practices.

According to Fricker (2007, 43), epistemology is not just a theoretical field but is further intertwined with social justice. Epistemicide or Epistemic Injustice creates disadvantages. While Testimonial Injustice affects how we share knowledge with each other by shaping credibility judgments, Hermeneutical Injustice influences how we make sense of our own social experiences. Such disadvantages harm individuals both intellectually and socially by limiting their ability to understand and express their experiences as well as reducing their voice in public discourse, thereby reinforcing socioeconomic inequalities and structural injustices (Fricker 2007, 43-46). Therefore, a failure to achieve global “cognitive justice” implies a failure of global social justice (de Sousa Santos 2015, 233).

### **The Intersection Between Epistemicide and Domination**

De Sousa Santos (2015, 91) theorises epistemic injustice or epistemicide from a more global lens, that is, as intersected with globalisation and Western cultural domination. Epistemicide here is the aftermath of the unequal cultural exchanges that have historically led to the erasure of knowledge from subordinate cultures. In the context of European expansion, Eurocentric modernity’s destruction of these knowledge systems is a key factor in epistemicide (de Sousa Santos 2015, 92). Given that Western evaluation systems, such as tenure metrics, often reinforce hegemonic norms and existing power structures, alternative or non-Western ways of sharing and producing knowledge may be seen as less credible (Patin *et al.* 2021, 10). To challenge and end the epistemicide in Africa, a focus on concrete and practical ways of epistemic liberation is called for (Masaka 2018, 297).

“The quest for the realistic concrete epistemic liberation can be enhanced if the agents of both the dominant and the dominated epistemologies are prepared to challenge the unjust *status quo* and move toward a position of parity of epistemologies and their agents.” (Masaka 2018, 297-298).

Given the problematality of epistemicide or epistemic injustice, further research is required to explore the connection between

epistemic injustice/ epistemicide, and concepts like “epistemic violence (Spivak 1988), epistemological privilege (Fricker 1999), silencing (Dotson 2011), epistemic oppression (Dotson 2014), decolonization work (Duarte & Belarde-Lewis 2015), epistemic exploitation (Berenstein 2016), citational justice (Kumar & Karusala 2020), and knowledge justice (Leung & Lopez-McKnight 2021)” (Patin *et al.* 2021, 11).

### **African Digital Platforms Agency**

The future resides in digital media platforms. Technology’s significance in Africa and the effects of the so-called digital revolution have been widely celebrated and extensively chronicled in fields including journalism, politics, agriculture, trade, and communication not to forget African digital arts, which provide innovative methods to represent diverse and evolving African identities (Bisschoff 2017, 264-266). Digital platforms, according to Nesbitt-Ahmed (2017, 377), provide Africans with significance and worth in relation to the creation and consumption of African literature. Global connectivity is rapidly changing in Sub-Saharan Africa, which is moving from a state of digital disconnection to a digital economy with hundreds of millions of connected inhabitants. The area can now compete internationally in the creation of digital goods and services thanks to this transformation, which has sparked enthusiasm about the prospects of an emerging knowledge economy (Graham *et al.* 2017, 345).

Digital platforms have historically been defined according to the field in which they have been researched (Koskinen *et al.* 2019, 321). Three fundamental traits are shared by the majority of digital platforms: they are technologically mediated, facilitate communication between user groups, and grant those user groups certain capabilities (Evans 2016; Constantinides *et al.* 2018; Davis 2018; Jacobides *et al.* 2018 as cited in Koskinen *et al.* 2019, 324). Digital Platforms can counter Epistemic Injustice as well, especially Public Scholarship. Digital platforms such as open-access online journals may elevate and centre voices from historically marginalised

populations through research-intensive public institutions to address epistemic injustice in education research (Quantz & Buell, 2019, 130). That explains why Africa's connectedness has risen over the last two decades and resulted in an increase in African entrepreneurs employing handmade digital technology, which might provide a breakthrough scenario (Tafese 2022, 1). However, it is not appropriate to be left to the intellectual hegemony or monopoly of one area to spread ideas about advancements in digital technology, particularly their adoption in many social contexts, thus, true globalization necessitates being receptive to North-South dialogue which is important in building relationships and overcoming intellectual barriers (Schoon *et al.* 2020, 12).

In order to establish African digital experiences as “epistemic sites” of knowledge creation in and of themselves, Schoon *et al.* (2019, 2) advocate for a decolonial approach in digital media studies that gives qualitative approaches precedence. Even while digital platforms are widely used in the global South, little is known about their effects on development (Koskinen *et al.* 2019, 8-9). Despite the fact that many nations in the global south have been freed from the prevailing colonial structures, many continue to face injustices such as the marginalization of indigenous languages, epistemic indigenous oppression, and destruction of cultural injustices against indigenous peoples brought forth by colonization and empire regimes (Makananise & Madima 2025, 2).

## THE POWER OF DIGITAL STORYTELLING

The practice of using digital tools and multimedia elements, such as images, video, audio, and text, to create and share a narrative is considered digital storytelling. The latter is, precisely, defined by Lambert (2009, 84-86) and De Jager *et al.* (2017, 2549) as a brief multimedia presentation, typically lasting between two to five minutes, that blends images, spoken narration, and various sound elements. Particularly, it is used for community engagement, creative

expression, and therapeutic settings, yet it has more recently been adopted as a research method within the arts. While digital storytelling projects may encounter some challenges, participants' feedback indicates that the advantages of digital storytelling surpass these difficulties, especially when implemented through a respectful and inclusive research approach (De Jager *et al.* 2017, 2575).

Digital storytelling also has the potential to promote justice and inclusivity by impacting participatory approaches in fields such as science and technology studies, design research, and human-computer interaction. This includes methods like participatory design, co-design, ethnographic studies, and participatory action research (Parvin 2018, 515). In academia, Digital storytelling can serve as a form of counter-storytelling in that it offers a compelling way to reframe knowledge from marginalised perspectives, and thus, presents a decolonial alternative to dominant neoliberal ideologies that uphold institutions and universities as the primary sites of knowledge creation (Dutta *et al.* 2022, 59). In South Africa, both individual and collaborative digital storytelling have enabled participants to document daily experiences and form a database for analysing social justice issues, aside from generating knowledge from lived realities (Walker 2024, 1). Walker states that their insights are organised into a social injustice map approach, which is further proposed as a valuable tool for empowering young people worldwide to foster their role in knowledge creation and contributing to a more just society.

## A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Based on the literature examined above, it can be said that digital storytelling is powerful and may constitute an epistemic site for Knowledge Reclamation and Narrative Sovereignty. There is also the supposition of an intersection between Community-Driven Platforms and Inclusivity or Inclusively Multimodal Storytelling Approaches. Another dynamically indicated dimension that Open-

Access avenues or storytelling platforms may be a key for such Epistemic Decentralisation.

### **Knowledge Reclamation, Narrative Sovereignty, Inclusivity and Epistemic Decentralisation**

Digital Storytelling can be considered as an Epistemic Site of knowledge reclamation. Undoubtedly, the digital age presents both challenges and opportunities for knowledge production, particularly for marginalised communities whose epistemologies have historically been silenced. Through the integration of oral histories, visual narratives, and multimedia storytelling, digital platforms can become powerful tools for cognitive justice and, therefore, a counter to epistemicide—the systematic erasure of Indigenous and non-Western knowledge systems. Digital storytelling, I propose, is not merely a means of expression; rather, it can serve as an act of epistemic resistance.

One of the most crucial aspects of digital storytelling is narrative sovereignty—the ability of marginalised communities to control how their stories are told and disseminated. Community-led storytelling initiatives can empower groups to document oral traditions, indigenous philosophies, and lived experiences, and so preserve them against the forces of epistemicide. Furthermore, these narratives may serve as counter-histories that challenge hegemonic knowledge production while resisting the dominant discourse that often distorts or erases Indigenous perspectives. Digital platforms, henceforth, can be regarded here as spaces where knowledge reclamation occurs, thereby providing a possibility for the validation and amplification of previously silenced epistemologies.



To maximise accessibility and engagement, digital storytelling must employ multimodal approaches that cater to diverse audiences. This includes the use of text, audio, video, and interactive media,

where the latter ensures that knowledge is not restricted to traditional literacy-based formats. Additionally, this multilingual storytelling is essential in preserving socio-cultural and linguistic diversity, that is, allowing indigenous knowledge to flourish in digital spaces. Techniques such as digital archives, interactive maps, and participatory documentaries may further enhance accessibility while ensuring that knowledge is both preserved and dynamically engaged with by different communities.

Open-access digital storytelling platforms may bring about decentralisation. The latter means that the digital storytelling process is in the hands of the communities it represents. Therefore, developing open-access storytelling platforms prevents corporate



and institutional control over narratives. This may allow marginalised voices to retain agency over their knowledge production. Besides, fostering an inclusive approach to storytelling, such as co-creation models, where community members collaborate with scholars, digital designers, and activists, is necessary for the decentralisation process. What is far more significant is participatory storytelling work-

shops where individuals can be equipped with the necessary digital literacy and technical skills to document and share their narratives, thereby enhancing a self-sustaining knowledge ecosystem.

## CONCLUSION

Digital storytelling can offer a powerful means of amplifying marginalised voices, resisting knowledge erasure, and fostering epistemic justice. Regardless of the digital divide issue, which may

constitute a hindrance to such epistemic justice, digital narrativity or storytelling can provide accessible, participatory, and multimodal approaches to preserving and sharing diverse epistemologies, thus ensuring that African knowledge systems are both recognised and actively shaping global discourses.

In this review paper, I propose that digital storytelling or narrativity can be a powerful means of establishing such epistemic sites of narrative reclamation, sovereignty, inclusivity, and decentralisation. Such a decentralised approach to digital media should prioritise qualitative and contextually rich narratives that may challenge dominant epistemologies. While digital platforms are widely used across the global South, their potential as tools for knowledge production remains underexplored. Therein, the persistence of epistemic injustice, seen in the marginalisation of Indigenous languages, cultures, and ways of knowing, raises the urgent need for alternative frameworks. Hence, leveraging digital storytelling can enable these communities to reclaim narrative sovereignty, resist epistemicide, and transform digital spaces into decolonial knowledge ecosystems where their epistemologies are preserved as well as actively shape the global discourse.

Future directions should explore how digital storytelling can be systematically integrated into both global and local knowledge systems as *sites of dialogue*. Also, virtual ethnographic research may be an effective way to understand the role of digital storytelling in countering epistemicide and the relationship between digital storytelling and epistemic justice, typically in Indigenous communities.

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