

Closing the scrollytelling gap with Closeread



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Slides: <https://wombat2024.talks.jamesgoldie.dev>

Code: <https://github.com/jimjam-slam/talk-wombat2024>

What's scrollytelling?

New York Times

Snow Fall: The Avalanche at Tunnel Creek

Miami Herald

House of Cards

All scrollytelling has...

Elements that **stay on the page** and update as **text scrolls by**

... but it might also have:

Graphic transitions

Maps

Animations

Movies

Sounds

Chart build-ups

(or it might not!)

These examples often take entire teams to build!

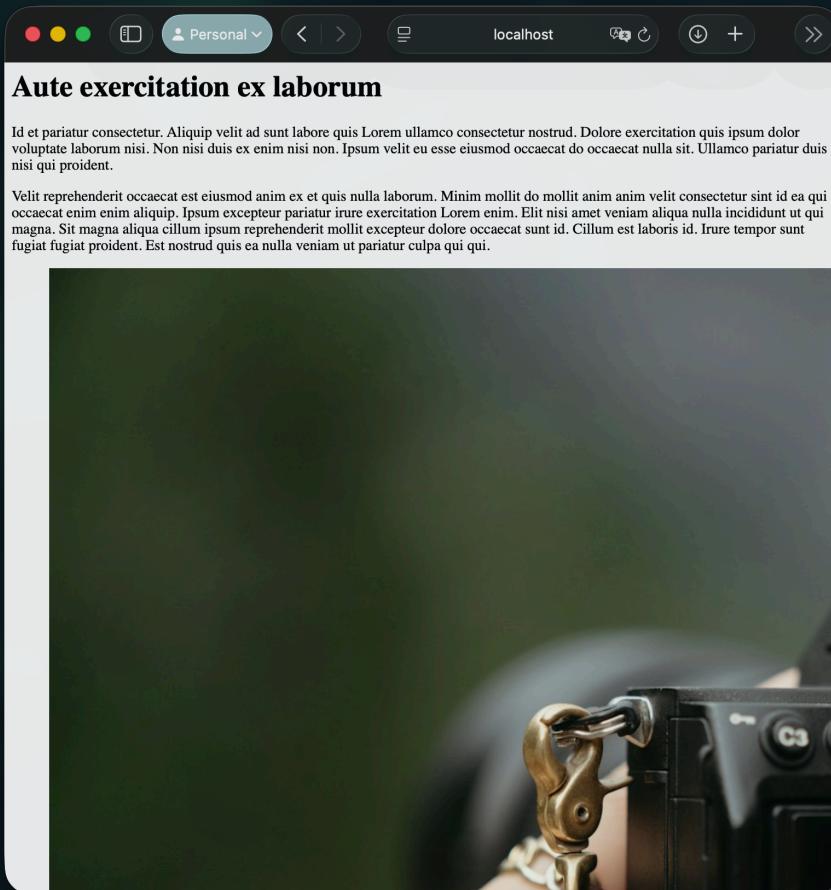
Data journalism • Engineering • Design • Reporting • Editing

Why is scrollytelling hard to do well?

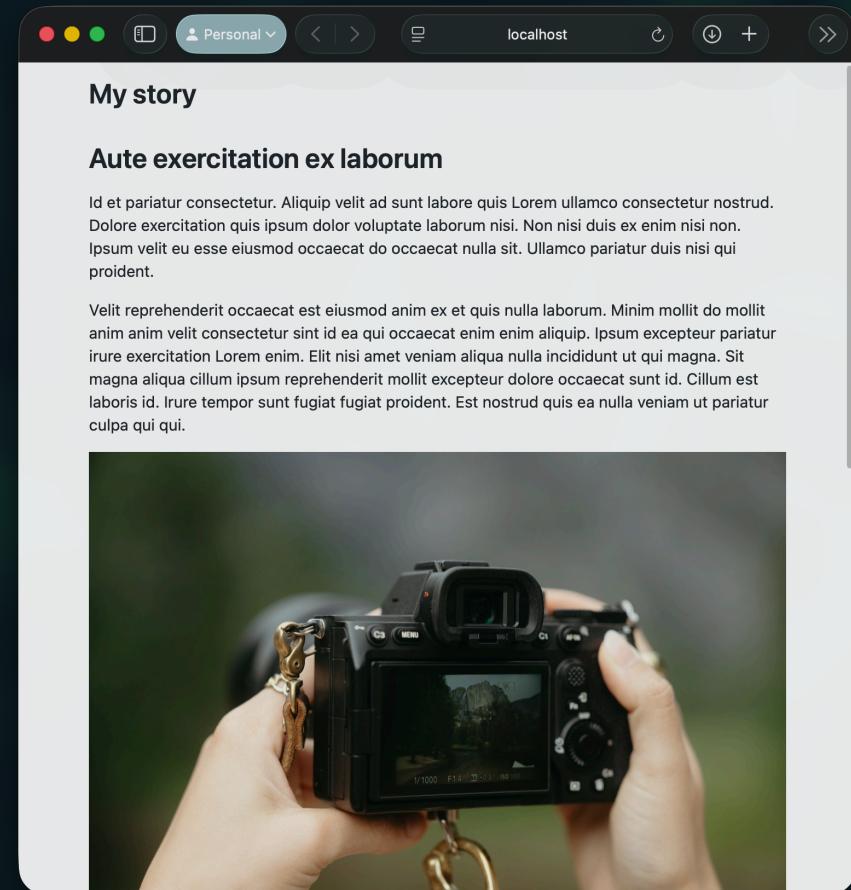
Quarto

takes care of a lot of web publishing fundamentals

Raw HTML



Quarto output





But scrollytelling requires even more engineering

Detecting whether things are on screen

Transitioning between elements

Sizing and positioning content (on various phones, tablets and browsers!)

Drawing **attention** to elements on the page

Playing and synchronising videos

Most of these elements are built bespoke for each story

What else is out there?

Commercial solutions!

But they're expensive

And not very flexible

And rarely work with the tools data folk use

Enter Closeread

Goal:

If you can write Quarto, you can write Closeread

```
---
```

```
title: My First Closeread
```

```
format: closeread-html
```

```
---
```

```
Hello world! Please read my Closeread story below.
```

```
::::{.cr-section}
```

```
Closeread enables scrollytelling.
```

```
Draw your readers attention with: @cr-features
```

```
::: {#cr-features}
```

```
1 highlighting
```

Ingredients of a Closeread

Use Quarto cross-references to build a story

Stickies are things that stick on the page.

```
::: {#cr-example}
I want to show this off!
:::
```

Triggers scroll past normally and make stickies appear or change.

```
Look at this... @cr-example
```

Goal:

Reasonable defaults with powerful options

Focus effects
Zoom, pan and highlight images and text

Layout options
Sidebars and overlays

Respect Quarto themes
(and customise them without CSS)

Integrates with Observable JS
For fully custom web graphics

Closeread Prize

Posit has run contests for Shiny, Great Tables, etc.

They approached us about sponsoring a Closeread Prize late last year

40 entries

Sports • Social policy • Mathematics • Finance • Personal stories • History •
Board games • Education • Astrophysics

Prizes

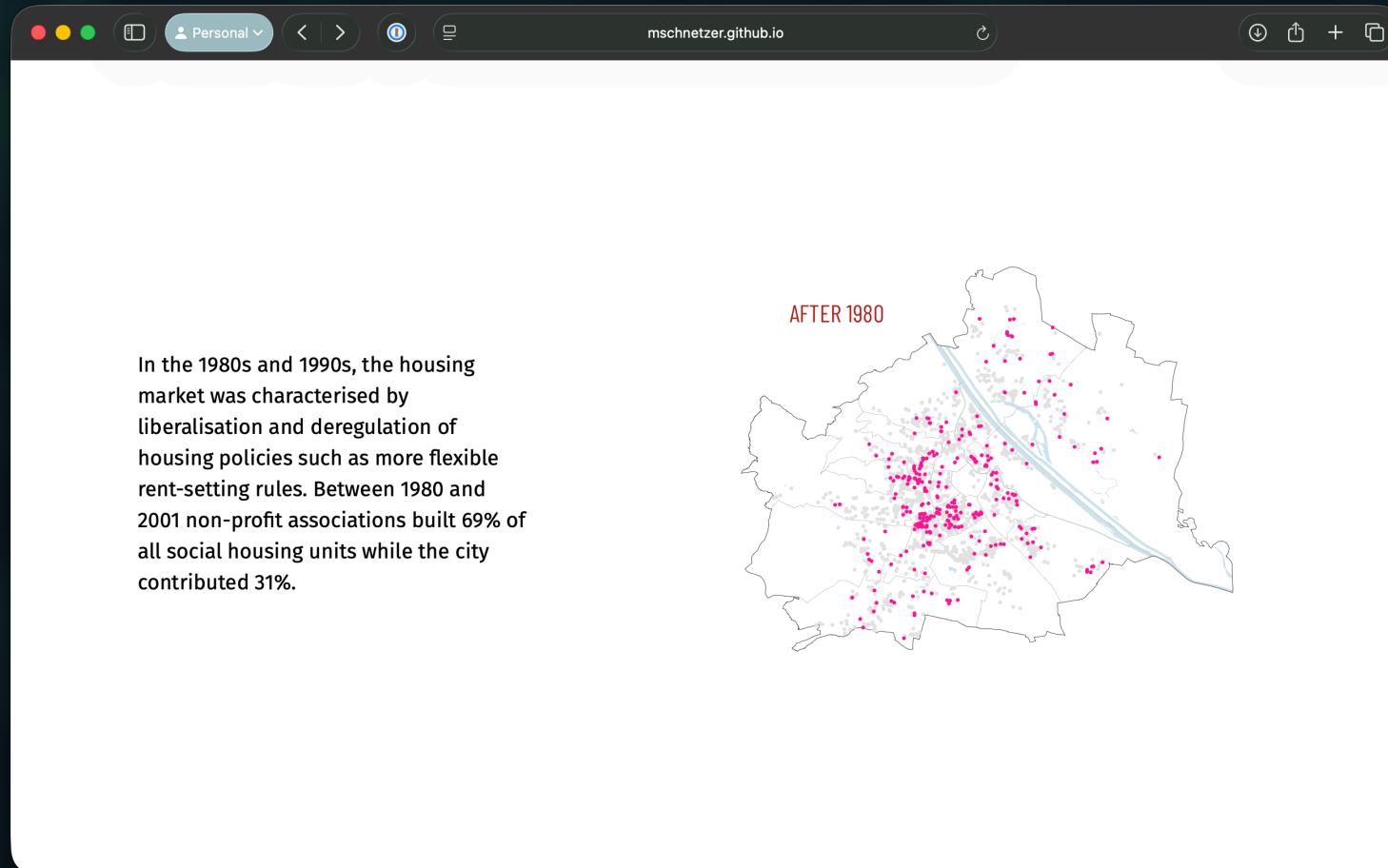
Grand Prize: Screenshot of EURO 2024 Final scrollytelling Analysis





Prizes

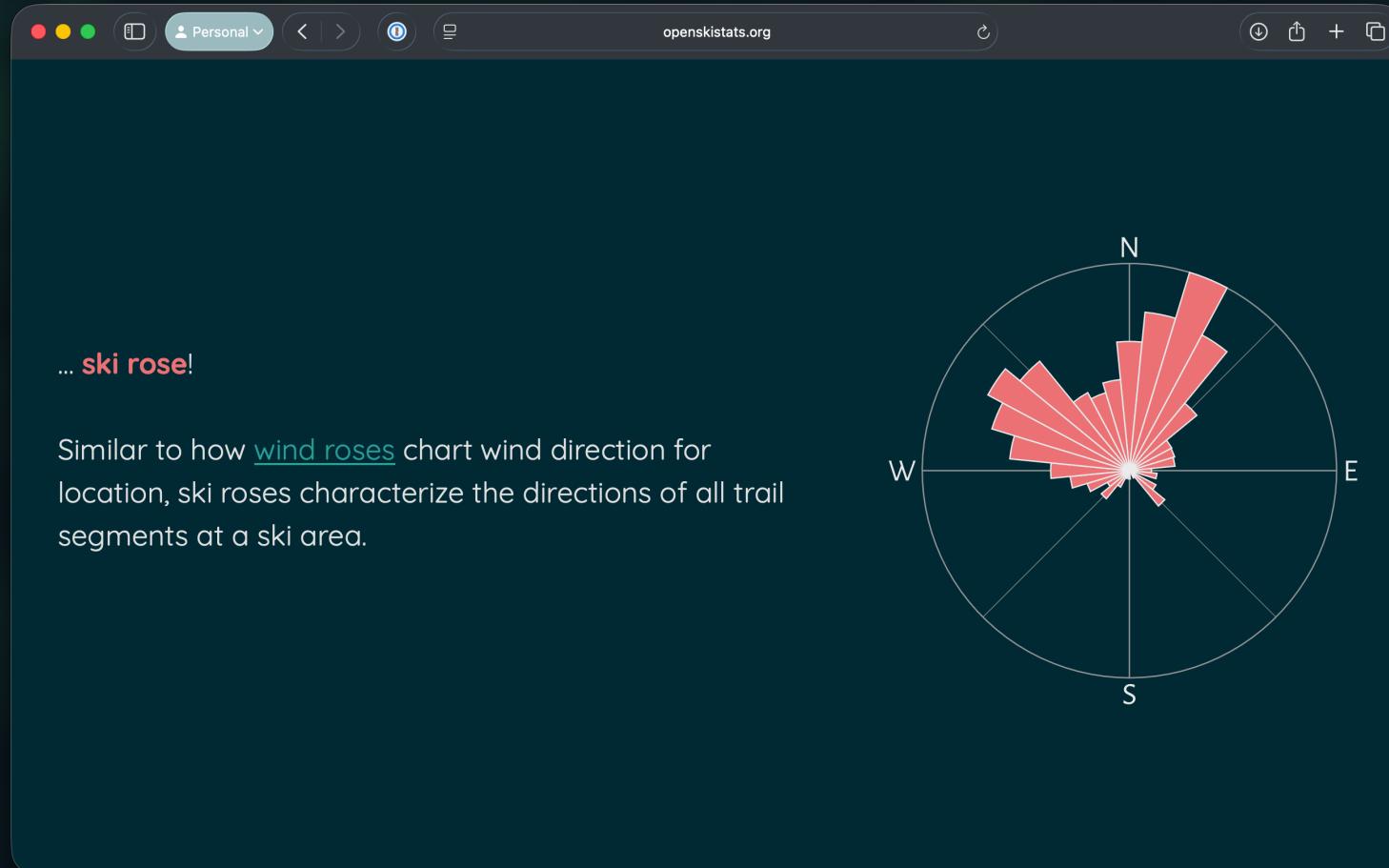
Special Prize: Council Housing & Neighbourhood Income Inequality in Vienna





Prizes

Special Prize: Which way do you ski?





Prizes

Special Prize: World Population Flags





Common themes

Less is more

1–2 sentences on screen at a time

You still need a compelling story

But that doesn't necessarily mean prize-winning research!

Build things up

Introduce one layer/facet/group at a time

Another contest? Yes!

This one is aimed at students!

<https://www.causeweb.org/cause/contests/data-scrollytelling>

Closes Dec 20

What's on the horizon

Widget support

Lots of Closeread Prize entries that tried to use htmlwidgets!

Aiming to support htmlwidgets (R), Jupyter widgets (Python), ...

Video support

Videos that play and loop when they enter

Think of these like museum exhibits!

Videos that progress as you scroll

Good for technical pieces that require pacing

Thank you!

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