

# IMMERSIVE JOURNALISM



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**UAL-LCC**

**Journalism**

**MA Critical Perspective**

# **LEARNING OUTCOMES**

**BY THE END OF THIS SESSION, YOU WILL BE ABLE TO**

- Define immersive journalism and its historical development.**
- Identify key technologies used in immersive storytelling.**
- Distinguish between VR, AR, 360-degree video, and MR.**
- Critically assess the benefits and challenges of immersive journalism.**
- Explore emerging technologies and future trends.**

***"Immersive technologies are opening gateways to virtual realities that might change journalism forever. In the virtual world, journalism balances on the edge between imaginary approaches to fact-based creation and extended options for fakes"***

Astrid Gynnild, Turo Uskali, Sarah Jones, and Esa Sirkkunen, *Immersive Journalism as Storytelling* (London: Routledge, 2021), p. 1

# WHAT IS IMMERSIVE JOURNALISM?

The term “*immersive journalism*” was coined by **Nonny de la Peña**

She defined it as “***the production of news in a form in which people can gain first- person experiences of the events or situation described in news stories***”

# WHAT IS IMMERSIVE JOURNALISM?

Immersive journalism uses virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), and other immersive technologies such as 360-degree to bring audiences closer to stories, making them feel part of the narrative.



# SOME HISTORY - IMMERSIVE JOURNALISM



- Began with experimental multimedia and interactive storytelling in the 2000s.
- The release of accessible equipment such as VR devices like the Oculus Rift in 2012 gave a push to the field.

# SOME HISTORY OF IMMERSIVE JOURNALISM

**Nonny de la Peña's work (2012-2014) is known as the "godmother of virtual reality."**

Projects like "*Hunger in Los Angeles*" and "*Project Syria*" showcased VR's power to evoke empathy and immerse viewers in real-world issues.

**Nonny de la Peña**



Nonny de la Peña at [SXSW 2024](#)

**Education** [Harvard University](#) (BA),  
[University of Southern California](#)  
(MA)

**Occupation** CEO of Emblematic Group



# HUNGER IN LOS ANGELES

## by Nonny de la Peña

She combines graphics with real witness audio to recreate powerful events the user can experience using virtual reality headset



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SSLG8auUZKc>



# **TECHNOLOGIES USED IN IMMERSIVE JOURNALISM**

- 1. Virtual Reality (VR)**
- 2. Augmented Reality (AR)**
- 3. Videos 360-Degree**
- 4. Mixed Reality (MR)**

# VIRTUAL REALITY (VR)

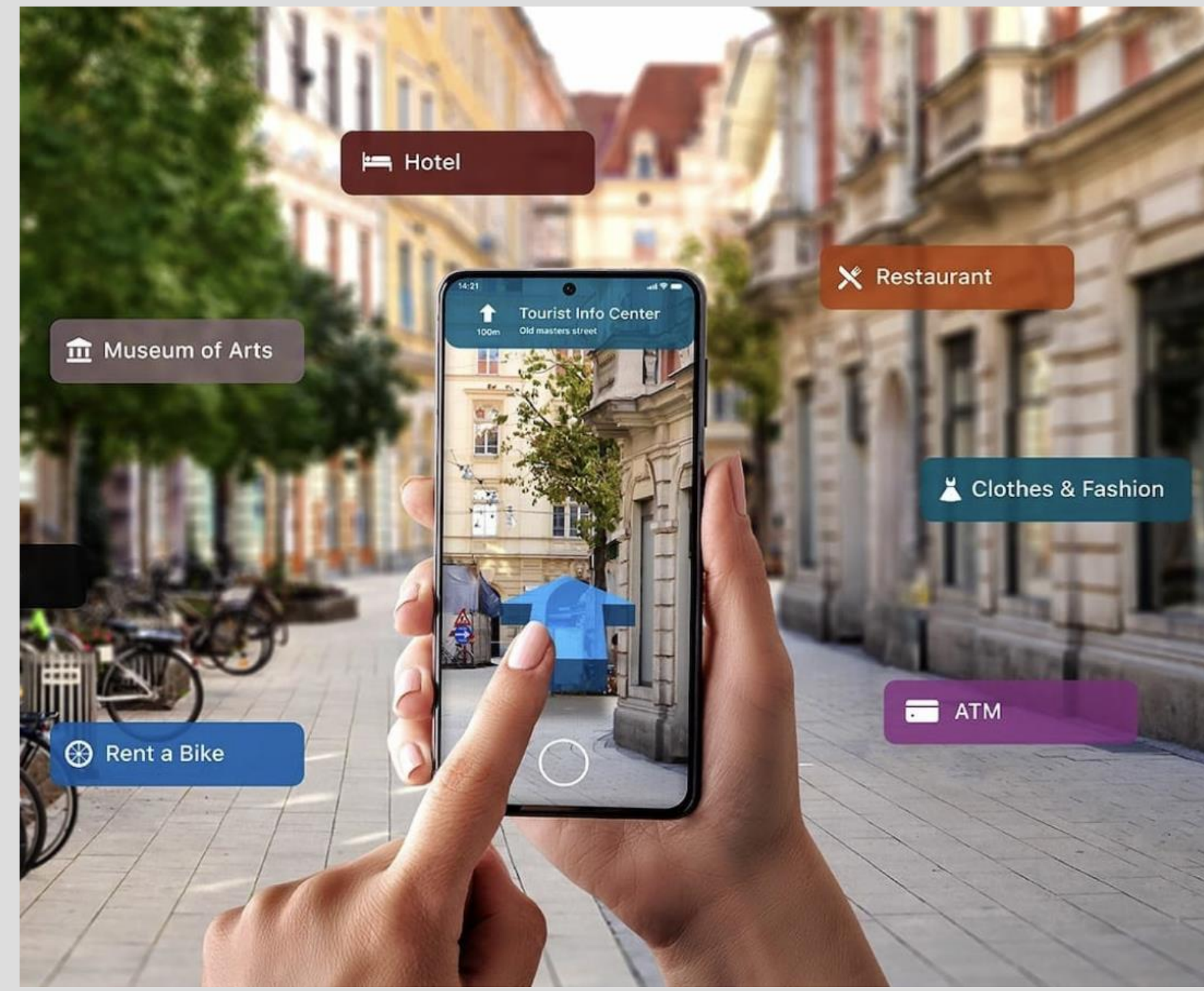
Creates fully immersive 3D environments where users can explore stories as if they are physically present in the scene. VR headsets, such as the Oculus Rift or HTC Vive, are commonly used.





# AUGMENTED REALITY (AR)

Overlays digital elements onto the real world, enhancing real-life environments with story-specific information or visuals. AR can be experienced through devices like smartphones or AR glasses.





**Augumented Reality**

**&**

**Virtual Reality**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h3rKvsFTfPA>



## AR

## VR

A digital layer is superimposed on the real physical world

Computer technology to create a simulated virtual world

Mix Of real world and virtual world

Creates entire virtual world

User can clearly differentiate between real world and virtual world

For user it's hard to differentiate what is real and what is virtual

User is not cut off from the realworld

User is completely immersed in artificial world, cut off from the real world

Only requires compatible smart devises such as smart phone, tablet,laptops, smart lenses etc

VR requires head mounted devises (HMD) or additional equipment's



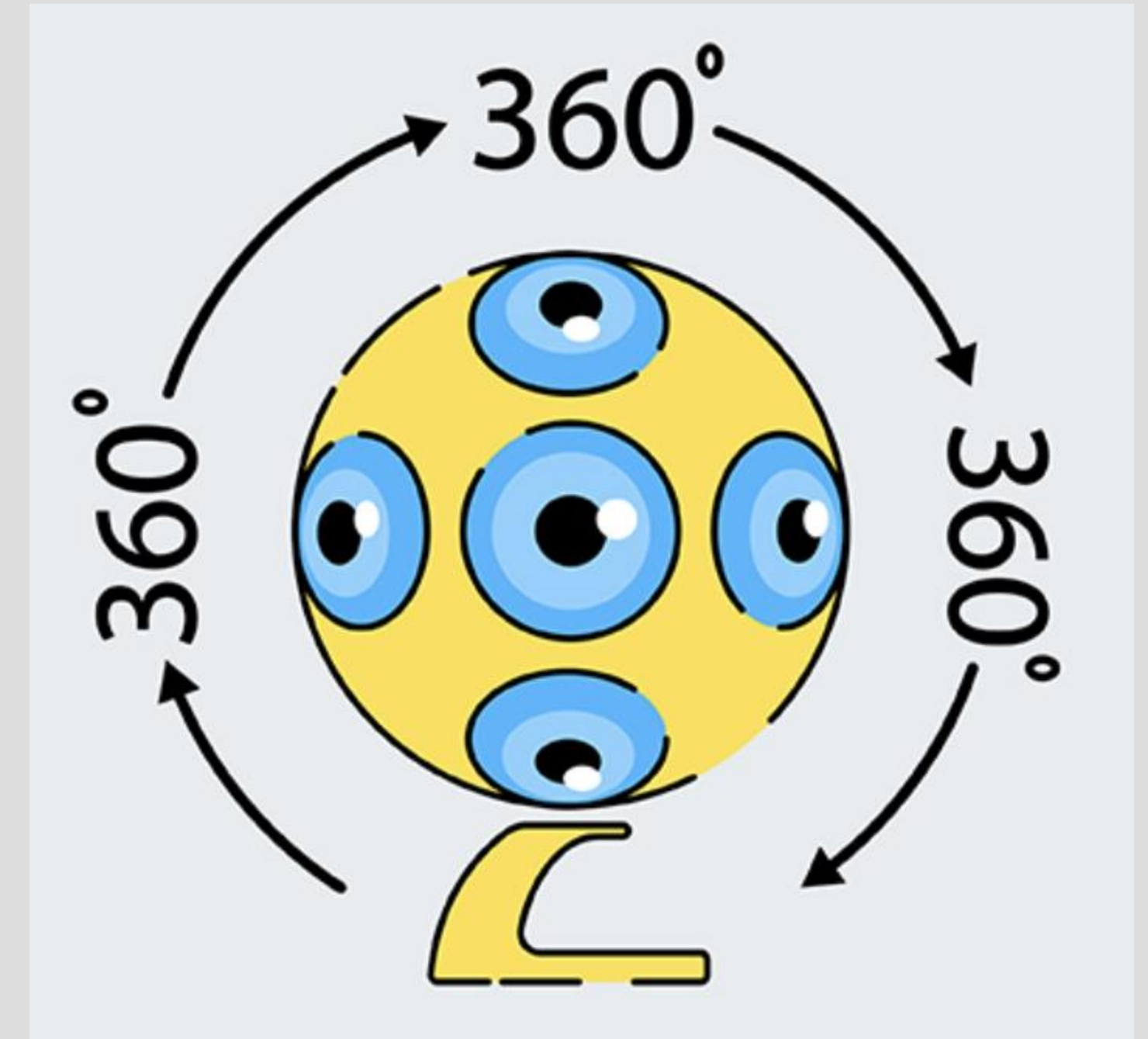
# **MIX-REALITY (MR)**

Combines VR and AR elements, allowing digital and physical objects to interact in real time. This is still developing but is gaining traction for more interactive storytelling.



# 360-DEGREE VIDEO

Allows users to look around in all directions within a video. This can be viewed on a phone, computer, or VR headset, giving a sense of presence in a real-world environment



# THE DISPLACED

## by The New York Times

In November 2015, The New York Times released its Virtual Reality (VR) app and distributed cardboard headsets to its 1.2 million subscribers. The app contained an experience called The Displaced





# THE DISPLACED

## by The New York Times



- This VR experience highlights the stories of three refugee children from Syria, Ukraine, and South Sudan that lost their home.
- Viewers can immerse themselves in their environments and get a sense of the harsh realities they face.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ecavbpCuvkl>



# **THE DISPLACED**

## **by The New York Times**

The mobile app had more downloads in its first few days than any other New York Times app has had at launch; the average time spent within the app was 14.7 minutes; some 92 percent of videos were viewed; and concurrently the videos began trending on social networks

**(Jaekel 2015)**

# AFTER SOLITARY

## by Emblematic Group and PBS Frontline

- This VR experience gives a first-hand look at solitary confinement, following a man who was released from a supermax prison.
- Users can explore the small cell and get a sense of the isolation endured by inmates in these conditions.



[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G7\\_YvGDh9Uc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G7_YvGDh9Uc)



# WE WHO REMAIN

By Trevor Snapp, Sam Wolson and the New York Times

- This 360-degree film follows the lives of people in the Nuba Mountains of Sudan, capturing their struggle during 2011 conflict between the Sudan government and the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army-North (SPLA-N) in the Nuba Mountains of Sudan.
- The film weaves together the lives of four people – a student, a rebel soldier, a journalist, and a mother – who struggle to improve their lives in the midst of a relentless war.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d04n6aE8FOk>

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/03/14/magazine/we-who-remain-vr.html>



# GREENLAND MELTING

## By FRONTLINE

- This immersive project takes viewers to Greenland, where they can see the effects of climate change on ice sheets and the surrounding environment. The experience mixes VR and 360-degree video with computer generated images (CGI) to show the scale and immediacy of climate impacts.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hUWqQ9F3sJk>

# **SOME BENEFIT OF IMMERSIVE JOURNALISM**

A recent study of users' impressions of and reactions to immersive journalism in virtual reality found that users think VR can add considerable value to main-stream journalistic productions, potentially boosting engagement and trust

**(Nielsen & Sheets 2019)**



# **SOME BENEFIT OF IMMERSIVE JOURNALISM**

## **Enhanced engagement**

VR and AR can make stories more captivating, drawing audiences in deeply.

## **Increased empathy**

Immersive experiences help viewers feel the perspectives of those affected by events.

# **SOME BENEFIT OF IMMERSIVE JOURNALISM**

## **Better understanding of complex topics**

360-degree environments simplify complex issues like climate change or conflicts.

## **Higher retention**

Engaging multiple senses makes information more memorable than text or video alone.



# **SOME CHALLENGES**

## **Health concern**

VR can cause nausea and dizziness due to the disconnect between visual motion and physical movement known as "motion sickness".

## **High production costs**

Creating VR or AR experiences requires expensive equipment, specialized software, and skilled personnel, which can be costly for news organisations

## **Technical limitations**

VR and AR experiences require powerful devices and stable internet connections, which may limit accessibility for some audiences, especially those with limited resources.

# **SOME CHALLENGES**

## **Limited audience reach**

Many people do not own VR headsets or have access to AR-capable devices, meaning immersive journalism can currently reach only a little audience.

## **Ethical and emotional concerns**

Immersive experiences can evoke strong emotions, which raises ethical concerns about manipulating viewers' feelings or causing distress. Journalists need to balance emotional impact with responsible reporting.



# IS IMMERSIVE JOURNALISM AN EMPATHY MACHINE?



[https://www.ted.com/talks/chris\\_milk\\_how\\_virtual\\_reality\\_can\\_create\\_the\\_ultimate\\_empathy\\_machine?subtitle=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/chris_milk_how_virtual_reality_can_create_the_ultimate_empathy_machine?subtitle=en)

# IS IMMERSIVE JOURNALISM AN EMPATHY MACHINE?

*I've never been that clear that just putting you in a situation to see it necessarily invokes empathy. I mean do we feel empathetic just walking down the 86 street and seeing a homeless person? Not always. We often walk past them. Putting on a VR headset isn't any different from that and therefore I've always questioned it. Whereas a good story, told beautifully, certainly can do that.*

**Watson 2020**



# IS IMMERSIVE JOURNALISM AN EMPATHY MACHINE?

*Does VR get you in someone's head better? I'm not sure but it certainly can take you to a place to see it for yourself and make **that sense of geography that helps you understand what's going on somewhere better.** That's probably one of its strongest things for news.*

**Watson 2020**

# **WHAT NEXT?**

## **5G AND IMMERSIVE GLASSES**

Many experts believe that the fifth generation of cellular networks (5G) and the development of immersive glasses is needed before immersive technologies will take off on a large scale.

5G will provide Internet speeds at least 20 times faster than 4G networks, enabling smartphones to download entire movies in seconds or stream massive multiplayer games without latency



# WHAT NEXT?

Fillion (2018) defines **deepfakes** as “realistic videos created with artificial intelligence software”

It is only a matter of time before deepfakes in the form of immersive journalism news or documentaries will be created and circulated.

# QUESTIONS?





# FEEDBACK ABOUT THIS SESSION?

Please use sticky notes to give feedback about this session. They will be used to improve it.



# References

Astrid Gynnild, Turo Uskali, Sarah Jones, and Esa Sirkkunen, *Immersive Journalism as Storytelling* (London: Routledge, 2021)

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