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## Miscellaneous

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# An Ethical Perspective on Transmedia Narrative Journalism

## Abstract

**Narrative (or storytelling) journalism has been proposed as an alternative for reconfiguring the information offered to audiences within the transmedia ecosystem, a product of the technological, economic, and cultural transformation of the media industries. The fact that the transmedia environment poses some ethical challenges for narrative journalists, however, warrants a thorough analysis of that situation. This study allows us to propose various standards, as a framework to guide journalistic practice in its commitment to question and reflect the reality of communities. From an applied ethics perspective, we utilize theories of Otherness and Moloney's principles of transmedia journalism to achieve this goal and propose various axes of reflection and ethical standards to support journalistic practice committed to the narrative approach. Consequently, we outline how journalists can foster a more active relationship with their audiences, develop an empathetic relationship with the Other, and improve their ability to respect, recognize, and include while recognizing their diversity.**

## Keywords

**Narrative journalism, transmedia journalism, journalistic ethics, theories of Otherness, digital journalism, applied ethics**

## 1. Introduction

In recent decades, the media ecosystem has transformed radically, leading to a hybrid environment characterized by abundant information and business model instability, as well as coexistence of traditional media with blogs, digital-native websites, and citizen-generated content (Anderson, Bell & Shirky, 2014). The result is a media ecology called transmedia, where social practices are negotiated through online and offline technologies and communication forms (Jansson & Fast, 2019). The new public communication social structure established by such reconfiguration triggered a journalism crisis (Drok, 2018). As a result, audience fragmentation and declining revenues have been observed, requiring adaptation to new media environments and redefinition of content, financial structure, and audience interactions (Deuze & Witschge, 2018). Additionally, our understanding of the roles and working practices of journalists has been influenced (Eberwein, 2022; Hanusch & Banjac, 2021).

This transformation has not stopped, as media respond to and also drive changes by popularizing and accelerating the adoption of new tools and practices (Salaverría & Martínez-

Costa, 2024). For example, social networks have evolved towards service platforms (Alaimo, Kallinikos & Valderrama, 2020); Artificial Intelligence (AI) is being incorporated into productive and distributive processes (Meier et al., 2024); sophisticated metrics have been incorporated for editorial decision-making (Salaverría, 2024), and new models such as total journalism have been developed that conform multidisciplinary teams (Sixto-García & López-García, 2025). Innovation does not stop there, as several models and genres have grown and evolved: co-creation (Sixto-García et al., 2021); comic journalism (López-Hidalgo & López-Redondo, 2021); immersive journalism and data journalism (Meier et al., 2024), and the use of self-destructive content and gamification strategies (Sixto-García et al., 2021). The transformation of contemporary journalism is also materialized in the implementation of mechanisms such as swipe-up and the adoption of new formats such as Audio 3.0 and podcasting (Sixto-García et al., 2021).

In short, the transmedia ecosystem has catalyzed a paradigm that emphasizes new forms, models, and genres in journalism, prioritizing the convergence of multimedia formats and languages (De Lara González & García-Avilés, 2024). Technological evolution and current journalistic practices have thus improved informative quality, as they open up new possibilities for journalism sustainability through innovation and experimentation (Sixto-García et al., 2021; Alvarez-Macias, 2022). And such advances have fostered new views concerning information, audiences, methodology, and communication enterprises (Lopezosa et al., 2021).

To address one of the current challenges, connecting with audiences, two approaches have recently gained attention: narrative journalism, for its ability to transform news forms and structures and its relationship with audiences (Van Krieken & Sanders, 2016; Rowland, 1987), and leveraging transmedia environment technology, for the possibilities of technology-enabled participation and relationships (Murphy, 2023).

Within this context, the new media ecology has radically questioned journalistic ethics. Ward (2015) states “When fundamental changes occur in news media, fundamental changes occur in the ethics of news media” (pp. 456). Since we agree with Ward (2015) on the need to reconstruct the basic concepts of journalistic ethics, it is relevant to reflect on the ethical dilemmas in the practice of transmedia narrative journalism. An initial search –through a systematic literature review following the PRISMA protocol (Moher et al., 2015)– revealed that although the concept of journalism related to terms such as narrative and transmedia has been widely studied (3,782 documents in Scopus), when filtering for the ethical criterion, only 11 relevant documents remained, which shows the clear need for research from this perspective. Thus, we pose two questions: (RQ1) what are the ethical risks of employing narrative journalism in transmedia environments? and (RQ2) how should the ethical responsibilities posed by this relationship with “the Other,” in other words sources and audiences, be faced? The hypothesis proposes incorporating Otherness as an epistemological foundation in transmedia narrative journalism to promote ethical and empathetic relationships between diverse communities. In the face of constant change, with potentially more active audiences and emerging models, journalists must have approaches that allow them to face these challenges from the deontological point of view.

### 1.1. *Methodology*

To conduct this analysis, we used the applied ethics perspective proposed by Cortina (1996), who notes that applied ethics seeks to guide action in everyday life. To achieve the proposed objective, we employed critical hermeneutics, an analysis methodology that seeks to interpret human activity in terms of its meaning and ethical valuation by identifying its guiding principles and evaluating its ethical adequacy (Cortina, 1996). Critical hermeneutics is based on the premise that human activities are imbued with ethical values and principles, so their analysis and understanding require a specific methodology that considers their context and meaning. Critical hermeneutics also seeks

to overcome the separation between theory and practice, to achieve a deeper understanding and more effective transformation of human activities. For Siurana Aparisi (2013), this method has a circular, three-phase dynamic: a) self-understanding, that is reflecting on where the practice of the profession, in this case journalism, is going; b) substantiation, or the moment in which one analyzes where one should go; and c) application, in other words, analyzing how the standard could be applied.

In this study, we selected the principles of transmedia journalism defined by Moloney (2011, 2015) as a corpus of key concepts that can be analyzed individually and as elements forming a set of essential propositions that can guide journalistic reflection and practice. Moloney took the key concepts of transmedia narratives defined by Jenkins (2009) as a basis. We consider these principles to be valid given their acceptance by authors such as Canavilhas (2014), Deuze (2017), Larrondo Ureta (2016), Rampazzo Gambarato and Tárca (2017), Renó and Flores (2018), Serrano Tellería (2016), López-Hidalgo and López-Redondo (2021), and Wahlberg and Nykvist (2022), among others. These authors emphasize the use of multiple media platforms, content expansion, and active audience participation as axes to define transmedia journalistic coverage models.

Likewise, the analysis was conducted from dual perspectives, given that being an applied ethics, journalistic ethics must be constructed through a rational dialogue among experts from different fields (Cortina, 1996). Thus, we incorporated the outlook of an academic specializing in journalistic ethics as well as the viewpoint of a journalist with 25 years of practical experience in journalism and the training of new journalists, both in the media and in academia. The purpose was to support the debate and reflection from theory and practice and seek agreements through rational argumentation, opting for an ethics of responsible conviction that builds dialogic principles without erasing social plurality (Cortina, 1996).

This paper is organized in three sections, in accordance with Siurana Aparisi (2013): First, the identification, contextualization, and interpretation of the activity is addressed. In other words, narrative journalism in transmedia environments is defined and placed within an ethical reflection on journalism. The second section, the rationale, critically reviews journalism's expected direction, proposing Otherness as a theoretical basis. It also details how harmonization of these concepts enables the establishment of journalism of value. The third section, the transformation proposal, examines the application of the elements described in the theoretical foundation, offering several concrete recommendations for decision-making based on the analysis.

## **2. Self-Understanding: Narrative Journalism in the Transmedia Ecosystem**

In this study, we understand journalism as a public communication structure shaped by the practice of diverse actors (journalists and citizens) who are situated and contextualized (Ahva, 2017) around a shared practical understanding (Witschge & Harbers, 2018). As possible and identifiable forms of action, these practices are collective, situated, provisional, and routine (Ahva, 2017). Moreover, they are not only instrumental skills, but involve cognitive, reflective, and evaluative processes (Davini, 2015). Thus, practices are repeatable and collective, as they are organized around a common understanding and can be represented and evaluated based on that shared image (Schatzki, 2001; Witschge & Harbers, 2018).

In this sense, journalism, as a set of dynamic and diverse practices, constantly evolves (Witschge & Harbers, 2018). Traditional information selection, production, and distribution now occur in more diverse environments (Ahva, 2017). This perspective expands to observe how digital platforms enable new practices that potentially configure new journalistic forms (Cammaerts & Couldry, 2016). Given that journalism as a structure is transformed or maintained through the practices that shape it (Ahva, 2017), narrative journalism may first be considered as a specific practice, because it uses narrative techniques to report on real situations, which differentiates it

from dominant practices. Second, when narrative journalism is conducted in transmedia environments, it is constituted with greater specificity (Deuze, 2017) insofar as digital platforms allow new types of exchange and possibly new types of journalism in digital or hybrid formats.

### **2.1. *The Current Environment: The Transmedia Ecosystem***

The transmedia ecosystem is characterized by multiple platforms, expanded content to encompass wider audiences, and participatory audiences (Jenkins, 2009; Scolari, 2013; Agila et al., 2017). Consequently, it transcends audiovisual narrative, resulting in new contemporary sociocultural complexities (Scolari & Ibrus, 2014). Transmediality reconfigures the perception of media and reality by generating immersive and emotional experiences at the confluence of various platforms (Freeman & Rampazzo Gambarato, 2019).

Here, it is important to differentiate two concepts: transmedia environment and transmedia journalism. The former refers to the ecosystem already described, which is made up of various platforms and media, in which processes of interaction and creation of meanings of diverse nature take place: journalistic, educational, or entertainment, for example. On the other hand, transmedia journalism narrates current affairs through autonomous messages that expand the information flow through various media, enabled by digitalization that promotes user participation in story construction (Rost & Bergero, 2016; Renó & Flores, 2018; Angulo et al., 2023). This practice uses scalable tools to create a “multiplatform narrative universe” (Moloney, 2015) where each medium enriches the narrative when contributing something unique (Torrado Morales et al., 2017). It also develops a new journalistic language based on narratives differentiated by platform, interactivity, hypertext, integrated multimodality, and contextualization (Agila et al., 2017; Canavilhas, 2014). Thus, not every project or practice carried out in a transmedia environment can be called transmedia journalism. For the purposes of this analysis, the term narrative journalism in transmedia environments refers to the hybridization of transmedia journalism and narrative journalism.

The transmedia approach is important, because it allows journalists to engage deeply and critically into more complex topics for longer periods, with a wider scope and more delimited audiences. The diversity of transmedia possibilities goes beyond podcasts, interactive infographics, webdocs, and interactive documentaries and extends to immersive journalism, newsgames, and virtual reality (Moloney, 2015; Torrado Morales et al., 2017; Peribañez, 2017).

To work in transmedia environments, it is important to understand the skills that this environment has helped to foster and take advantage of the transmedia literacy that audiences are developing (Alonso López & Terol Bolinches, 2020; Scolari, 2018). Thus, journalists must master technological, media, and thematic versatility (Scolari, 2008).

### **2.2. *A Century-Old Practice: Narrative Journalism***

Narrative or literary journalism, also known as storytelling journalism, is a major type of nonfiction writing that uses narrative techniques to report real situations. Its aim is to “tell news as (true) stories” (Neveu, 2014, pp. 537) and does so by carrying out extensive, exhaustive research and then portraying stories of real people located in a specific space and temporality (Sims, 2009; Neveu, 2014; Greenberg & Wheelwright, 2014; Cuartero-Naranjo, 2017; Van Krieken & Sanders, 2021).

In this media context, narrative journalism represents an opportunity for renewal because it (1) enables more active audience participation, (2) encourages fieldwork and identification with stories, (3) reduces the predominance of official sources, (4) offers greater depth, (5) creates an interdisciplinary space (Neveu, 2014; Van Krieken & Sanders, 2017; Oschatz, Niederdeppe, & Liu, 2022), and (6) generates more engaging information (Kulkarni et al., 2022). On the other hand, though, it has been characterized as niche journalism (Neveu, 2014) and criticized for moving away

from journalistic fundamentals of accuracy (Groot Kormelink & Costera Meijer, 2015; Van Krieken & Sanders, 2021).

From an applied ethics perspective, narrative journalism presents three dangers that could lead to loss of credibility and integrity (Van Krieken & Sanders, 2017): (a) the temptation to alter the truth to attract readers for aesthetic considerations amid content saturation, (b) building a niche instead of striving to improve journalistic quality, and (c) the temptation to break objectivity and factuality rules. However, since it represents an opportunity for renewal, it is essential to analyze the ethical commitment implied by narrative journalism in this media context. If narrating journalistic stories poses more complex conflicts and greater ethical dilemmas (Harrington, 2007) doing so in transmedia environments requires a change of style, mentality, and professional organization and culture (Larrondo Ureta, 2016). In this context, maintaining the integrity and quality of literary journalism and preserving the depth, precision, and narrative reflection in this digital environment are crucial, since adaptation to new platforms and digital formats should not compromise the genre's essence but rather enrich its possibilities of expression and dissemination (Bak, 2023).

### **3. Substantiation: Ethical Perspective Based on Theories of Otherness**

As described above, the ethical practice of journalism becomes more complex with the addition of the narrative perspective within the new transmedia context. This reality develops in what Bauman (2003) defines as liquid modernity, wherein the journalist must coexist between real and virtual public spaces that mix information, advertising, and fiction (Augé, 1992). Reflecting on the process of Otherness, recognizing the Other and the others, and responsibly and freely exercising the duty to inform are essential. Several disciplines have analyzed the process of Otherness and its relationship with identity, that is, the construction of self in relation to others, for example, in psychology through self-concept (Tajfel, 1984), in anthropology with the analysis of social boundaries (Barth, 1976), and in sociology through the construction of identity from the context of power relations (Castells, 1999). Theories of Otherness recognize that contemporary ethics must grapple with the problem of the Other and its definition in order to establish a relationship and attitude toward Others and to accept them comprehensively.

#### **3.1. Otherness**

To construct our approach to analysis, we considered relevant theories of Otherness, specifically, the approaches of Ortega y Gasset (1914), Laín Entralgo (1968), Zubiri (1974), Buber (1982), Ward and Wasserman (2015), Dussel (2016), and Temelkuran (2022) and the contributions of the ethics of listening, reciprocity, and the philosophy of Ubuntu, which allow us to claim that dialogue between two or more people during a free, autonomous, and reciprocal encounter.

Our proposal is based on placing Otherness as a dialogic ethical reference (Cortina, 1996) for narrative journalism in transmedia environments. This, in turn, requires an inclusive global perspective that recognizes global interconnections and transcends localism toward global theories and practices built on relationality and interdependence, without ignoring power imbalances (Ward & Wasserman, 2015).

We begin with the perspective of Buber (1982) for whom human beings are primarily concerned with loving themselves, but an encounter with the Other is essential because humans do not live in isolation. Consequently, Otherness is constructed when one empathizes with another. This concept of Otherness establishes that when the "I" opens itself to an encounter with the Other, it recognizes a "You," not a stranger but a fellow human. Human beings recognize themselves as people, and the I-thou relationship is transformed into "We."

From this perspective, Zubiri (1974) states that in a reciprocal encounter a person is recognized as a being with *sentient intelligence*: a being that not only reasons but integrally embodies their reasons, feelings, aesthetic life, and intuitions. However, in the broadest sense, Ortega y Gasset (1914) understands *person in fullness* as a being that is defined and immersed in a specific context, when all the referents are integrated in Otherness, nature, and the dimension of transcendence.

Lain Entralgo (1968) suggested another key pillar of Otherness. For him, emphasizing the importance of one's encounter with the Other makes it possible to overcome the "I" as the center of one's experiences, which is a legacy of modernity, and focus on dialogue. He outlined three forms of encounter with the Other, conditioned by one's subjective and autonomous response: *Objectivity* (the Other is considered an object), *personality* (we are and see each other as people), and *proximity* (if there is correspondence, we will see each other close).

More recently, in the face of the demands of global reality, values such as dialogue, hospitality, and reciprocity forge respectful and horizontal conversations, according to Ward and Wasserman (2015). Within the framework of dialogic ethics, participants interact as situated human beings and acknowledge each other's identities and perspectives through respectful listening. From this perspective, emphasizing the diversity of voices and perspectives in journalism is possible, promoting a fair representation of society and a listening ethic that includes dialogue with the audience, giving space to their opinions, and considering them in the coverage. According to these authors, this perspective enables listening through difference, that is, giving voice to marginalized or underrepresented communities in the journalistic narrative. To this end, active listening is essential in order to recognize the other, understand their perspective and empathize with their position. Congruent with Levinas' relational ethics (Pinchevski, 2021), this view emphasizes that communication begins with listening and not speaking, underscoring responsibility toward the other, to validate other people's experiences and challenge the historical dominance of Euro-American frameworks (Ward & Wasserman, 2015). For these authors, the risks to avoid range from possible manipulation by more powerful parties, a biased interpretation of what is heard, and the burden of a greater time and resource investment required for listening.

Another relevant approach is reciprocity: it proposes incorporating audiences' expectations and perceptions of journalism, as well as the contributions they can make (Lewis, Holton, & Coddington, 2014), as it recognizes that community expectations are intrinsically linked to news organizations.

### 3.2. Community and Intercultural Dialogue

In the face of the current complexity, Temelkuran (2022), from the global south, renews hope in Otherness theories from his human perspective by highlighting the importance of the language of empathy, solidarity, inclusion, justice, dignity, and honest creativity. When facing banal, negative information about the world we inhabit, he proposes recovering the use of these values and trusting in the collective power to change the course.

In Latin America, Dussel (2016) emphasizes community and dialogue between the self and the other. He proposes ethics based on a conception of the subject that seeks to establish an authentic dialogue between the Other and We. The foundation lies in the fact that community of origin is the basis for constituting identity. Dussel argues that ethics must be grounded in the community and interpersonal relationships, considering love of neighbor as the highest ethical and communitarian law. He stresses the importance of justice, equality, and freedom in human interactions, conceiving ethics as a praxis, a shared way of life guided by these principles. It advocates a *decolonizing turn* called *transmodernity*, which recognizes all cultures' equality and promotes dialogue.

In the African tradition, the concept of Ubuntu as a philosophy emphasizes the interconnectedness and shared humanity among people, proposing that individual identity is

intrinsically linked to communal relationships. Originating from the Zulu and Xhosa languages, Ubuntu can be translated as “I am, because we are” or “A person is a person through other people” (Nyamnjoh, 2020; Tavernaro-Haidarian, 2018). This philosophy emphasizes the importance of inclusivity, compassion, and solidarity in social and community life, challenging the Western individualistic view. Nyamnjoh (2020) presents Ubuntuism as an ethical principle that should be incorporated as a form of critique and complement to Western modernity.

In journalism, applying the Ubuntu principle implies seeking a shared understanding of the issues and favoring coverage that allows for a wide range of viewpoints and thus avoids polarization and fosters reflective and constructive dialogue (Tavernaro-Haidarian, 2018). This approach involves a change in the journalist’s role from intermediary to mediator who recognizes multiple interpretations and complexities. The journalist not only observes or monitors but also facilitates the exchange of ideas, as their other task involves actively listening and contributing to the dialogue, including their own perspective.

This journey allows us to configure an analytical perspective for the practice of narrative journalism in transmedia environments based on Otherness so that certain contradictions can be overcome. For example, transmedia journalism tends to reinforce the relationship of objectivity, especially when the Other is conceived as a client or consumer who must be attracted, captured, and absorbed by the informative universe established by the journalist or media. However, narrative journalism has been characterized as emphasizing the relationship of *personality* by telling human interest-centered stories that emphasize people and their circumstances. Thus, based on the theory of Otherness, we consider the fundamental challenge faced by narrative journalism in transmedia environments to be establishing relationships of *proximity* in three directions: (1) with the people about whom a story is told; (2) with people as audiences, who are expected to actively participate in the transmedia environment; and (3) with the journalistic team, made up of people in community relationships, beyond their role as producers or mediators. Thus, if journalistic work is conceived as a human act involving the support, protection, and compassion of the various people involved, then an encounter with the Other is a relationship of *proximity*, of humanity.

From this perspective, we propose an encounter with Otherness as an axis of reflection for ensuring that narrative journalism fosters an ethical and empathetic relationship between communities through communication and interaction that is respectful, harmonious, and cognizant of the Other’s diversity. Otherness helps people overcome selfish individualism by sharing and building stories into an encounter between “Me” and “You.”

#### **4. Application: A Proposal for Narrative Journalism in Transmedia Environments**

In this section, we present ethical orientations from the perspective of Otherness configured through our analysis, as a proposal to be used by narrative journalists immersed in transmedia practice for discernment purposes.

To conduct this analysis, we first identified each principle of transmedia journalism in the terms identified by Moloney (2011) and adopted by various authors: Spreadable, Drillable, Continuous, Serial, Diverse and Personal in Viewpoint, Immersive, Extractable, Built on the Real World, and Inspiring to Action. Secondly, we contrasted each principle with the characteristics of narrative journalism, its possibilities and limitations. We thereby identified several challenges that journalists may face related to each principle in this specific practice. Finally, we analyzed these challenges from the perspective of Otherness and then proposed an ethical principle to guide journalist discernment in the face of these specific challenges and give them meaning according to their own contexts and opportunities. In addition, each principle included an example that illustrates some of the challenges or possibilities for reflection that may be involved (see Table 1). It is important to note that we made no judgments regarding adherence of these works to the

proposed ethical principles, as such assessment would require in-depth examination of context, published content, and impact—objectives beyond the scope of this research. Additionally, examples may illustrate multiple principles simultaneously.

**Table 1.** Ethical Standard for Transmedia Narrative Journalism: A Few Examples

<b>Transmedia principle</b>	<b>Ethical standard</b>	<b>Example</b>	
Spreadable	Reciprocity	San Gabriel y sus demonios. N. Viana (2016).	The reporter confronted ethical challenges: securing consent in communities with spiritual beliefs about photography and publishing identifiable images in a transmedia context where widespread sharing is possible.
Drillable	Responsibility	El país de las 2 mil fosas. A. Guillén, M. Torres, & M. Turati (2018).	The research combines data visualization with contextual elements. This interactive approach creates engagement while improving comprehension of complex social issues.
Continuous	Consistency	Malvinas. Una experiencia transmedia. S.F. Romero (2022).	This digital project assembles ex-combatants' and families' testimonies into a collective war narrative with personalized timeline.
Serial	Affirming the other	Indestructibles. X. Aldekoa & A. Rodríguez (2020).	This multi-platform initiative shows the next African generation's resilience and determination. It presents 11 distinct stories that collectively provide a comprehensive continental perspective.
Diverse and Personal Viewpoint	Proximity	En la brecha: Desigualdad de género en el ámbito laboral. C. Reig Valera (2018).	The project explores gender labor inequality through 7 women in male-dominated fields.
Immersive	Active listening from the difference	La grieta. C. Spottorno & G. Abril (2016).	Journalists immersed themselves in communities to understand realities firsthand. This enables deep audience engagement with the narrative.
Extractable	Generosity	Fukushima, vidas contaminadas. D. Verdú (2016).	The project merges personal stories with immersive elements, allowing audiences to witness post-disaster impacts.
Built on the Real World	Authenticity	Amazon Underworld. B. Ebus, J. Torres., & B. Fraser (2023).	The project created a database mapping armed groups at borders. It reveals how these illicit activities affect both local communities and the Amazon ecosystem.
Inspiring to Action	Staying together	No fue el fuego. A. Gutiérrez Valdizán & D. Rea (dir.) (2022).	After the fire at Hogar Seguro (2017), a multidisciplinary team of journalists examined state neglect, creating a reference that inspired public demands for justice in Guatemala.
Interactive Collaboration*	Professional solidarity	La masacre de Tamaulipas: El sueño americano muere en México. L. Arroyo et al. (2021)	The transmedia work tracked 16 Guatemalan migrants from their homes to their murder location. The multidisciplinary team dealt with the migration issue through an approach that fuses narrative accuracy with emotional intensity when interpreting events.

Source: Own elaboration, based on the nine principles proposed by Moloney (2011), who adapted the seven principles of transmedia. \*This analysis adds one more principle.

The purpose of this proposal is to provide a comprehensive framework, a map with coordinates for locating oneself in the narrative journalist transmedia context.

#### 4.1. *Spreadable*

This principle recognizes the nature of networked culture and implies that a journalistic work must inspire and enable the audience to share it so that it spreads and expands in the communicative ecosystem. As this principle requires content to be replicated, it can influence people in three ways: by a) unduly appealing to emotions; b) exaggerating the reality or situation of the people or communities whose story is told by distorting the need for help, understanding, support, or listening. For example, Natalia Viana (2016) documents the suicides of adolescents in indigenous communities in the Amazon region of Brazil in her report *San Gabriel and its Demons* (Table 1).

From this perspective, transmedia undoubtedly allows for greater interaction by generating an open dialogue through stories between creators and audiences. Therefore, journalists must leverage this dialogue to invite and motivate audiences to share stories in order to generate more dialogues, not just clicks. Given that Otherness is about the relationship between fellow human beings, we propose *reciprocity* as an ethical standard to address issues arising from expansion. Reciprocity fosters an encounter between autonomous and free people. Therefore, narrative journalists can and should challenge audiences to proactively disseminate the stories but always from a place of freedom and respect for others and their diverse realities.

#### 4.2. *Drillable*

Transmedia news allows journalists to further explore people's stories and realities. As transmedia content becomes more available across platforms, audiences tend to seek diverse content with multiple perspectives. This approach presents several ethical risks for journalists, including: a) using unverified information to fabricate details; b) failing to meet audience expectations; c) misrepresenting issues for dramatic effect; and d) using inappropriate means to access sources or audiences. To address the issues concerning greater drillability, we propose *responsibility to the Other* as an ethical standard. Narrative journalists must promote audience curiosity to enrich the quality of information for the audiences and improve their understanding of the story, which will, in turn, result in more clicks. Moreover, they must clearly and explicitly delimit their audiences in relation to the people and community they are reporting on. This respect goes through the journalist's mediation, with the aim of enabling a truly intercultural dialogue. *El país de las 2 mil fosas* (Guillén, Torres & Turati, 2018) exemplifies an innovative approach that combines data analysis with transmedia narrative strategies (Table 1).

#### 4.3. *Continuous*

Continuous information narrative is an essential characteristic of transmedia journalism, as the story must be perceived as unique and in-depth to maintain some degree of longevity in people's memories. Thus, the story's form, tone, elements, or characters must be preserved across platforms. *Continuous* allows the journalistic narrative to be consistent, avoiding contradictions or confusion.

However, this search for continuity may distort the image of the subjects reported in the story and generate confusion if the elements of continuity are not appropriate or are exaggerated or invented. In response, the ethical standard of *consistency* allows journalists to cohesively present the Other's identity during dialogue with the audience. Thus, a journalist must ensure that narratives about specific people or communities are not fragmented but that audiences have access to complete stories through open dialogue, regardless of the platforms they choose to use. This standard demands that creators speak the language of the Other, know their contextual reality, and exhaust all intellectual possibilities to nurture their interlocutors' knowledge. The objective should be to recognize diverse customs, habits, languages, ethnicities, religions, arts, values, preferences, cosmogonies, and worldviews. "Malvinas. A transmedia experience," directed by Romero (2022), exemplifies applying this continuity principle (Table 1).

#### 4.4. *Serial*

Transmedia information narrative follows the serial principle. That is, it is fragmented into units that can be distributed in various media and at different times. *Serial* implies the elaboration of complete and interesting stories in each medium, not pieces of the same story. This characteristic encourages the audience to maintain attention and interest for longer periods and even to return to the proposed narrative frequently. However, applying the *serial* principle to maintain audience attention involves two major risks: (a) the story can be manipulated and (b) journalists may prioritize the story, not the people and community the story is about. Although this risk is shared by other news genres, it is significantly high in narrative journalism because it involves more data, context, and information about the people at the center of the story.

To address these issues, journalists must *affirm the Other* by recognizing them as people, rather than merely assuming a subject–object relationship while producing stories about them. Thus, while narrating their stories, journalists must respect their identities as well as their privacy, freedom, and autonomy. *Indestructibles* is a transmedia project developed by Aldekoa and Rodríguez (2020) that exemplifies this principle: the work documents the experiences of 11 children in 10 African countries (Table 1).

#### 4.5. *Divers and Personal Viewpoint*

In transmedia storytelling, audiences have the option to generate story content. This possibility entails the risk of stigmatizing the subjects of the story, because they are exposed to points of view that may be varied but perhaps not diverse or respectful. Conversely, it can impose a degree of subjectivity by perhaps establishing a vision of how the person should be perceived.

Faced with these risks, journalists can increase their discernment through *proximity*, which allows them to look at the other person carefully as a fundamental axis of respect. This examination, along with understanding, allows journalists to perceive the nuances of the circumstances and capture the various facets of the Others, including the details of their decisions or the conditions for their actions. Thus, subjectivity is built by looking at the person without hostility and by recognizing their differences.

Furthermore, journalists must approach audiences not only as “prosumers” who actively influence content but also as “adprosumers,” i.e., users who co-create and combine production, distribution, and recommendation of content, which enhances personalization and diversity of information (Sixto-García et al., 2022). Moreover, journalists are obliged to approach not only the people they write about but also recipients of the content they generate so that the information yields better results. However, journalists must balance citizen empowerment by maintaining professional journalistic standards. It is essential to distinguish between co-creators and journalism professionals (Sixto-García et al., 2022). This principle can be observed through *En la brecha*, an interactive documentary directed by Reig Valera (2018) (Table 1).

#### 4.6. *Immersive*

Transmedia journalism provides several alternatives for broadening the news experience and allowing the audience to immerse itself in the story. When this principle is applied, it enables the audience to grasp in-depth understanding of what people or the community are experiencing. However, this *immersion* could promote prejudice when the audience interprets the story from another context, altering the reality of the Other and even placing them in a vulnerable situation.

To address these risks, narrative journalists must apply the ethical standard of *active listening from the difference* to gain understanding of the Others, their circumstances, impact, reality, and decision-making abilities. Without understanding, there is no real dialogue, making it difficult to reconstruct the situation or the experience. To honestly achieve immersion in a world of others

requires a high level of responsibility. This is only possible if journalists, audiences, and citizens are engaged in dialogue that transcends the relationship of mercantile consumption that may predominate when generating transmedia content. *La grieta* exemplifies immersive transmedia journalism, documenting Spottorno and Abril's (2016) journey from Africa to the Arctic as they explore the European identity crisis across borders (Table 1).

#### 4.7. Extractable

The *extractable* principle involves obtaining elements from the story subjects to link them with the daily life of the audiences through the journalist's work. When audiences perceive these elements as applicable to their own lives, they become more committed to the story and better relate to its subjects. A risk of this principle is that the journalist's intervention and "extraction" may harm the subject or community. Furthermore, as the bridge between community and audience, the journalist might assume a protagonist role, undermining essential journalistic dialogue.

Journalists can address this through *generosity* – lending their skills and talents to both community and audience so that through honesty and personal sharing, the Other is revealed and valued. If writing in first-person, journalists should position themselves as subjects of open dialogue to recognize Otherness and foster fraternity, rather than merely constructing personal branding. *Fukushima, vida contaminada*, by Daniel Verdú (2016), exemplifies the extractable through journalistic investigation using virtual reality and 360° technology to transport users to the nuclear disaster's epicenter (Table 1).

#### 4.8. Built on the Real World

In transmedia storytelling applied to fiction, a world or universe is constructed with specific rules allowing expansion across varied platforms and formats. Conversely, transmedia journalism reconstructs rather than invents worlds. It presents the real, complex world and its nuances, using multiple narrative tools to make this world accessible to audiences. The greatest risk in applying this principle to journalism is promoting hyperreality, that is, a distorted construction that supplants or simulates the reality of the Other from the point of view of the explainer (Baudrillard, 1978).

To address these risks, authenticity based on genuine encounters is crucial (Dussel, 2016). Without honesty, relationships become instrumental, reducing the Other to an object (Buber, 1982). People's lives must be narrated respectfully for their will and freedom to build honest dialogue. When sharing with audiences, journalists must exceed basic journalistic standards that merely offer different versions and inform interviewees about publication details.

Journalists must understand transmedia resources' potential emotional effects and avoid using them purely for commercial or propagandistic purposes. Journalists must clarify information-gathering mechanisms, story construction methods, agreements, reconstruction processes, and supporting data. Any speculation, even if plausible, must be clearly identified and delimited. The Amazon Underworld research (May 2022–July 2023) demonstrates real-world reporting complexity, involving 37 media professionals from 11 countries (Table 1).

#### 4.9. Inspiring to Action

Another principle of transmedia journalism is to motivate audiences to engage in the real world from a new perspective: to *inspire to action*. However, in the quest to move to action, journalists must avoid manipulating, misleading, sensationalizing, or unduly appealing to people's emotions in a risky attempt to move them. However, narrative journalists can achieve discernment by committing to *closeness with the Other* (Buber, 1982).

If the objective is ensuring active audience participation, journalists must commit to action but without compromising the autonomy of the community and people being reported on. This,

however, requires journalists to educate their conscience so that they can participate in such a dialogue with the other. *No fue el fuego* (Gutiérrez & Rea, 2022) is a transmedia project that reflects this principle (Table 1).

#### 4.10. *Interactive Professional Collaboration*

We propose one more principle to those proposed by Moloney: interactive professional collaboration. Transmedia journalism involves the work of different people who add a broad range of competencies and functions to journalistic production, compared to what is seen in traditional journalism. In addition to reporters, editors, photographers, and designers, transmedia journalism involves producers, scriptwriters, illustrators, social network coordinators, programmers, web designers, post-producers, and so on, who harmonize the production objectives to achieve a community work. Transmedia journalism involves building a collective “We” to give meaning to the Others around whom the story is centered. In following this principle, journalists can achieve discernment by maintaining *professional solidarity*. Without it, journalists will find it difficult to offer an integral global perspective with coherent premises and purposes aimed at reconciling sustainability and commercialization, as well as the scope of participation and interaction with prosumers. An example is the work *La masacre de Tamaulipas: el sueño americano muere en México*. Eleven people participated: reporters, editors, photographers and videographers, video editor, and web designers (Table 1).

## 6. Conclusions

Currently, journalism recomposition is taking different paths, ranging from the search for innovative news coverage approaches (Alvarez-Macias, 2022), such as the use of Artificial Intelligence, to the resurgence of approaches such as data or narrative journalism. All these paths have ethical implications that must be analyzed by considering the transmedia environment, because this environment exponentially increases the complexity of the decisions a journalist must make to inform the audience and engage with citizens. Particularly, narrative journalism must include certain elements to maintain and reinforce its quality and, above all, guarantee the dignity of the people who are subjects of the news.

The analysis carried out through critical hermeneutics and supported by examples of transmedia narrative journalism yielded results that answer the research questions. On the one hand, the challenges journalists face in practicing narrative journalism in transmedia environments have been identified and organized into a map following 10 easy-to-understand principles (RQ1). On the other hand, a proposal has been structured to address the ethical responsibilities derived from these challenges through reflection based on Otherness theories as an analytical framework. Examples have been provided of how various journalists in different places and times have faced the risks and applied the principles (RQ2).

This study's relevance lies in its comprehensive proposal contributing to the debate on ethical decision-making in transmedia narrative journalism. Despite limitations, including not analyzing regional particularities of journalistic work, these constraints suggest avenues for future research. Researchers might conduct comparative analyses across countries on transmedia narrative journalism principle application and interview journalists about these principles and standards. Future studies should examine transmedia narrative journalism content, assess whether journalists have incurred the risks outlined here, and review journalists' ethical decision-making processes (e.g., Borden, 1997). Particularly important is research on how people and communities featured in transmedia storytelling journalism have benefited or been harmed.

The ethical perspective in transmedia processes demands detailed exploration, as technological innovation expands journalistic practice possibilities while potentially increasing

vulnerability. Beyond describing and analyzing journalism trends, elements promoting improved practice must be urgently identified. Future research should deepen the journalistic aspects of each standard arising from transmedia ecosystem principles. This conviction of living Otherness, including Otherness and listening reciprocity, offers possibilities for reflection on reconstructing the standard guiding narrative of journalism ethics and is open to enrichment from other perspectives, thus broadening the debate and contributing to the improvement of digital, specifically transmedia, journalism.

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