

SPEAKER 1. Naples, November 2022. The faint voice of an influencer in the background attempts an almost impossible mission: trying to find a pizza with pineapple on top right here in Naples. A recipe that Neapolitans detest. "Pineapple in Naples is dead," the pizza chef remarks to the hapless influencer.

Because there are things in the world that are quite irreconcilable with each other, making it incredibly difficult to combine: pineapple and pizza in Naples, parmesan on fish, or cappuccino after noon, Roma and Lazio football teams, the devil and holy water.

And then there's journalism and gaming. Providing information, which is a very serious matter, seems to blend poorly with playful and gamified forms of content creation. Yet someone in the world is trying, someone has already produced and continues to produce informative and journalistic content to both inform and entertain at the same time

SPEAKER 2. But what does it actually mean to inform and entertain on important topics? Here's a prime example: let's put on Meta's visors from Facebook, the Quest 3 VR. Price: €549. For those listening who might not know, these visors are like magical glasses that transport us to real places reconstructed in virtual form. Suddenly, we'll find ourselves catapulted onto the bobsled track of the 2022 Beijing Olympics. Being catapulted means being in the race, seeing and experiencing it as if we were the ones competing. The towering mountains all around, expanses of pristine snow, the roar of the fans, and the gleam of the medals.

SPEAKER 2. The second example takes us to the border between Gaza and Israel, to the dramatic terrorist attack by Hamas against Israeli civilians. This tragic event is reconstructed on the website Blink.com (Dubai) using the narrative techniques of a video game.

SPEAKER 2. It's curious that the editorial team in Dubai - where it's 50 degrees in the shade - can achieve this thanks to the technology of a Norwegian startup (-50 degrees). A startup with the name Impossible. The name is Wizrt.

SPEAKER 3. The assault by Hamas on October 7th is being portrayed as if terrorists and victims were part of a video game by the Dubai startup, Blinx. But is this really a good idea? Isn't there a risk of

turning such a dramatic event into a spectacle or game? Addressing this concern is Nonni de la Peña, the American journalist and entrepreneur who is a pioneer in immersive journalism. Since 2012, Nonni has used immersive journalism to bring people inside the plight of the most vulnerable.

A man collapses to the ground in a diabetic coma while standing in line at the Los Angeles Food Bank, desperately seeking a piece of bread. This scene is depicted in the work "Hunger in L.A." Another example is a man confined in the maximum-security prison at Guantanamo. There is no intention of creating a spectacle. On the contrary, immersive journalism strives to eliminate the distance between the viewer and those who suffer; between the audience and the marginalized.

SPEAKER 4. And then there's another ambitious goal that immersive journalism sets for itself. Let's look at Italy today. Newspaper sales are declining steadily. Over 830,000 people no longer watch the news. Their exodus from information takes shape between 2022 and 2023, as calculated by the television regulator. By 2024, Reuters news agency describes an even more disillusioned and distracted Italy. Interest in news has dropped by 34% between 2016 and 2024. Bringing people, especially the young, back to news will not be easy. Nonni de la Peña herself points to immersive journalism as the antidote to this disenchantment. It's a new kind of journalism—more engaging and compelling.

NONNI 1. "I've been on an amazing commission this past year on trust, media and democracy and trust in our institutions is at an all time low. And yet, journalism provides a really important part in informing the public so that they can vote with some knowledge. So I'm really hoping that immersive journalism and the younger audiences get a deeper and more visceral understanding of stories and embrace journalism again as a way for them to also help uphold our democratic values and participate in democracy".

SPEAKER 5. But the success of immersive journalism hinges on creating a sort of new YouTube. There was a need for a free platform where creators and authors could easily upload their videos without complications, so everyone could watch them. Nonni de la Peña established this in 2019. It's called Ritch dot love.

NONNI 2. "I think immersive journalism is just starting. I've seen so many news organizations start to embrace the medium. The problem has been the difficulty of making it, the cost of making it and the distribution hurdles. And we've just built this really great distribution platform and toolset to make it easier for anybody to start making photo real pulp fiction and nonfiction stories. I'm really excited that we're going to help anybody and everybody participate in telling important stories".

SPEAKER 6. In this world without borders, we've already encountered a startup from Dubai, Blix, which trains in Bergen, Norway. Now, let's head to Salvador to meet Brazilian media expert Caio Sampaio. Sampaio authored the 2023 book "Level Up," which explores one of the key topics of this podcast: using video game narrative techniques to enhance journalistic storytelling. Below, you'll also find a review of an earlier book, "Newsgames," published in 2012. Among the many examples, the latter book cites a game created by Wired magazine. The game illustrates how, in a naval battle, Somali pirates gain economic advantages from attacking commercial ships and kidnapping crew members.

SORBILLO. Today I am having a very special pizza here in the old center of Naples, at my restaurant Presepe napoletano. You may already be seeing it: it is the pineapple pizza. Guys, don't go wild. I am tied to tradition. However, I want to try it because I put it on the menu. I'm cutting right to the core, this is a particular pizza that you will find here in the old center of Naples.

SPEAKER 6. We're back in Naples, at Gino Sorbillo's pizzeria on Via dei Tribunali. The famous pizza chef breaks the taboo. Starting January 2024, his establishment serves the much-disparaged pizza with pineapple. So, it turns out we were right. If even Neapolitans are resigning themselves to eating the sweet pizza with pineapple, then journalism can also embrace something seemingly irreconcilable. Games, virtual reality, immersive videos: all can coexist as long as it remains rigorous journalism, informed and useful to people.