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New Media Techniques

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VR Journal Entry

I found the Ted Talk and the article really interesting. I have always thought of VR as a tool mainly for video games or film, but this idea of VR journalism is something completely new. Since the whole point of Virtual Reality is the immersion, it just makes sense to use it to immerse the user in an environment on the other side of the world. This brings us into a very sticky ethical area though, because it’s hard to say whether this experience counts as something journalistic that would instill someone with empathy, or if their lack of physical presence there makes them feel safe like a tourist. On the one hand, no news report could ever communicate to its audience what it’s like being at a protest or a firefight as well as VR could. But when it comes to empathy, I’m not sure if virtually being within an environment automatically makes you relate to the people within it. It’s undoubtedly more empathetic than traditional film, as shown by that VR movie in the Ted Talk, but the viewer’s lack of physicality in the environment makes them more like a tourist than a participant. I don’t think that should keep us from using it, though. Even if some viewers will feel like tourists, it will still instill a good portion of the viewers with a sense of empathy. How someone experiences the virtual environment is up to them, that shouldn’t prevent the filmmakers from filming it though.