

## Entrevista

# Spatial Journalism and innovation

Dr. Amy Schmitz Weiss is a professor of journalism at San Diego State University and holds a Ph.D. from the University of Texas at Austin. Her fields of study are spatial journalism, digital journalism innovation and international communication. Dr. Schmitz Weiss has published her research widely, in national and international journals, including the recent *Journalists and Their Perceptions of Location: Making Meaning in the Community* in Journalism studies.

Dr. Schmitz Weiss explores the emerging concept of Spatial Journalism, which she defines as the intersection between journalism, spatiality and location-based services and mobile technology. Journalism incorporates space, place and/or location, being it physical, augmented or virtual. She is the creator and editor of the Spatial Journalism newsletter, in which she introduces examples, trends and relevant information to the practice, such as the recent news of the magazine-like mobile application, Flipgrid, geolocating its local news feeds to audiences.

The professor has recently spoken to us about the practice of Spatial Journalism, current challenges and opportunities, for journalism practitioners and educators.

### **Vanessa - Could you explain the concept of spatial journalism and why this kind of practice is so relevant currently?**

*Amy - Spatial journalism is a theoretical framework of explaining how the journalism practice can be understood through location (physical, augmented or virtual) and how it can demonstrate another form of storytelling/journalism practice where location and news intersect. You can see more of my research, articles, videos and the newsletter here: [spatialjournalism.com](http://spatialjournalism.com) or <https://digitalamy.com/spatial-journalism/>*

**There have been changes in journalism practices due to this new media ecosystem. What happens to journalists and their**



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**work in this context? How is that related to spatial journalism?**

*Amy - The journalism industry is at a moment of upheaval. Several news organizations recognize that the communities they thought they were covering don't necessarily match up to the actual communities they serve. As a result, some news organizations are taking a moment to self-reflect and understand how they can cover their local area better. Some are then going into the community to ask them what is important? What do you care about? What are the places and spaces important to you? For Spatial Journalism, it seeks to show how important location (physical, augmented and virtual) can be to an individual and the community. It's the connector between the newsroom and community to show how spaces and places do matter and the news that comes from those places - no matter the proximity. Some places are currently underway trying to do this like the news experiments underway at the Lenfest Local Lab in Philadelphia.*

**Vanessa - Could you talk about journalism as a community of practice? In your view, are these communities locally formed or are they transcending spatiality?**

*Amy - Journalism can be a Community of Practice (Lave & Wenger) if it so wishes to be. But there are several factors needed in order for it to be such. The spatiality of this could be separate in this context.*

**Vanessa - Do you see relevant applications of spatial journalism stemming from Latin America?**

*Amy - Yes, there's a project: the Amazon in Brazil that came out several years ago that connects location, information and the news: <https://www.icfj.org/news/infoamazonia-visual-and-graphic-exploration-worlds-largest-rainforest> And it is still operating today: <https://infoamazonia.org/en/>*

**Vanessa - You have talked about journalism from an entrepreneurial perspective, highlighting the importance of innovation and spatial journalism in current-age journalism. Are those issues connected (entrepreneurial journalism, innovation, spatial journalism)?**

*Amy - Certainly they can be - but don't have to necessarily be. There are many digital-native startups nowadays in Latin America that are experimenting with different innovative approaches. Spatial journalism can be one of those approaches.*

**Vanessa - How do you see educators being able to deal with all of these demands that a professional journalist needs to know within this context?**

*Amy - It's complicated as a journalist today needs to know the journalism basics, but also understand technology and its appropriate application to platform, moment and space. For the spatial journalism perspective, it's a mindset that puts local into a new context that allows one to think of covering a community differently than before.*

**Vanessa - In your opinion, has the COVID pandemia brought any change in journalism practice? If so, are they going to remain? What would be the impact of such changes?**

*Amy - Yes, I think the pandemic has created some changes in the journalism practice - some for good and others not so good. The lack of being able to go out into the community and cover stories as before is a detriment to the stories that have gone untold or neglected. I think the pandemic though has also allowed journalism practice to recognize that things can be done differently in how to report and cover a community. That storytelling can be collaborative, cooperative with the community as well.*