

# Introduction

## Transmedia Studies—Where Now?

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Let's start with a question: what is transmedia? Here, we mean this question not as a lead-in to presenting any kind of rudimentary, oft-cited definition, but rather as a genuine question. The transmedia phenomenon has led to the burgeoning of transmedia studies across media, film, television, cultural, and communication studies across the academy, not to mention the wider creative and cultural industries. *The Routledge Companion to Transmedia Studies* seeks to be the ultimate publication for scholars and students interested in comprehending all of the various aspects of transmediality, be it in terms of media industries and their platforms, digital and mobile communications, advertising and marketing sectors, audience behaviors and cultural practices, or socio-political forms like media activism, identity, literacy, and education. This collection, which gathers together original articles by a global roster of contributors from a variety of disciplines and industry backgrounds, sets out to contextualize, problematize, and scrutinize the current status and future directions of transmediality, exploring the industries, practices, cultures, arts, and methodologies of studying convergent media content across multiple media platforms. Now is the time to offer this ultimate publication about transmedia studies, given the central yet multifaceted ways in which transmediality has come to materialize in the media landscape.

Marsha Kinder (1991) first used the term “transmedia” to describe the multiplatform and multi-modal expansion of media content. Henry Jenkins (2006) reintroduced the term within the context of digital change and “transmedia storytelling” has subsequently seen widespread adoption and interrogation. Jenkins’ (2007) definition of transmedia storytelling as “a process where integral elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience” has become one of the dominant ways by which the flow of entertainment across media is now understood, especially in a digital and commercial setting where the correlation between transmedia storytelling and the commerce of entertainment has been reinforced in industry. As *Heroes* creator Tim Kring once asserted, transmedia storytelling is “rather like building your Transformer and putting little rocket ships on the side” (Kushner 2008). By providing audiences with more and more content, it seems, transmediality—an umbrella term most fundamentally describing “the increasingly popular industrial practice of using multiple media technologies to present information . . . through a range of textual forms” (Evans 2011, 1)—is characteristically understood as a commercial practice, enabling as it does for multiple revenue streams and numerous sites of engagement. Marie-Laure Ryan puts it plainly in her assertion that transmedia storytelling is essentially “a way to get us to consume as many products as possible” (2013, 384).

But commercial transmedia storytelling is not the end of the story for transmediality. In fact, Jenkins’ description of transmedia storytelling (of a single narrative that is only truly complete when

elements from multiple media forms are brought together into a coherent whole) has arguably rarely materialized in quite the fully integrated, plot-intertwining fashion that Jenkins envisaged. Further, as a mode of practice, transmedia storytelling is still most closely associated with what Benjamin Birkinbine, Rodrigo Gómez, and Janet Wasko refer to as the global media giants—“the huge media conglomerates such as Disney and Time-Warner, [which] take advantage of globalization to expand abroad and diversify” (2017, 15). Outside of the conglomerates, though, transmediality has evolved in other ways, namely into a brand development practice or as a way to support traditional media content through transmedia franchising systems (Johnson 2013), to name its other dominant commercial purposes. But transmediality has equally gained wider relevance as digital screen technologies have multiplied, with the so-called “old media” of film and television now experienced through online transmedia distribution practices (Evans 2015), whereby content becomes integrated with social media and other online platforms. Other terms such as “multiplatform” (Jeffery-Poulter 2003), “crossmedia” (Bechmann Petersen 2006), and “second screening” have joined it (Holt and Sanson 2014), but transmediality remains an important concept for understanding the fundamental shifts that digital media technologies have wrought on the media industries and their audiences. More than this, transmediality has since grown into a distinct subfield of scholarly investigation, one that relates to a range of studies across film, television, social media, gaming, marketing, literature, music, journalism, and beyond.

However, the more that transmediality has broadened its definition and its practical use in recent years, the more that it has arguably become something else entirely. Let’s not forget that research has defined transmediality through very different disciplinary lenses, be it in terms of storytelling (Jenkins 2006; Evans 2011; Ryan 2013), marketing (Gray 2010; Grainge and Johnson 2015), journalism (Gambarato and Alzamora 2018), world-building (Wolf 2012); historical culture (Freeman 2016), activism (Scolari, Bertetti, and Freeman 2014), literacy (Scolari 2016), and so on. And these different sets of creative and disciplinary lenses should not be underplayed in our understanding of what transmediality is. Mapping the many faces of transmediality is an important task for researchers, for it hints at its multifaceted formations, functions, values, and roles across the wider media landscape.

And yet an almost inevitable consequence of transmediality being approached via so many different disciplinary lenses is that the very definition of transmediality might remain decidedly in flux, meaning different things to different people at different times. In 2011, Brian Clark argued that the potential for transmediality to be (mis)understood as almost everything means that “transmedia,” as term, has possibly outlived its usefulness, insisting that only by refining the definition will scholars secure its long-term viability. Clark, we believe, was absolutely right in his critique, and simply because we live in “a digital media environment ... [that] calls for a spread of media” (Brinker 2017, 209), it does not mean that everything is transmedial. Revising, refining, and clarifying our understanding of what does—and therefore what does not—constitute a form of “transmedia” is indeed crucial, both to the future of this avenue of study but more importantly to our collective abilities to make sense of how, why, and when media content flows, expands, and moves across multiple media platforms in particular ways, for particular reasons, and with particular effects.

However, we posit that only by embracing the multiplicities and pluralities of transmediality as a cross-disciplinary phenomenon can one fully grasp its prominence. To paraphrase Christy Dena’s point from her chapter in this book, it may well make sense to create a simple definition of transmediality so that people understand and recognize it, but doing so is often at the cost of understanding the complete picture. A diverse and ultimate volume interrogating the status, the breadth, the developments, the themes, and the futures of transmediality is thus a timely opportunity for transmedia scholars to reflect on this subfield’s current status and to explore potential new directions for future research. Importantly, each contributor in this book has conducted leading research into a particular area of transmedia studies or has done widespread transmedia practice across the cultural industries. Together, our contributors thereby offer a unique perspective on the practices, cultures, arts, and methodologies of studying media across multiple platforms.

Still, this cross-disciplinary approach based on embracing multiplicities and pluralities raises another notable question. If transmediality indeed means different things, in different parts of the globe (see Freeman and Proctor 2018), to different sets of industries, cultures, arts, and disciplines, then how can one go about classifying such different interpretations and divergent industrial practices as the same phenomenon? Doing this successfully—and responsibly—almost means *re*-understanding transmediality, moving far beyond a set of narrow, discipline-specific definitions based on entertainment or storytelling or marketing alone. In effect, it means articulating a more overarching idea of transmediality, albeit one that still addresses the specificity of its workings in different contexts. As Henry Jenkins insists, “this does not mean that transmedia means everything to all people and thus means nothing to anyone. Rather, it means that we need to be precise about what forms of transmedia we are discussing and what claims we are making about them” (2016). This is where the breadth of this book comes in, and it is our embracing of the multiplicities and pluralities of transmediality that also drives the structure of this book. Looking across specific contexts of different industries, cultures, arts, practices, and methodologies of transmediality in turn, we will now use the remainder of this introductory chapter to outline our overarching conceptual interpretation of what transmediality really means, argued in dialogue with the themes and ideas of the subsequent chapters. From there, we also speculate where transmedia studies could go next. And so now we return to our original question, meant with a sense of genuine reflection: *what is transmedia?*

### Industries of Transmediality

In her chapter on transmedia television, Elizabeth Evans claims that “these [digital] platforms, and the way they are being utilized by content creators and owners, are contributing to media culture becoming increasingly and inherently transmedial.” Similarly, Carlos A. Scolari argues elsewhere that, as of 2017, we are part of a media landscape where almost all content can in some way, shape or form be considered transmedial, meaning that “soon we will assume that all communication industries will be transmedial—it will be integrated into the DNA of media communication” (2017). Somewhat echoing the earlier sentiments of Clark, then, for Scolari (2017), the prevalence of transmedia across the contemporary media industries means that we no longer need to distinguish transmedia communication from other forms of communication.

But transmedia’s prevalence is highly questionable and complex, and it is not particularly accurate to assume that transmediality exists across all creative and cultural industries. Indeed, as digital technologies and mobile devices continue to bring media interfaces into the workings of our daily lives, a salient question to consider is not only *what* is transmedia, but also *where* is transmedia? Jenkins’ more recent writings on transmediality have begun to consider ideas of transmedia location, meaning “the context from which transmedia products emerge” (Jenkins 2016). There is thus a question in terms of which industries transmediality is now an active part of, and what specific purposes it holds within and across them. The first section of the book comprises 13 chapters around those industries that we believe represent the most dominant transmedia industries today: Film, Documentary, Television, Telenovelas, Comics, Publishing, Games, Music, Journalism, Sports, Social Platforms, Celebrity, and Attractions.

In terms of a focus on industries as a lens through which to better understand what transmediality really is, then, it is evident from this section’s configuration of chapters that transmedia industries necessarily embrace both fictional and non-fictional universes. Renira Rampazzo Gambarato’s chapter on transmedia journalism usefully reiterates the importance of characterizing transmediality as, first, multiple media platforms, second, as content expansion, and third, as audience engagement. The transmedia DNA of these characteristics is intertwined with fictional entertainment, as emphasized in Kinder’s (1991) and Jenkins’ (2003, 2006) original research, as much and as well as it is with non-fiction initiatives, as clearly demonstrated by Freeman’s (2016) historicized approach to transmedia studies previously. Transmedia phenomena, as a common ground, involve the richness of

multiplatform media—it is, as Jenkins notes in his foreword, about a set of relationships across media. Particular media platforms can emerge and disappear, can be in vogue or be ostracized, can change and evolve. Nevertheless, we could not have transmedia dynamics without the support of multiple media platforms and the industries that align them together. Furthermore, this section posits that beyond the digital domain, transmediality can and should involve a variety of alternative combinations between both online and offline platforms. The Internet and all digital technologies unequivocally play a crucial role in (1) disseminating transmedia content, (2) making content easily available worldwide, (3) reaching a diversified range of audiences, (4) enabling audience engagement, and (5) contributing to a participatory culture, for instance. But the possibilities to enrich the audience experience via offline activities, live events, and analogue initiatives, are immense because they can dramatically contribute to (1) the feeling of immersion, (2) the sense of belonging, and (3) the emotional response of audiences, as discussed in the afterword of this collection. These immersive emotions and behavioral practices are key to definitions of transmediality, as is demonstrated in Helen W. Kennedy's chapter on transmedia games, which shows the fruitfulness of applying "play theory" to understandings of transmediality.

Looking across industries as diverse as journalism and the celebrity scene, moreover, it is clear that such playable online or offline transmedia strategies can contribute to a growth of these industries, with the proliferation of content across media platforms building both new storyworlds and new job roles. Chapters on transmedia sports, by Ethan Tussey, and transmedia social platforms, by Portia Vann, Axel Bruns, and Stephen Harrington, for example, both reinforce the globalism associated with transmediality, and particularly the idea that transmediality is partly a tool for enhancing the democratization of media content everywhere. And yet part of the future conceptual breakthrough for transmedia scholars must be to better understand how said democratization of content gels with the innate commerce of many transmedia production motives, as is demonstrated by Šárka Gmíterková's study of the transmedia Kardashian brand and by Matthew Freeman's look at the Warner Bros. Studio Tour in London as a commercially oriented brand extension of the *Harry Potter* storyworld. With any example of transmediality, where is the line between expansion-as-commerce and expansion-as-democratization—and if or when does that contradictory line become in any way problematic?

Transmediality, in fact, is perhaps best understood as a series of conceptual contradictions, as the chapters in Part I show. Sarah Atkinson, positioning "film [as] arguably the most dominant instantiation of the transmedia storytelling phenomenon," sees a tension between "the franchise and campaign binary"—that is, between notions of content and promotion—while Joakim Karlsen hints at the importance of conceptualizing transmedia documentary as a blend of fiction and non-fiction, experience and participation, all combined into a single package. Karlsen's chapter shows the power of transmediality to embody the full potential of participatory media, and yet also points out the innate contradictions that arise when one begins to conceive of non-fiction as something that is itself participatory. Echoing this emphasis on combined tensions, Paola Brembilla explores transmedia music as a set of narrativized and visualized forms of artwork, cross-marketing, and branding. For Brembilla, transmediality is a "streaming of content" afforded by "synergy networks"—a streaming that builds a greater experience for audiences. Importantly, seeing transmediality—most broadly defined—as a stream of content "allows us to account for its versatility and ability to serve several purposes," thus altogether suggesting that transmediality works to give media content greater "cultural and economic value in the contemporary mediascape."

Conceiving of transmediality as a mode of diversification across the cultural industries makes sense, tying in with William Proctor's assertion in his chapter that transmedia comic books are often a secondary or alternative platform for films and television series. Such an idea also gives credence to Alastair Horne's chapter on transmedia publishing, which outlines some of the challenges for transmedia production. Understanding transmediality as diversification also supports Evans' conception of transmediality as something that is deeply rooted in the past and yet is foregrounded by contemporary media industries as a way to stand content apart in a crowded marketplace. For example,

Evans highlights the usefulness of “analogue” theory—academic concepts that originated before the days when “transmedia” was part of the common vernacular—in understanding transmediality in a digital sphere. Evans’ chapter on transmedia television shows how particular media—and particular media industries—are *themselves* transmedial, and indeed have always been transmedial, in terms of operations, consumption habits, aesthetics, and so on. If media industries have long extended content across platforms, and audiences have long been encouraged to migrate across a stream of content, then transmediality is best understood as a conceptual approach to producing media via multiple delivery channels that each have combined commercial/democratic objectives at heart, itself enabling creative and participatory opportunities for sustained intellectual and emotional engagement. Simultaneously, from an industrial standpoint, transmediality becomes a means of adapting and diversifying media content so to best afford this kind of sustained intellectual and emotional engagement—as in Inara Rosas and Hanna Nolasco’s chapter, which stresses how “lighter plots and shorter narratives” are key to the successful transmedial expansion of telenovelas in Brazil.

### Arts of Transmediality

Part II of the book includes seven chapters on Transmedia Storytelling, World-Building, Characters, Genres, Writing, Photography, and Indie. Thinking about what the art of transmediality actually looks like, these seven chapters highlight a number of overlapping themes. Interestingly, Erica Negri’s chapter on transmedia indie positions transmediality as a “situation of narrative chaos ... [one] that attempts to conciliate narrative forms of digital technologies.” In other words, transmediality is itself a conceptual approach to producing media that is intrinsically messy, born out of messy technological disruptions over time, shaped with often messy objectives at heart, and tailored for messy, fragmentary, hard-to-pin-down audiences. Yet from an artistic standpoint, our contributors’ understandings of what transmediality *can be* remain more consistent than divergent.

For starters, besides the story to be told or the message to be delivered, which are both fundamental to the art of transmediality and transmedia storytelling more specifically, one such consistency concerns the role of world-building as a core concept. As Jenkins has pointed out elsewhere, the principle of world-building is inherent to the transmedia logic:

Most forms of transmedia are structured through a process of world-building. The concept of world-building emerged from fantasy and science fiction but has also been applied to documentary or historical fiction. Worlds are systems with many moving parts (in terms of characters, institutions, locations) that can generate multiple stories with multiple protagonists that are connected to each other through their underlying structures. Part of what drives transmedia consumption is the desire to dig deeper into these worlds, to trace their backstories and understand their underlying systems. Fictional texts imagine and design new worlds; documentaries investigate and map existing worlds.

*(Jenkins 2016)*

Regardless of how much a given story overlaps with the “primary” world, the varied dimensions, plausibility, richness of details of fictional and non-fictional transmedia worlds are designed and represented to be as important, intriguing, and compelling as its characters and plots. This creative equivalence is a central distinction of the concept of world-building in particular and transmedia stories in general. The essence of world-building is the strategy that best provides audiences with more stories sharing the same characters and world dynamics, but moreover, it offers them different yet equally immersive media experiences and emotional reactions.

Moreover, Jenkins’ characterization of transmediality as that which provides the desire to dig deeper also extends to other chapters across this section, albeit sometimes with messier consequences in ways that reinforce Negri’s contextualization of transmediality as chaos. Roberta Pearson’s chapter

on transmedia characters, for example, defines the art of transmediality as the creative process of making additions to media texts that cohere—or do not cohere—arguing that “cohesion depends upon points of contact between the addition and the transfiction.” Pearson shows how audiences gain pleasure from seeing those additions cohere or not cohere, thus lending further weight to our earlier claim that transmediality is in essence a system of diversification.

However, Donna Hancox’s chapter on transmedia writing suggests that it is so much more than this, painting a picture of the contemporary transmedia landscape as that which “re-imagines the intersection of media, genre and form to present an entirely new approach to writing.” Hancox shows how transmedia fiction is often quite linear in nature, and yet its multifaceted use of multiple platforms affords arguably the best possible mode of storytelling—a mode that is capable of enhancing characterization, emotional and experiential engagement. This idea of transmediality, not as story-building, but as story-enrichment, links to Mélanie Bourdaa’s chapter, which shows how transmedia storytelling opens up new possibilities for articulating fictional time.

Altogether, the chapters in Part II indicate that transmediality—from an artistic point of view—is about creating an adventure, one that seeks to transform the world into a story and the story into a storyworld. It is a means of crafting immersion, it seems—and, specifically, offering storytellers creative, pervasive ways to engage audiences emotionally and experientially. Or to put it another way, the art of transmediality is to build *experiences across and between the borders where multiple media platforms coalesce*—experiences that thrive on connecting, sharing, and responding. As Kate Fitzpatrick, a marketing strategist, discusses in the Afterword, “today, the concept of transmedia itself means creating a journey or experience that uses the most relevant mix of channels and platforms for your intended audience.” Similarly, Natalie Rios Gioco, a transmedia consultant also interviewed in the Afterword, suggests that transmediality is about “delivering information by experiencing”: it is “a system of cause and effect—a distribution of information (cause) that triggers an integrated, expansive response (effect).”

Indeed, characterizing transmediality as an experiential mode of engagement and causal relationships between content and people allows us to go beyond seeing it as a messy side-product of the fragmented media landscape, and also goes beyond describing it as a means of “allowing for different engagement depths,” as Kevin Moloney puts it in his chapter on transmedia photography. Going beyond this description, Moloney’s chapter does an excellent job in showing how a photograph—a single media image—is capable of hinting at so much more than it shows, bringing together both actual and imagined narrative moments and spaces that co-exist and extend, in the viewer’s mind, at least, beyond the borders of the photograph itself. Moloney goes on to argue that

for producers and critics of transmedia storytelling in any genre, the critical thinking about photographs must not only be how they interact with other media forms used in a project, but how they are also autonomous stories, capable of rich, immersive narrative, fine detail and visual fact presentation.

In terms of studying the artistry of transmediality, in other words, it is important that we return, somewhat contradictorily, to a medium-specific approach to studying individual platforms in order to better understand the function of specific platforms in and across the media landscape. There is a danger that comes with describing the convergences of contemporary media—namely, that convergence becomes directly associated with blending all forms of different media together into single sites of (digital) media artifacts. For even amidst a time of apparent technological convergence, mobile and online media, second screening, and so on, it is crucial to remember that different media still operate with largely specific sets of affordances, practices, policies, and consumption habits (Smith 2018). Thus in order to understand the artistic transmedia potentials of comparatively new platforms, such as augmented reality (AR), we first need to understand what AR—as an individual platform with distinct affordances—can actually *do*. By way of example, elsewhere Freeman (2018) explores

the kinds of transmedia interventions represented by *Priya's Shakti*, a project that uses comic books, exhibitions, AR and street art to call attention to the struggles faced by women in India. Focusing on the artistic value of AR, Freeman explains how users are encouraged not to escape reality by entering a fictional world, but instead to think differently about reality by traversing the line between real and virtual (2018).

James Dalby (2017), echoing these same kinds of important social dimensions, argues elsewhere that the true function of any single piece of transmedia content is not simply to enrich, enhance, or augment its companion pieces, but in fact to give one piece of content (a film, a web series, a comic book, a novel, etc.) a new, previously missing dimension that forever shifts the meaning of that piece of content into something else entirely (Dalby 2017). Transmediality, then, has an important *ontological* function to play: at its best, it has the power to shape—and to re-shape—how we perceive the media and the world around it.

### Practices of Transmediality

Part III presents seven chapters focused on Transmedia Adaptation, Developer, Production, Commodification, Franchising, Distribution, and Branding and Marketing. Alongside academic perspectives, this section also features chapters written by renowned transmedia practitioners and pioneers, such as Jeff Gomez (Starlight Runner Entertainment), Robert Pratten (Conductr), and Max Giovagnoli, all sharing their own experiences and perspectives on critical case studies of transmedia projects led by their companies. As hinted previously, practices of transmediality go beyond traditional media franchises, sequels, or adaptations, leading to “integrated media experiences” (Davidson 2010). In the simplest sense, transmedia integration stands for expansion of content across multiple media and formats typically with some level of audience engagement. Christy Dena’s chapter, however, argues that thinking of transmedia practice as simply the creation of extensions does not fully encapsulate what transmedia creatives do, nor is it the “only valid design choice for multi-platform-thinking.”

Moving beyond notions of extension-making, then, the chapters in this part emphasize and showcase that there is life outside of commercial understandings of transmedia storytelling, countering the recurrent assumption that transmedia equals marketing. Andrea Phillips (2011) has argued previously that this supposition occurs because of economics: “It’s not that there are more marketing campaigns using transmedia than anyone else; it’s that the marketing campaigns are much, much more visible. Why? Because they have more money to throw around.” Freeman (2016) has demonstrated how advertising is intrinsically connected to the early transmedia initiatives of the twentieth century, but this by no means signifies that practices of transmediality are limited to narrow definitions of advertising, marketing, and branding. Instead, Evans’ chapter on transmedia distribution articulates that transmediality is a set of “logics” that all involve “branching out into new online spaces” in order to re-locate and to re-contextualize content, (re-)acquiring new audiences.

More than this, the chapters in this part characterize the practices of transmediality as a careful balance between creativity and strategy, echoing aforementioned ideas that it is essentially a blend of content and promotion, fiction and non-fiction, commerce and democratization, experience and participation. For example, Jeff Gomez shows, via a detailed discussion of how he and his team developed the *Pirates of the Caribbean* films into a multiplatform adventure, that the practice of building experiences across and between the borders of multiple platforms is in fact less to do with platform, but is rather a dual process of (1) narratological analysis and (2) something that is “discerned in the storyteller.” This balancing act between creativity and strategy is reinforced further in Peter von Stackelberg’s chapter on transmedia franchising, which notes that “commercial pressures will drive the adoption of transmedia [practices] across the various media sectors,” which will in turn “drive the need for new creative approaches.”

There is therefore the sense that the practices of transmediality are driven by conceptions of “themed storytelling,” to borrow Alison Norrington’s (2017) term, regardless of industry. Gomez,

for instance, stresses the importance of an “essence” when crafting transmedia projects, by which he means a kind of thematic x-factor that runs across all media platforms and links the story to the storyteller in emotional and experiential ways. Robert Pratten, too, uses his chapter on transmedia production to position transmedia projects as “living, breathing worlds” that, by spanning countries, languages, platforms, and time, “more closely imitate real life.” Even Anna Kérchy, whose chapter is rooted in the commerce of transmedia commodification, understands this practice as the making of “adventures to collect” that can yield “amazement results” over time.

In that sense, transmedia practices are really about crossing time as much as they are about crossing media, operating as systems of production and distribution that cater for the possibilities of tomorrow as well as for the demands of today. And doing so once again means channeling modes of creativity and strategy simultaneously, as per Max Giovagnoli’s chapter on transmedia branding and marketing, which stresses the different ways via which creativity sits at the heart of all good transmedia campaigns. Giovagnoli points out how the strategic addition of games, events, and online promotions for a given transmedia brand all work together to enhance emotional investment and enjoyment.

In effect, chapters on the specifics of Transmedia Production, Transmedia Franchising, Transmedia Branding and Marketing, and so on, all clearly demonstrate that practices of transmediality, while prioritizing different agendas and audiences, are *not* storytelling, or marketing, or branding, or commodification, at least in isolation. Rather, practices of transmediality are defined precisely by the bringing together of all of these diverse practices into a single, innovative media package. What varies is which of these diverse practices are foregrounded at particular times. Transmediality is a “concert” of practices, as Gomez puts it, “weaving a tapestry of story that surrounds, immerses, and interacts with the audience.”

### Cultures of Transmediality

The fourth part of the book is dedicated to 12 chapters about Transmedia Archeology, Heritage, Fandom and Participation, Paratexts, Politics, Charity, Education, Literacy, Social Change, Identities, Psychology, and Religion. Cultures of transmediality explore diachronic and synchronic developments in the realm of transmediality within a human-centered approach and perspective. In our quest for understanding and advancing transmedia studies, putting people’s needs in the forefront seems an appropriate way to improve media and communications and reach a more satisfying transmedia experience. Besides the economic advantages that transmedia practices can potentially bring to culture and society, what would be the hearty reason why we would actually need or want transmedia experiences in our lives? We do not necessarily need transmedia dynamics in our lives, but we can definitely take advantage of its techniques and tools to achieve a more meaningful, emotionally connected, and fulfilling media experience. For instance, Marie-Eve Carignan shows in her chapter how notions of transmediality become useful for understanding both the mediatized representation of religion and also the process via which people make sense of a religion. Despite all of the technological advancements in media we are facing, fundamental human needs, instincts, and motivations have not changed radically. As Pamela Rutledge’s chapter on transmedia psychology alludes to, people continue to be driven by social connections, meaningful experiences, and the need to share stories that allow them to be part of something larger than themselves.

Transmedia cultures, indeed, are precisely that: experience-centered, technologically augmented conversations, a sharing between storytellers and audiences, between audiences and other audiences, and between online and offline worlds. This is where the concept of “paratext”—i.e., the promos and online materials that “create texts, manage them, and fill them with many of the meanings that we associate with them” (Gray 2010: 6)—becomes particularly useful to understanding transmediality. Matt Hills’ chapter on transmedia paratexts examines this meaning-making process further, arguing that paratexts “have been repositioned as a new terrain for audience struggles.” And building on aforementioned ideas that transmediality—in its building of immersive, emotional, experiential,



and paratextual spaces that closely imitate real life—chapters in this section explore the intrinsic connections between transmediality, culture, and aspects of daily life. This includes Paolo Bertetti's look at the interlacing of transmedia storytelling and changing historical cultures, and Dan Hassler-Forest's account of how popular transmedia franchises such as *Star Wars* are “made meaningful by their specific association with politics.” This same idea of cultural interlacing is reinforced by Jenny Kidd's examination of how museums and heritage sites are embracing the experiential and participatory possibilities of transmediality in ways that open up rich possibilities for “identity and nation building,” crafting storyworlds of “liminal spaces between known and unknown, past and present, fact and fiction.” André Jansson and Karin Fast, too, suggest that transmediality ultimately describes a media ecology “in which social practices are molded by and negotiated through different media technologies, and interweave with various forms of offline communication.” In turn, Paul Booth articulates this same interweaving of transmedial social practices in his chapter on transmedia fandom and participation as the recalibration of “what narrative ‘is.’”

What such a recalibration of narrative looks like might mean thinking of transmediality as a widened arsenal of media platforms that can aid people in achieving a goal, as Donna Hancox explains in her chapter on transmedia for social change. Or it might mean thinking about the experience of a particular set of transmedia content *not* as a discrete brand or even a story in the traditional sense, but rather as a much more fluid, ephemeral and value-laden transmedia *ethos* (see also Freeman and Taylor-Ashfield 2018). Matthew Freeman's chapter on transmedia charity explains how “the concept of *ethos* is perhaps more useful for characterizing the way audiences navigate transmedia charity projects, with people following beliefs, values, themes, philosophies and meanings (rather than stories) across media.” To understand what transmediality really means, we have to talk about navigation, and in particular the ways in which people move across physical and virtual spheres—and what motivates that process of moving. This means analyzing the behaviors and motivations of a media-crossing audience with much more rigor, an idea for future research that is also reinforced first by Lorena Peret Teixeira Tárzia, whose chapter on transmedia education asserts that “transmedia provides a platform for students to learn how to identify, understand, and engage different audiences in their stories,” and second by Carlos A. Scolari, who theorizes transmedia literacy as “informal learning strategies” that “facilitate the exchange of experiences” for different groups of learners.

Once again we are back to emphasizing the multiplicities and pluralities of transmediality, then. André Jansson and Karin Fast argue in their chapter that “identity” should be applied as a theoretical framework for understanding transmediality, given that identity—or identities—act as a “complex and negotiated interface between self and society.” This idea is echoed elsewhere by Michael Humphrey (2017), who argues that memory is an important part of the transmedia space and one that shapes “the spirit of the self.” One potentially important direction for the future of transmedia studies is for scholars to consider the increasing mediatization of life itself, and to better understand what it means to think of our digital lives as complex, intertwining, transmedial experiences.

### Methodologies of Transmediality

The last part brings the following chapters: A Narratological Approach to Transmedial Storyworlds and Transmedial Universes; An Ontological Approach to Transmedia Worlds; An Experience Approach to Transmedia Fictions; A Design Approach to Transmedia Projects; A Management Approach to Transmedia Enterprises; A Micro-Budget Approach to Transmedia in Small Nations; A Genettian Approach to Transmedia (Para)Textuality; A Semiotic Approach to Transmedia Storytelling; A Mythological Approach to Transmedia Storytelling; A Qualitative Network Approach to Transmedia Communication; and A Metrics Model for Measuring Transmedia Engagement. Methodologies for studying transmediality are much needed, especially given the way that transmedia studies involves the analysis of hybrid phenomena. The challenge, as Anne Mette Thorhaug, Kjetil Sandvik, and Tem Frank Andersen (2016, 2) have expressed previously, is that “without grasping the broader media

environment in which particular media platforms are part ... it [is] difficult to demarcate and frame them as phenomena.” Elsewhere, James Dalby (2017) goes as far as suggesting that applying theory from “non-transmedial contexts” to what are specifically transmedia texts is limited, arguing that “existing theory is not redundant as such, but can and must be reconsidered for transmedia environments.” Dalby’s reasons for such an altogether revisionist view stem from, first, the added sense of immersion that may arise from the vast array of available content within any given transmedia story, and, second, from the way in which the active need to piece this vast array of content together in a way that creates meaning—emotionally and/or experientially—transforms rudimentary notions of “audiences” into “participants” (2017).

In response, this section showcases some of the pertinent and original initiatives that aim to fulfil this gap in research methodologies. The discussion revolves around the ontological (things), the epistemological (knowledge), and the phenomenological (experience) parameters involved in transmedia studies. As our authors discuss, these parameters affect the process of ideation, building, and executing transmedia products as well as consuming, interacting, and participating within them. We argue that the process of experience, the act of personally observing, encountering, or undergoing transmedia experiences, is itself key to characterizing transmedia studies at large: a “possible procedure to address the issue of contemporary complexity through a phenomenological approach to the coeval reality” (Ciancia 2015, 133).

Frank Branch and Rebekah Phillips, for instance, stress the need to analyze transmedia content as “real things” on account of the socially profound ways via which transmediality intersects with everyday life. This perspective is reinforced in Nicoleta Popa Blanariu and Dan Popa’s chapter, which stresses the “connection between mythical narrative and transmedia storytelling [as being] the *performative* dimension.” Jan-Noël Thon, meanwhile, outlines a “toolbox” of transmedial narratology that provides a better understanding of how the pieces of transmedia universes operate according to “redundancy, expansion, and modification,” hereby echoing Pearson’s earlier claim that the pleasure of transmediality lies in piecing different elements together. Ascribing a mixed-method approach within transmedia studies thus makes a great deal of sense, combining, for example, “aesthetic/formal analysis with the qualitative investigation of user reception in order to get the full picture of the [transmedia] experience,” as Susana Tosca and Lisbeth Klastруп claim in their chapter. Using both qualitative and quantitative approaches is something that Eefje Op den Buysch and Hille van der Kaa’s chapter on metrics also demonstrates, while Gambarato stresses the value of embracing what she describes in her chapter on design as the “intricate entanglements between all the constituent elements of [super] [sub]systems, that is, the set of components, the environment, and the set of relations.” These intricate entanglements define transmediality, clarifying the need from a research point of view for diverse disciplinary perspectives, such as those underpinning Ulrike Rohn and Indrek Ibrus’ chapter (business and management), Kyle Barrett’s chapter (media industry studies), Geane Carvalho Alzamora’s chapter (semiotics), and Matthias Berg and Andreas Hepp’s chapter (media communications). Berg and Hepp’s chapter, in particular, highlights the methodological process of the transmedia scholar to be one of “networking,” an idea that is also reinforced in Raúl Rodríguez-Ferrándiz’s chapter on transtextuality, which—given the multifaceted, multi-functional and ever-changing nature of transmedia content—stresses the need to “watch over” and “take care” of that content.

Our attempt, then, to reflect upon the proposed question *what is transmedia?* is concluded by recalling Jenkins’ (2016) recent postulation that “transmedia—broadly defined—continues to grow in many different directions as people respond to the challenge and opportunities of communicating systematically across multiple platforms.” Transmedia, as a term, is merely a descriptor, one that requires meaningful application to different scenarios. That is why Jenkins (2016) insisted that transmedia be used as an adjective instead of a noun. Yet while it is clear to see already that this book paints an enormously varied picture of transmediality, when looking across industries, arts, practices, cultures, and methodologies, it seems that understandings of transmediality are indeed more consistent than divergent.

Specifically, there is a consistent and clear emphasis on understanding transmediality as *experience via technology*, and relatedly on the creativity of audiences, particularly in the context of strategically motivated, democratically augmented media. We return to our conceptualization of transmediality as the building of experiences across and between the borders where multiple media platforms coalesce, altogether refining our understanding of this phenomenon as specifically a mode of themed storytelling that, by blending content and promotion, fiction and non-fiction, commerce and democratization, experience and participation, affords immersive, emotional experiences that join up with the social world in dynamic ways. And in doing so, it becomes more than the sum of its parts—weaving through industry, art, practice, and culture. All of the chapters in this book show vividly how important transmediality remains to understanding communication and culture at large, and hint at the importance of defining transmediality in sociological terms—by which we mean the role of transmediality in helping us all to better understand how we navigate culture as well as our everyday lives.

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