The concept of 'research route' as a methodological basis for social analysis of web archives, with special attention to the transformations of the websites of Portuguese newspapers as a case study

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Abstract:

The present communication deals with the experience of using material from Arquivo.pt in a social-scientific research applied to the diachronic study of the transformations of the websites of four Portuguese newspapers (*Correio da Manhã*, *Diário de Notícias*, *Expresso,* and *Público*). In this context, we describe and explain the main purpose of this study and its methodological issues. With the purpose of studying the changing structure of those websites we had to discuss some choices regarding our approach to the material being studied. We sought to establish an innovative methodology by crossing the epistemological assumptions of the investigations in journalism studies with the methods of searching in web archives. Therefore, we applied the quantitative and qualitative grids of the media research framework to the data operations of this archival research, considering previous research in which web archives were used for journalism research. One of the fundamental discussions we had was around the problem of delimitating all the available material for our research. From the dispersive character of that material arose the particular problem of guiding ourselves in the raw and insufficiently ordered flux of web content and structures. In the discussion around this issue we proposed the concept of 'research route'. Using the naval metaphor of the web, we proposed that concept with the objective of delimitate the available data, moving away from repeated material, material with errors and material which is beyond the scope of our subject matter. In this communication we focus on the cognitive and methodological aspects that are behind the concept of 'research route' and its possible uses for future work.

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Brief biographical note:

Diogo Silva da Cunha holds a degree in Journalism, is finishing the master's degree in History and Philosophy of Sciences and is a PhD fellow in Philosophy of Science, Technology, Art and Society. He has done his research at the interface between communication studies and

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