A fragmented approach
Un enfoque fragmentado
Uma abordagem fragmentada

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In the past twenty years, the digital revolution has changed communication practices, in the midst of a number of socio-economic and professional tensions among media organizations and practitioners. This shifting environment not only implies the convergence of diverse media structures and organizations, but also the active participation of the audience and artifacts in the process of producing, organizing, modifying, commenting and sharing news. In this fragmented media ecosystem, it is imperative to analyze the elements disrupting media systems and media use. It is not an easy task, but we have the responsibility of increasing the academic dialog around these phenomena, as the nuances of such disruptions need far more research attention than currently given. Therefore, it is essential to find new perspectives to study issues such as the utilization of big data to interpret our social life, the impact of digital devices in journalism, and the presence of the former audience in the media space.

This special issue of Palabra Clave is all about exploring these disruptions through a variety of theoretical and analytical approaches. Even though the digital shift has inspired a new wave of research that analyzes the impact of technology and innovation on media organizations, journalistic practices, and the news-making process (e.g., Anderson, 2013; Belair-Gagnon, 2015; P. J. Boczkowski, 2004; Cottle, 2000; Domingo, D. & Paterson, 2011; Howard, 2002; Singer, 2013), the fragmentation of the news ecosystem calls also for new spatial models and critical ways of thinking in online settings (Reese, 2015; Shoemaker & Reese, 2014; Anderson, 2013).

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This set of key contributions published in this special issue offers a different perspective on that fragmentation. For example, the article "A Critical Axiology for Big Data Studies" offers an important and much needed analysis of big data research from a critical methodological point of view. It is a thoughtful nudge for researchers to take the necessary methodological steps to interpret big data sets in a meaningful and contextual manner. The work also suggests researchers to be aware of the risks of following the technological euphoria of big data without questioning its final end. The article sheds light on the control exercised by governments and corporations over big databases. By way of this essay, the author makes a great contribution to our understanding of big data, its impact on communication studies, and the challenges that researchers face when dealing with big data as a hegemonic concept. The author invites a mixing of methods (qualitative and quantitate approaches) in order to understand the social implications beyond the superficial operationalization of big data.

The article "Reconfiguring and Remediating Social Media as Alternative Media: Exploring Youth Activists' Digital Media Ecology in El Salvador" shows how activists from a developing country understand and adopt digital technologies -specially social media- to achieve their goals and create counter narratives that support their causes. Given the social unrest of Latin America, this paper goes beyond newsrooms to see how social movements promote their own frames using digital technology, overcoming the gatekeeping control of mainstream media. At the same time, the article proposes overcoming digital determinism when analyzing the role of social media, and other digital technologies as platforms for protests. This approach helps us to understand the logic behind and the influences that shape social media activism and protest in Central America. The paper reveals that Salvadorian activists do not use social media necessarily with the intention of taking people to the streets. Social media is more of a way to create a network of support among activists, and to increase visibility to attract traditional media attention as well as international support. In this sense activists are not only using social media as a new platform for their claims but also (and mostly) as a supporting network.

The work "*La brecha de las noticias en Argentina: factores contextuales y preferencias de periodistas y público*" offers an interesting analysis about the discrepancy between the content displayed by journalists on their websites' homepage, and the most read online articles selected by users. This research contributes with evidence to our understanding of the differences between journalistic news values and the audience news values that have led to the configuration of a new paradigm in media consumption and distribution. By tracking clicks in online interactive spaces, media and journalists have begun to realize that there is a gap between news consumption and traditional journalistic news values. The realization of these discrepancies has contributed to the creation of innovative content formats and topics that may need further analysis to understand its implications. The fact that users pay attention to political news during certain moments of intense political activity like elections, but then they lose their interest on key socio-political issues, raises questions about how media and journalists can attract audiences' civic and democratic interest during times of political flatness.

The paper "Sensor Journalism: Pitfalls and Possibilities" offers a fresh perspective on how journalists and journalism professors can use digital sensors integrating communities or classrooms to improve storytelling and reporting. The paper is an important contribution to the much needed discussion and experimentation in this area to grasp opportunities and limitations of these devices to create journalistic investigative pieces and new narratives. At the same time, it brings attention to collaborative acts such as crowdsourcing as a way to empower communities in the collection of relevant data that ensures accountability.

Finally, the paper "Reevaluating Journalistic Role Performance in U.S. Newspapers" analyzes the watchdog and civic journalistic functions in five major US print publications through a quantitative content analysis. Differences between the type of content and media reveal how journalists have shifted their role toward a more civic line in which topics like human rights, protest and religion acquire great relevance in journalistic coverage given the current social unrests, and the articulation of a variety of social demands through social media. Meanwhile, the traditional watchdog approach

continues to be tied to politics and crime, topics in which journalists usually find officials accountable for their public actions. The research examines journalistic roles in the manifest content, and it helps us to apprehend the gap between journalists' self-explanation of their roles, and their actual performance in the production of content.

Palabra Clave, one of the best journals in Latin America that is dedicated to communication and journalism, wants to open discussion around these disruptions and contribute answers to key questions raised. Forces shifting traditional media paradigms are global (e.g., big data, social media activism, digital devices for collecting data, users in the media space, etc.), and as such, part of our own reality. However, we believe they are not being discussed and investigated in the region with the intensity our times demand. This special issue is an invitation to increase dialog and research looking at new actors and external dynamics that are shifting and transforming the media ecosystem.

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