CHAPTER 15

The Network as Chronotope: Internet and Political Practices in the Colombian Student Movement MANE and Occupy São Paulo¹

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Introduction

At the beginning of this current decade, a series of mobilizations and movements took place in the world which saw the internet and social networking take a leading role of mediation. Some of these movements, such as the so-called “Arab spring”, the Indignados in Spain and the Occupy Wall Street movement, achieved visibility through international media deployment. However, other movements of occupation and protest that took place in Latin America had little or no exposure in international media. This was the case for educational reform movements and occupation movements in several Latin American cities. Their relative invisibility was correlated with the extent and magnitude of these mobilisations, their disruptive rallying against political orders, and the interrelationships between many of them. This was a context of spatio-temporal mutations of related action that took place within a specific network.

From case studies of the Colombian student movement and the movement Occupy São Paulo, both in 2011, it seems that from a transnational perspective, there emerged some new forms of communication. It was evident that digital technologies offered an appropriate means of reconfiguring political action to denote a new process of politicity in emerging hybrid space-time configurations. The “Invisible Spring” is perhaps a suitable metaphor for the origin and deployment of these Latin American movements, for the connections between them, for their actions in contexts of political invisibility and their forms of protest and mobilisation which were mediated by the internet and Facebook in particular. The term “Spring” expresses a double connotation.

¹ Two papers precede this text: “The Invisible Spring’: Internet in the indignation and occupation movements and the cases of Colombia and Brazil’, Arab Media Institute, University of Westminster, April 2013; “Invisible Spring’: Internet and political practices in Colombian and Brazilian mobilization’, rc 34: Youth Sociology. ISA World Congress of Sociology, Yokohama, Japan, 13–19 July 2014.
On the one hand, it refers to notable youth uprisings in the Maghreb and their influence, impact and links with other similar movements in the world. On the other hand, the term “Spring” concerns the non auto-produced character of the name of these movements, because it is a term attributed by actors outside: an external designation expressive of the power relations involved. The term “Invisible” denotes not only the multiplicity of what does not appear but the social conditions that produce invisibility: invisibility is not only absence of the visible but a social and political production of what does not appear. The term “Invisible” also refers to the reconfiguration of space-time in the action network; indicating the emergence of new forms of being in the contemporary world. Thus “Invisible Spring” is a way of referring to those Latin American movements, their specific dynamics and links, which did not interest the global academy and the international mass media but which are represented in this chapter. Below, the two case studies are presented first, through the problematization of notions of politicity in the network, their visibility and invisibility, and the nature of the network as chronotope. The chapter finishes with some thoughts that do not seek to conclude but raise issues for further research.

**Colombian and Brazilian Movements in 2011: The Cases of MANE and Ocupa Sampa**

The cases here are the *Mesa Amplia Nacional Estudiantil – MANE* in Colombia, and *Acampa Sampa Ocupa Sampa* or Occupy São Paolo in Brazil. These movements imply a double condition: they belong within a typology of emerging political action with characteristics in common with other discursive and organizational dynamics at the contemporary international level, such as those mentioned above and besides, they express the contextual distinctiveness of the production of knowledge and new forms of collective political action in the continent.

**MANE**

The *MANE* movement in Colombia was influenced mainly by the Chilean student movement (see Aguilera, this volume). It was also inspired by the Arab uprisings (see Sanchez, this volume) and by the *Indignados* of Spain (see Nofre, this volume). *MANE* was a student movement unprecedented in the last 40 years, its closest antecedent being the student movement of 1971 which was recorded as the largest mobilization of students in the history of Colombia (Pardo and Urrego 2014). The relative invisibility of *MANE* in the international media does not indicate that the movement was irrelevant. In fact the situation where it was created and deployed faster, it became far-reaching in