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S. Giraldo. Colombia: the case of citizen movement...

Colombia: the case of citizen movement of the February 4th – 2008. Facebook: polarization or participation?

Colombia: el caso de las movilizaciones ciudadanas del 4 de febrero de 2008. Facebook: ¿polarización o participación?

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Resumen: *El centro del artículo es el estudio del grupo de Facebook: "UN millón de voces contra las Farc, creado como respuesta a la fallida liberación de secuestrados por parte de la guerrilla colombiana de las Farc, ocurrido el 31 de diciembre de 2007. LA evolución del grupo, y su consecuencia trascendental –la gran movilización mundial del 4 de febrero de 2007, en oposición al grupo guerrillero-, demuestran el peso del contexto político en las dinámicas de internet, la extrema polarización y que las reacciones encadenadas y el efecto de red son, ambas, situaciones que pueden servir –o destruir- los valores de la democracia y de la participación de la ciudadanía activa.*

Abstract: *The centre of this paper is the study of the "Un Millon de Voces contra las Farc" Facebook group, created in response of the failure release of*

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hostages on the part of the Farc Colombian guerrilla, happened on December 31, 2007. The evolution of the group, and it's transcendental consequence - the great world mobilization of February 4, 2008 in opposition to the Farc-, demonstrate the weight of the political context in the internet dynamics, the extreme polarization and that the linked reaction and his network effects work both for the good and for the evil of the democratic and participative values of the active citizenship.

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First part: General context

1. A frustrated release

Colombia. December 18th, 2007. The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Farc[2]), after countless political and military errors[3], announced the release of three hostages of political relevance in the country: Clara Leticia Rojas González[4], her son Emmanuel[5] and Consuelo González de Perdomo[6]. For the release, the Farc decided to give special weight to Venezuela's President, Hugo Chavez, and to the Liberal senator of Colombia, Piedad Cordoba; the important role of the two actors was given as a response to the previous cancellation by the Colombian government of the mediation of Chavez and Córdoba, who were trying to achieve a humanitarian exchange between the Farc hostages and members of guerrilla in prison.

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[2] Marxist-Leninist Colombian guerrilla, active since 1964.
[3] The Farc were involved in the death of eleven provincial deputies of the Valle del Cauca who were kidnapped, terrorist attacks to citizens and cities, extortive kidnaps, and excessive participation in production of illicit substances.
[4] Colombian Former vice-presidential candidate for the period 2002-2006, who was kidnapped with Ingrid Betancourt, Presidencial candidate, on february, 2002.
[5] During her captivity, Clara Rojas had a relationship with a member of guerrilla, and gave birth to her son Emmanuel.
[6] Former member of the Colombian National Congress, kidnapped on September 10th, 2001.

The president of Venezuela, in an unprecedented act, managed and coordinated the release operation, and became the main actor of the national and international media. Between December 26th and 31st, Colombian society was waiting with great expectation because the release was supposed to take place within these days. But the last day of the year the Farc, again, made a mistake: arguing lack of security, they announced to the Venezuelan government the impossibility for releasing the hostages due to military actions taking place in the zone established for the release. Nevertheless, the real reason for the failure of the process was that Emmanuel was not with the Farc.

The media turned against guerrilla, Hugo Chavez and Piedad Córdoba; they were seen as the direct responsible for lying not only to the national but to the international community. The society then polarized in favour of the military defeat of the guerrilla, supporting also the negatives for the humanitarian exchange, which constitute the basis of the Colombian president, Álvaro Uribe. The further release of Rojas and González, mediated by Chavez and Córdoba, as well as the release of another group of former members of the Colombian Congress[7], were almost unnoticed by the Colombian collective imaginary.

After all, there is an interesting element that requires special attention. After the first failure for releasing the hostages, some citizens found on the new tools of media, on the internet and on the new platforms for exchanging information on the web 2.0[8], a space for expressing their unconformity. Facebook, which constitutes an interesting example of the rapid increase of social networks, became a key tool for the configuration of a worldwide movement against the Farc. But it also became a space for the polarization of uniform and non plural thoughts. Facebook turned into a massive space guided by the opinion of citizens, not by their effective participation; and due to its high impact, combined with the impact of other factors, favoured the appearance of governmental actions that reached the boundaries of the international legality. The actions that would have received social and moral sanctions in any democratic field,

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[7] Gloria Polanco de Posada, former member of the Colombian National Congress, member of the Conservative Party, who was kidnapped on July 26th, 2001; Orlando Beltrán Cuellar, former member of the National Congress, member of the Liberal party, kidnapped on august 28th, 2001; Luis Eladio Pérez, former member of the National Congress, member of the Liberal Party, kidnapped on June 10th, 2001; and Jorge Eduardo Géchem Turbay, former member of the National Congress and member of the Liberal Party, kidnapped on February 20th, 2008.

[8] According to Tim O'Reilly, the Web 2.0 is related to the second Web generation which is based on a community of users and a special variety of services, such as social networks, blogs, wikis and folcsonomies, which promote the collaboration and quick exchange of information among the users (O'Reilly, 2006).

found support in the opinions of cybernauts; these opinions aligned in the context of the current events.

2. Social Networks

The characteristics of the networks -its form, architecture, and the way information flows among the nodes- determine their power structures and leads to the appearance of new values, new routines and new political orders. The combination of these new elements, with the new technological trends (the way they work and the way they are used), build up new relations among social actors. But more than that, all these elements have lead to the emergence of innovative social actors that propose new political values, incentives and alternative social movements (Ugarte, 2007).

Centralised, decentralised and now, distributed networks (with Web 2.1[9]). The distributed network is inscribed within the ethics of the Hacker. The information, the technology and the creativity have become relevant elements within the logics of production and response for the "receptors" of information. The new distributed network proposes a new way of organisation, in which the Blogs and platforms for exchanging information –which are the places for gathering, sharing, meeting…- are of great value. Each one of the users –either of blogs or networks- is an individual actor that moves in a new media, in the first distributed media in history: the Web 2.1.

In this new media, there is not a unique way for transmitting information; there is no system of representation. Each actor decides by its own without the possibility for deciding over the others. The actor gains the capacity to exercise a social mobilisation according to a unique system of decision-making: the degree of agreement and support to the proposal of an actor that participates in a network (Ugarte, 2007).

The social networks build up by users, which are part of the world's exchange platforms, have lead to the appearance of social movements that are able to influence the public agenda. The blog, the SMS and other technological tools have been key

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[9] Ugarte (2007) makes a difference between the Web 2.0 and the Web 2.1. Its main difference is the capacity of the authors of the platforms to delimit and control the information produced within them. In the case of the Web 2.0, the authors -normally the owners- have the capacity to control the content of what is produced. In the case of the Web 2.1, each user is the owner of its own space, so the user does not need of others to guarantee its capacity to express. It is a closer space, but we still haven't achieved it.

elements of relevant mobilisations[10], and have shaped a new way of social organisation: the cyberactivism. (Ugarte, 2007).

This social movement organised in the swarming[11], through cooperation, is the basis of the cyberactivism; it allows internet to become a media for spreading information. Its dynamic, based on adding individual actors, has lead to the appearance of collective actions that have the possibility to influence the government's public agendas. Moreover, they have become gatekeepers of democratic processes. These processes of incidence are the result of the actions referred by Ugarte as *Ciberturbas*. Therefore, the process of social discussion that emerges on internet now turns into the streets, and there are no clear boundaries between the cyberactivists and the mobilised people.

3. Facebook

The social networks have become important applications in the Web 2.0. The popularization of PC's and laptops, their low costs and the new possibilities of internet connection strengthens the capacity of the new communication tool for reaching all the spaces of life. New relations and new interaction systems appeared through the interface of the graphic screens on the web. Thus, there is an emergence of new modes for relating with others and for sharing information though the networks.

The tools for adding new contacts for the exchange of messages evolve rapidly. In this context appeared the social networks that allow the multifunctionality within the exchange platforms. The old ways of sharing information, getting in touch with others, and sending information are now integrated into infinite spaces that develop applications in which interaction takes place. Photos, videos, personal messages, conversations, e-cards, gifts, mechanisms for finding people, surveys, personality tests, among others, which used to be fragmented and unifunctional spaces, are now components that build up the new scenarios in which the social networks operate.

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[10] Some of the examples are: the resignation of President Estrada in the Philippines on 2001; the period between March 11th and March 14th of 2004 in Spain, in which the country celebrated the general elections; the social protests of November 2005 in France; and the "Macrobotellón", also in Spain, on March 2006.

[11] "La revolución informacional está cambiando la forma en que la gente lucha a lo largo de todo el espectro del conflicto. Lo está haciendo fundamentalmente mediante la mejora de la potencia y capacidad de acción de pequeñas unidades, y favoreciendo la emergencia de formas reticulares de organización, doctrina y estrategia que hacen la vida cada vez más difícil a las grandes y jerárquicas formas tradicionales de organización. La tecnología importa sí, pero supeditada a la forma organizativa que se adopta o desarrolla (…) Hoy la forma emergente de organización es la red" (ARQUILLA & RONFELDT, 2000)

The theories of snowball and six degrees of separation[12] appeared in these new social constructions. Through the conversation and the peer to peer communication, the society integrates into the platforms. And it pressures the (still) disintegrated part of society to become part of it…

Facebook is a social network created by Mark Zuckerberg in 2004. At the beginning, it was only a tool that allows the communication within university colleagues. Nevertheless, due to the effects of networks and the rapid massification, it grew and became part of the five biggest networks worldwide. In May 2008, the number of active users in Facebook reached more that 80 million.

This social network provides a simple and free inscription; it allows users to work with more than 24.000 applications that include most of the available services of the Web 2.0. The users create their own space in which they can share information[13], and based on a system for finding and inviting people, they can add contacts, and create their own friends list. This creates a community for sharing and exchanging information, in which the user's own spaces are available for its community[14].

Facebook, as well as Myspace and Friendster, has become the top of the social networks during the last three years. Facebook has experienced an extraordinary and unforeseen increase, which was not expected within the models of traditional businesses[15]. The United States, Canada and the United Kingdom are the countries with the highest amount of users, followed by countries such as Turkey, Australia, Sweden, Norway and France[16]. The Colombian case[17] is of particular interest due to the fact that the impact of the network in the country in terms of users is higher than in countries like Spain, Germany or Mexico. In this South American country, the users give the network a particular use. It has been used, among others, for grouping users

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[12] Both concepts refer to the capacity of a network to experience and an extraordinary increase in the number of users and "contacts", after an initial impulse.

[13] In their spaces, users have available tools for sharing information in different formats.

[14] Nevertheless, the privacy of the space can change according to the users' preferences.

[15]The extent to which this product has increased, which in principle is not a commercial product, shows the changes in the types of businesses that are done through the Network. When referring to Facebook, there is a need to reconsider and rethink different indicators for analysing its success. Its basis may be found on its capacity for generating users own contents through a simple platform.

[16] Data consulted on Facebook's website of statistics. http://es.facebook.com/press/info.php?statistics (Last consulted: June 10th, 2008).

[17] Facebook has more than 500.000 colombian users. Data consulted on Facebook's news website. http://www.facebooknoticias.com/2007/12/10/usuarios-de-facebook-por-paises.

for diverse interests, based on shared hobbies, entertainment and even political and philosophical ideas.

4. Groups on Facebook

Facebook users have the possibility to create groups no matter the interest[18]. The groups are created and administered by one or various users; they decide the type of group, its interests and if it will be an open group for the whole facebook community, or if it will be a closed group, only for those users that receive an authorisation of the administrators of the group in order to become part of it and be able to participate.

Each group has its own space for interaction. All the members are able to post in the website of the group information they consider convenient[19]. Apart from the applications[20], the groups have two main spaces for users to express their ideas. The first one is **the wall.** It is similar to the idea of graffiti, and it is also available in the personal sites. In this space, users are able to post comments and opinions that they want to share with the rest of the group members. Every time that a comment is posted, it appears in the main page of the group; therefore it can be read by the rest of the members. The posts appeared in a sequential order.

The second space is the **discussion board.** This works in the same way as the other forums of the traditional websites. The only difference is that the user that belongs to a group can comment about the topic proposed on the board and can also create new board topics for discussing other issues that can be commented by the rest of the users that belong to the group.

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[18] The predetermined interests of Facebook are, among others: businesses, common interest, art and entertainment, geography, internet and technology, just for fun, music, organisations, sports, hobbies and students' group, each one with more that ten additional categories.
[19] Normally, the users post photos, images, videos, links to articles or to other related websites; they also propose topics for discussion –on the forums- and they make comments – on the wall-
[20] They include: the possibility for calling a meeting, send messages to all the members of the group, edit contents, post documents, among others.

Second part: "Un millón de voces contra las Farc"[21]: Analysis of the evolution of one Facebook group as the driving force of political participation – and polarisation.

1. Un millón de voces contra las Farc

On January 4th, 2008, due to the current events of the frustrated release of the hostages of the Farc, the group "Un millón de voces contra las Farc" appeared on Facebook. Its first board topic became the central force that grouped together the cybernauts: "**Marcha nacional el próximo 4 de febrero:** ante la demencia y el cinismo de las farc-ep (enemigos del pueblo) invitamos a todos los colombianos de bien a una gran movilizacion (sic) el proximo (sic) 4 de febrero en rechazo a las mentiras, el engaño de esta organizacion (sic) y a su vez para exigir la libertad sin condiciones de todos los secuestrados... todos unidos en esta gran causa"[22].

From this moment, the group, under the dynamics of the networks, began to increase abruptly, and it focused on a common purpose for organising a mobilisation in the streets. The political context in which this group emerged allows it to create a strong initiative. It also acquired a special dynamic for the development of the mobilisation, based on the tools provided by internet. Within a short period of discussion, and with few common agreements, the ideas of the group spread and became visible for the national and international society, due to the lack of boundaries of internet.

Summing up, the group has three core moments that determined the development of the social action. The first one is based on the consolidation of the proposal and the increase of users to the extent to be considered current news for the national and international media. This period of gestation took place between January 4th and 17th of 2008.

The second moment began when the group appeared on the agendas of the mass media. From January 17th, 2008, until the day of the mobilisation, there is a drastic change on the relevant actors of the mobilisation, and, when it became a worldwide

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[21] A million voices against the Farc.

[22] "National mobilization next February 4th: before the dementia and the cynicism of the farc-ep (enemies of the people) we invite all the Colombians of good to a great mobilization on February 4th in rejection to the lies, the deception of this organization and in turn to demand the freedom without conditions of all the kidnapped ones... all joined in this great reason". SANTIAGO, Carlos A. Message posted on January 4th, 2008, at 18:55 in the discussion board of the group "Un millón de voces contra las Farc". Available on: http://www.facebook.com/topic.php?uid=6684734468&topic=3267.

movement, the group reached its highest increase. The participation of users in the established spaces of the group also increased. Therefore, the news became even stronger and finally, the mobilisation took place in February 4th, 2008.

Finally, after the mobilisation, the movement entered into a new and different phase. The previous events were affected by the changing dynamics of the network. The political driving force used to be in the hands of citizens, but they were completely displaced by the traditional actors.

The figure below illustrates the trajectory and political incidence of the group:

Un millón de voces contra las Farc: Trajectory and political incidence
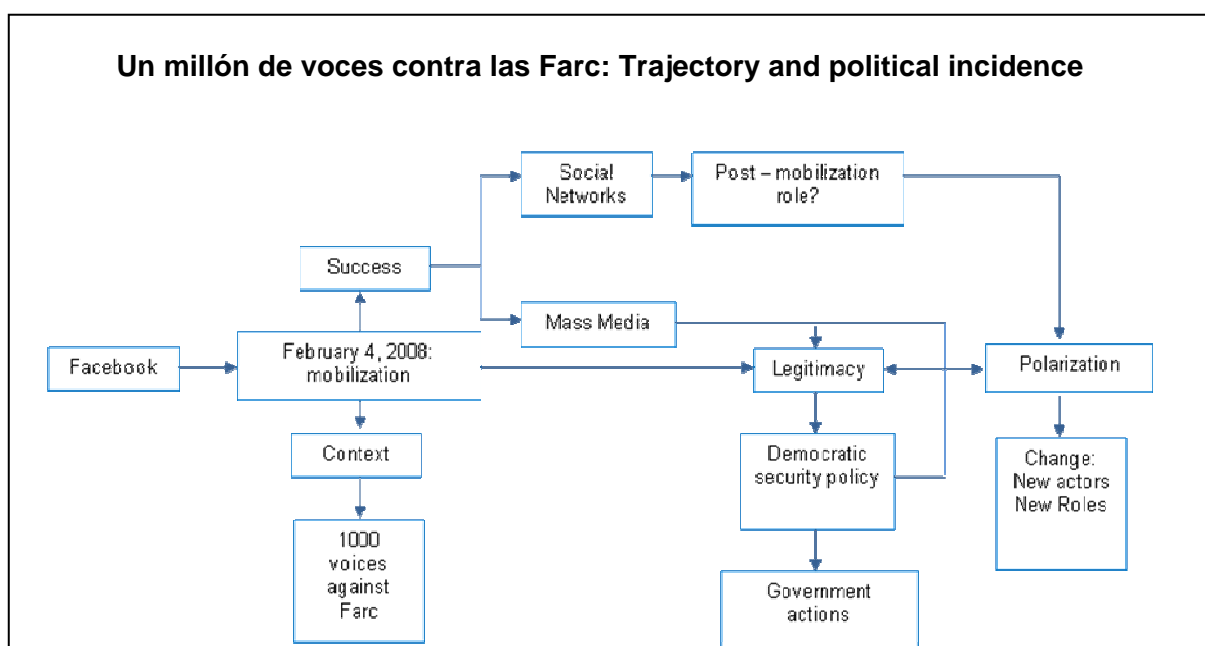
The international mobilisation promoted by the group "Un millón de voces contra las Farc" was built up within a context that allowed the alignment of citizens around the general dissatisfaction with the guerrilla group, on the one hand, and the materialisation of this dissatisfaction through the mobilisation of February 4th, 2008, on the other hand. This context of dissatisfaction emerged as a response to the failure of the release of hostages by Farc; this dissatisfaction was taken as an advantage for gaining the support of the public opinion to the proposal; which was well received by the majority of the population.

The success of the mobilisation can be explained as the result of two main points for propagating information. On the one hand, the multiplier effect of the social networks, which was analysed before, and on the other hand, the continuous and eternal role of

traditional media in terms of mobilising citizens. In this case, the media had two opposed but strategic functions. The media promoted the potential power of the mobilisation, but at the same time, withdrew the prominent role from citizens and focused on the role of the traditional political actors. Therefore, the mobilisation stopped being from citizens and became a political one.

The mobilisation took two different paths that complement each other and align to the strategic interests of the Colombian government. Whereas in the imaginary persists the idea of the mobilisation as a social one, promoted by citizens, the leadership of the mobilisation moved to the political actors of the government, its political parties, and famous actors that invite to participate. The media and the government prepared advertising campaigns favouring the mobilisation. By contrast, the opponent party stays in the crossroads at the imaginary one of the action as a social mobilization. From this moment, the ones that go against the proposal will be seen as part of the guerrilla, and the ones that participate, will be seen as "uribists"[23].

The government, as the guarantor of the mobilisation – as well as other social, political and institutional actors[24]- gained in the mobilisation an absolute legitimacy. Thousands of people took to the streets to express their dissatisfaction against guerrilla actions. These people supported the legitimacy of the democratic security policy[25] of the government, and later on, they supported governmental actions that even violate the international laws (see below).

The mobilisation became a mass media issue, and thus, became an issue of political power for the government and for the opponent party. Both try to persuade people, creating the polarisation of society that, on the one hand, radicalises the opponents against the government, and on the other hand, guarantees the legitimacy of the president[26] and of his actions.

The impact of the group "Un millón de voces contra las Farc" ended on February 4th. The group became a panel for polarised and unfounded opinions. The group reflects

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[23] This refers to the different actors that support and agree with the policies and the government of Álvaro Uribe Vélez.

[24] It is important to mention here some of the members of the demobilised paramilitaries- AUC, a paramilitary group of right wing trend, created on April 1997 with the objective of centralising the different paramilitary groups existing all over the country.

[25] This has been the central point of the government of Uribe during his mandate (since 2002), which is based on the military defeat of the guerrilla groups.

[26] It is important to take in mind that the Colombian regime works over a presidential system in which the executive branch has most of the power.

what is happening in Colombia: a majority[27] supporting the institutional policies, and a minority opposing to this, trying to survive within the context of stigmatisation, and the constant reference as them as closed to the guerrilla groups.

2. Three periods of the group "Un millón de voces contra las Farc"

2.1. The birth of a social mobilisation: From January 4th to 17th, 2008

After the proposal made by Carlos A. Santiago and Oscar Morales, on January 4th, 2008, the group on Facebook started gaining adepts. During this period, there is only one topic that matters: the mobilisation. The logistic factors, the exchange of information and the messages supporting the mobilisation are the main topics of discussion. There is a unified project that users try to keep out from the political ideas; there is a clear objective: the reject to the Farc.

Most of the discussions have a propositive sense in terms of defining the space, the places for gathering and the logistics for guaranteeing the participation of the different cities. The basic agreements for the mobilisation were enough for putting together in almost ten days more than 130.000 users in the group.

The use of media during this period can be seen in the constant information presented regarding the Farc and the actors involved in the failed release (mainly Hugo Chavez and Piedad Córdoba), in order to give continuity to the agreement established regarding the objective of the mobilisation.

Nevertheless, the users promoted the need for including the mass media in their movement. The users asked constantly for contacts with media and with celebrities; the objective is to spread the movement in order to reach the whole society. This expected moment occurred on January 17th. From this moment, the proposal for mobilisation became part of the news, and it became a political and strategic issue for the traditional actors in Colombia.

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[27] According to the information provided by surveys, after the mobilisation of February 4th, the popularity of the President reached more than 80%.

Graph No 1. Evolution of the number of users in the group "Un millón de voces contra las Farc": January 4th- June 6th, 2008.
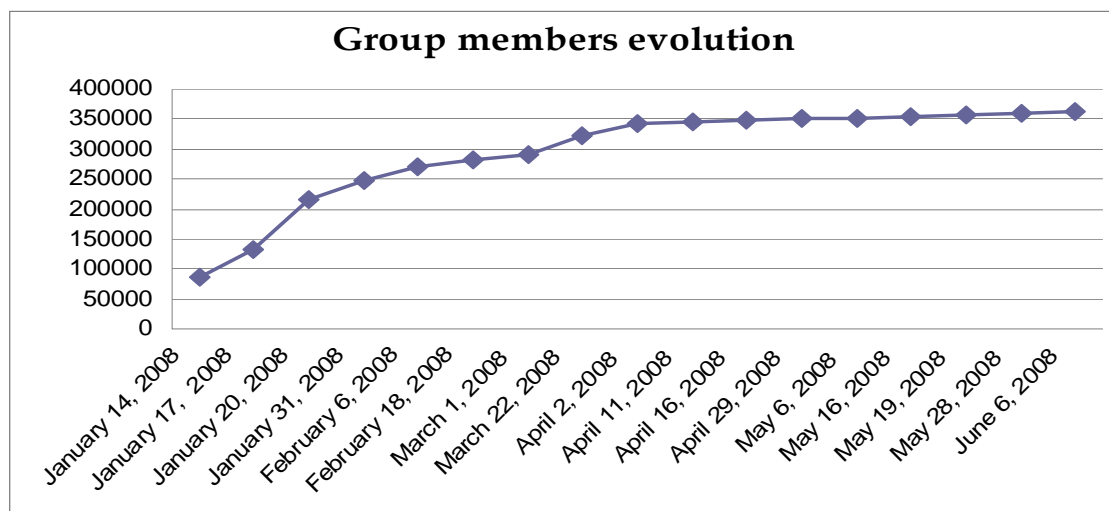
2.2. The mediatisation of the mobilisation: From January 17th to February 4th, 2008

From this date, the mobilisation became a worldwide issue. The number of users began to increase, and reached almost the double of the users between January 17th and 31st. At this moment, the number of users inscribed in the group was 250.000[28] (see Graph 1). In addition, after the mediatisation of the mobilisation, the participation in the wall and in the discussion board notably increases during this period of time (see Graphs 2 and 3).

The users were aware of what the media say about the mobilisation, but the media focused mainly on the main actors, as mentioned before. However, the massification of the movement makes that new actors align to the proposal, causing its politicization; here, the first manifestations of polarisation appeared.

The way the proposal promoted through Facebook appeared on the media pressures the society for manifesting and taking a position. The opinion articles refer to the topic; the media shows every day the adherence of celebrities, political parties and movements. Diverse advertising messages spread within media and within the different

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[28] If we take into account the number Facebook users in Colombia, which is more than 500.000 users, can affirm that almost 50% of the active users of this social network were members of the group on January 31st, 2008.

spaces for promoting the mobilisation. The politicians, as well as other actors, invite the citizens to take to the streets.

During this period the polarisation of society appeared, but it is still not completely manifested. Due to the different and opposed positions regarding the mobilisation, the opponent party, which still agrees on the initial idea of the mobilisation, decided to propose an alternative mobilisation against the violence of the rest of the armed groups of the Colombian conflict. The staging of the political actors caused by media is the responsible for the division of the Colombian society in two different factions. The processes of stigmatisation, as well as the radical positions began to emerge with much more strength. Nevertheless, there is still a clear idea of unity promoted by the initial movement that called for the mobilisation, which can be seen in the unity of the mobilisation that took place on February 4th.

However, after the mobilisation, the group on Facebook lost its sense and its perspective.

Graph No. 2. Evolution of the participation on the wall of the facebook group "Un millón de voces contra las Farc": January 4th- June 6th, 2008.
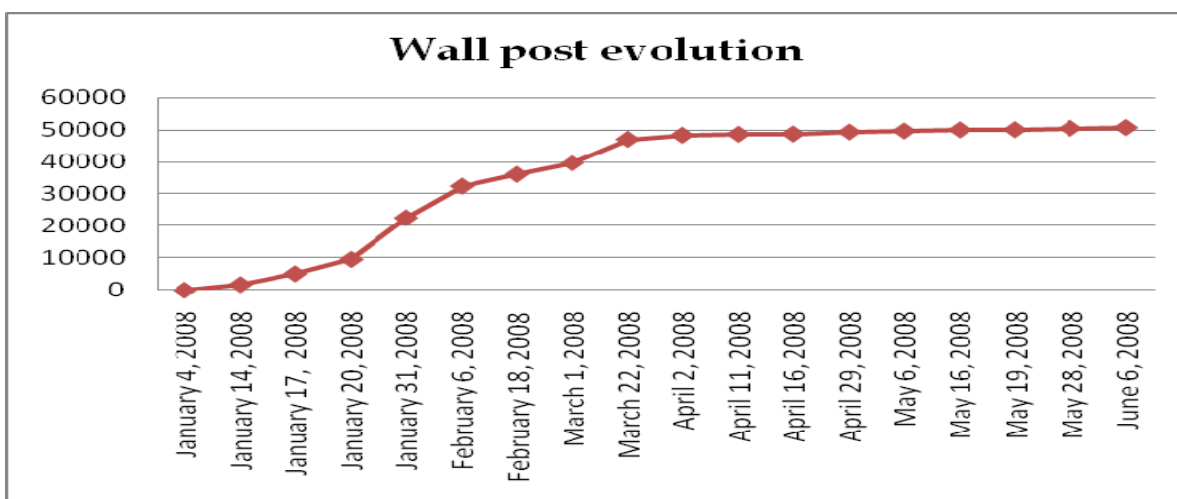
2.3. Polarisation: From February 4th to June 6th[29]

After the mobilisation took place, the radical and polarised positions appeared in the group. The initial unity of the group, which was considered the focal point, began to

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[29] The research done for this paper was developed until June 6th, 2008. However, this does not mean that the group has disappeared or that it is not relevant anymore.

evaporates, and due to this, the cohesion disappeared. As it can be seen in Graphs 2 and 3, participation stagnates, and the content of the discussions only reflects the comments of one side or the other regarding the Colombian politics.

The first discussion after the mobilisation emerged with the proposal for the new mobilisation called by the opposition. "*How many of you are going to mobilise against the terrorism of AUC[30] and of the State[31]?*" This is one of the topics proposed in the forum. The immediate answer is: "*Reasons for not mobilising the 6th of March*[32].

On the other hand, and due to the success of the mobilisation as a way for promoting the legitimacy of the current president, emerged the political absolutisms, which look for giving the president Álvaro Uribe Vélez an undefined mandate: "PROYECTO DE LEY 'Uribe presidente hasta la extinción de las FARC-EP'"[33].

The polarisation within the group is also perceived by the creators of it, who decided to close the open participation on the discussion board during some days on April. This led to the creation of a new group by users, called "Foros un millón de voces contra las Farc – Sin censura"[34]. In the information of the group, it is said that the group was created as a "*response to the violation experienced by the members of the group "Un millón de voces contra las Farc", who suffered the closing of the discussion board by the administrators of the group, who were not able to expose and support their opinions; and they opened the group with some "participation rules" as a way of censorship that does not enrich or solve anything. As history has shown, it is not by silencing or avoiding the opposition how the country is constructed*[35]".

At this moment, it is clear that the group has lost its bearings and its sense. After the mobilisation (which was the reason why the group emerged), the group decreased in terms of opinions regarding new events –some of the events proposed relates to new mobilisations in favour or against specific actors-. The group entered the logics of low impact and low participation. The trend in terms of increase of users, messages in the wall and discussion board started to change.

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[30] Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia.
[31] Name given to the discussion boards within the group "Un millón de voces contra las Farc". Available on http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=6684734468
[32] Ibíd.
[33] PROJECT OF LAW ' Uribe president up to the extinction of the FARC-EP. Ibíd.
[34] Forums a million voices against the Farc - Without censorship.
[35] Free translation. Original at: http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=14615190497

However, the changing events and trends in a country such as Colombia, allows the emergence of new discussions that, again, reproduce the factors of polarisation and reject to different values. The radicalisms are now evident, and there is a lack of proposals, continuing with the trend followed since February 4th [36]. The group "Un millón de voces contra las Farc" became a simple wall for posting opinions, but not for participation.

Graph No.3. Evolution of the participation in the discussion board of the group "Un millón de voces contra las Farc": January 4th-June 6th, 2008.
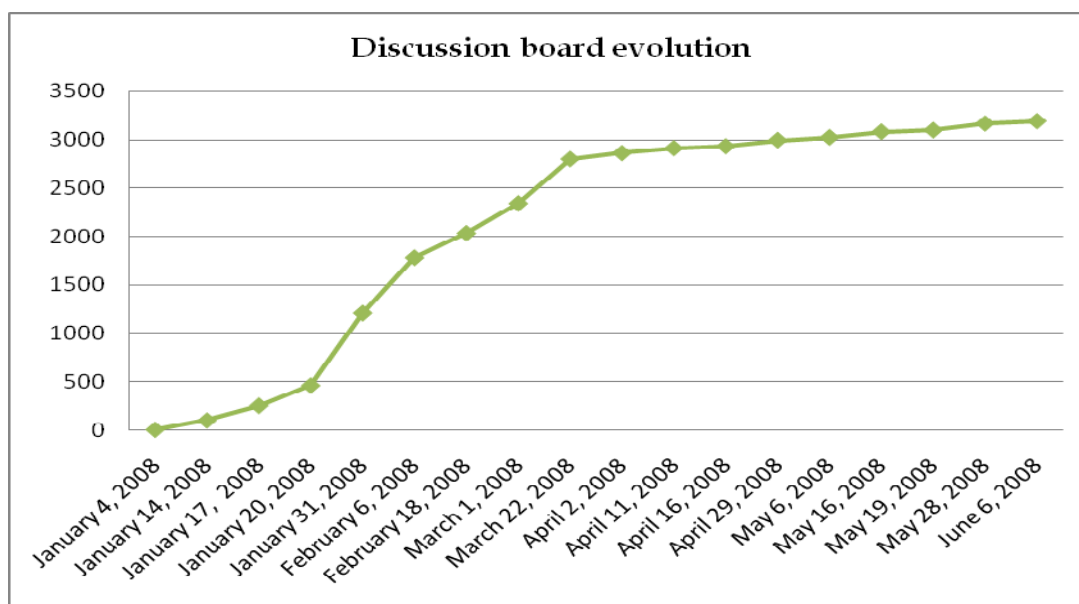
3. The political use of the mobilisation of February 4th

For the government of Álvaro Uribe Vélez, the mobilisation of February 4th became a jump of legitimacy. It served as a way for weakening the opposition that was getting together for supporting the humanitarian agreement pressured by Farc and by the relatives of the Farc hostages. It also served for gaining much more support to the democratic security policy, and increased the popularity of the President, who became the president with the highest popularity among Latin American countries.

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[36] Some of the examples regarding this are the discussions against the Supreme Court of Justice, for the actions against the political processes of the presidency and the political parties that support the President. Groups such as "Que esta (sic) pasando con la Corte Suprema de Justicia… ¿para quién (sic) trabaja?" (What is happening with the Supreme Court of Justice … for whom does it work?) questions the investigations that this autonomous institution has developed regarding the illegality and unconstitutionality of the government or the members of the Congress close to the government.

This issue allowed the president to develop different political actions, based on the support given by the people. Nevertheless, this has also led to exceed the limits of legality and the legitimacy of the democratic institutions. The aligned thought in favour of the president was never contested within the group of Facebook. On the contrary, the group helped consolidating the imaginary in a constant spread of messages supporting the presidential policies and against the opposition, which was associated with guerrilla groups.

With plenty legitimacy, the president started military actions; the core moment here appeared when the military forces attacked the guerrilla camp in the neighbour country Ecuador. This led to a regional crisis between Colombia, Ecuador, Venezuela and Nicaragua. This issue was discussed at the Organisation of American States (OAS), and it finally ended up with a declaration that rejects the violation of the Ecuadorian territory[37]; nevertheless, the regional tension continues.

Moreover, the appearance of "parapolitics"[38] without consequences, the lack of questions to the process for approving the project of constitutional reform that allows the re-election of the president, and the fall of the political reform proposed by the opponent parties[39], are factors that can also be associated with the high legitimacy of the Colombian regime; which was generated by the mobilisation originated in Facebook.

But what is more striking here is the fact that since the mobilisation of February 4th, 2008, it is more clear the intention for a second re-election of the current President. The support to his actions, and the Colombian imaginary about his personal presidential figure, leaves the floor open for a constitutional reform that allows the re-election (again) of Álvaro Uribe Vélez.

Third part: Conclusions

1. Internet, as well as other social networks, can become a space for democratic participation of citizens; but users need to be able to develop the necessary competences for promoting pluralist and democratic values and practices. The

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[37] OAS Declaration regarding the current issues between Colombia and Ecuador. March 14th, 2008.

[38] This is the way of referring to the political scandal that is taking place in Colombia since 2006, due to the links between more than 51 politicians -mostly members of uribist parties-, and paramilitaries; this happened after the demobilisation process of the some groups of AUC.

[39] The reform proposes the lost of the Congress bench in of the politicians and theirs parties that were involved in the "parapolitics".

mobilisation of February 4th of 2008, originated from the cyberspace, is a clear example of the citizens' power for mobilising society. Nevertheless, if the tying to the traditional mediatisation done by the mass media continues, and if the social mobilisation depends on this, the actors that appear in the media will continue driving the actions of people, not the citizens that integrate a determined community.

The citizenship can take advantage of the tools given by internet for promoting actions; nevertheless, there is a need for overcoming the simple opinion and stigmatisation. The applications in the social network analysed here, as well as in other scenarios of the cyberspace, allows the configuration of new participatory models and new alternatives for the exchange of proposals and information; which can be discussed and build up based on the spaces and the collaborative work within the Network. The formation of citizens and their actions can be promoted through the social networks. The free access to information has become a clear advance for achieving this objective. However, it is necessary to develop the participative capabilities of citizens that allow the construction of citizens as actors with clear objectives of democratic political actions. The non-alignment with media and with its actors is the only possible way how citizens can become part of the news.

Also, it is important to be careful with the use given by the traditional actors to the mobilisations promoted by citizens. The leadership should be placed in the citizenship, and it should powers its capacity for influencing the political decisions. The citizenship should also guarantee the smart control -based on clear and transparent information-, of the political actions of their representatives. All these needs can be channelled and strengthened through the social networks if the user has previously gained the necessary competences for participating in the Network.

2. The current events, the novelty, and the constant movement makes difficult to work on social networks and on internet. There is no long term in this media.
 There are only short -term trends that disappear rapidly. Users migrate or get bored easily. This is the reason why the political action promoted through the network is the only real instrument for keeping the group cohesion. Without this, the group will only be a simple space for discussion, as all the spaces that exist nowadays.

The networks erode himself; this is the reason why it is necessary to have creative and novelty alternatives for working on. The only way how the group can work as a Network is by offering different things every time. Something can work for a short period of time,

but it should be enriched with other elements so that it can continue working. If the topics regarding the political affairs are boring for the majority of the population throughout the world, there is a need to look at ways of making them interesting on the Network. It is necessary to look at ways of doing participative discussions in the network.

The political participation in the social networks can be made without the interference of the controls of the administrators of the spaces. The dynamic of networks does not allow the control of the users' actions. The dynamic competences of the network are the only ones able to give the self-regulation to citizens. They are the ones that should define if their action needs representation, or if these actions only require a strong action with a clear social objective: to influence the political agenda and the government decision making process.

3. Polarisation and participation. Both of them are in the Facebook area and in the realized study. How we can guide the users to improve de participation side?

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