

Gathering modes, political and educative-communicative practices of urban youths

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Abstract

Based on a 2008 and 2009 research about youth groups in Bogota and Medellin as well as more recent studies on new social movements made in collaborative companionship with various youth groups¹ this work attempts to answer the broad question many specialists ask themselves about the youth: what is politically innovative about the practices of this part of the population? To answer this question this study will firstly analyze their forms of association and the types of social action they develop; the way in which being together represents for young people a force activated by the links of affection and a variety of capacities that allow them to confront social fracture, thus favoring the rise of new issues, objects and fields to address. Among other matters, the paper will display the strong tendency of the youth to face social problems such as the environmental deterioration and the shortage of water; the over-exploitation and animal abuse; the ability of art to face the fragmentation, cruelty and indifference of the contemporary city; the educational inequity and the lack of varied opportunities for the youngest. It will be described how these practices do not mingle with the representative politics procedure nor have the intention of impacting on regulations or state proposals. This paper will show that most of these movements propel a decisive educational attitude that does not distinguish between self transformation and the transformation of others; how education is a key field for political confrontation where the organizational capacities of these movements converge with their eloquence and ability to positively impact other social sectors, as well as their competence and good judgment in the creative use of the different media. This study will present the way in which young people have the power to project themselves further away from their group's limits by creating temporary cores, wider nets, strategic alliances and a diversity of connections, hereby bringing about other kinds of social conformation that, generally, do not seek to gather nor direct the individuals. Finally, bursting out of the tendency to locally anchor the practices, young persons show their ability to create situations, formulate statements and innovative interpretations as well as accomplishing social impact by composing ways of live and collective projects which effectively transform the current conditions of domination, inequity and injustice.

From the perspective of methodology, the investigation assumed a qualitative-reflective approach, which meant to jointly build knowledge between the researchers and the research objects in a sort of interplay, looking to stablish symmetrical and shifting relationships between “objects” and “subjects” of knowledge. In this manner monitoring as a whole became an interactive process of differentiation and reciprocity between the reflectivity of the knower subject (who has played out theories, explanatory models and even his common sense) and the group of youths under research, who determined their own interpretation frames on the phenomena. The design of the *data gathering* technics facilitated said passage, as the researchers, with their particular personal and socio-cultural background, were the main “instruments” of investigation. Furthermore,

1 The above mentioned studies refer to the following: “Jóvenes participación política y formación ciudadana. Estudio comparado en Bogotá y Medellín” (2008-2009); “Prácticas comunicativo-educativas de Bogotá y la región del Altiplano (2010); “Reflexividad y producción de conocimiento” (2011-2012), y “Saberes, prácticas y redes de colectivos de nuevos movimientos sociales de Cundinamarca” (2015-2016). All these researches were lead by the author and financed by the Universidad Central in Bogotá; the first one in collaboration with Colciencias and the Universidad de Antioquia.

in practice, the various tools overlapped, and *flexibility* in using these technics became the central characteristic of the field work, as its guidelines were gradually developed along the investigation process. In this case reflectivity meant that the technics provide information about the researcher as well as on everyone else.

Finally, “expressive intervention”, a term we assigned to the consented presence of the investigation team during the expressive events of the youth groups, took an important place within the investigation by way of participant observation and communicative input. We looked to place ourselves in a common time and space together with the group, i.e., in synchronicity with the regularity and the cycles of their performances, assuming a participant role in order to establish coincidences between their expressions and our means to go along with them by getting involved with their daily dynamics. This “coordination of passions” allowed us to create a cartography appropriate to each group’s expressive condition, making the community’s movements comply mainly to the pace of the events; whereas meetings with an exclusively investigative communication purpose - as are common in discussion groups, interviews and other methods created for the researchers to give an unbiased account of the research object’s condition- had a lesser importance.

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