Violence and social networking in Mexico: Actors and surveillance technologies

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Introduction

In the last five years, Mexico has seen the emergence of unprecedented expressions of violence by groups linked to drug trafficking. Particularly it can be seen in three forms: beheadings as an execution form between groups of drug traffickers and against police; attacks against police stations, mayors, newspaper, magazines and television stations using car bombs; and finally, the blocking of avenues and streets in the countries northern cities as well as the cities of the south. These expressions of violence have generated a feeling of insecurity, terror and fear in many sectors of the population. It is clear that these newer expressions of violence have gone and reinforced as well as consolidated the expansion of a number of important surveillance technologies, both in public as well as private spaces.

What is certain is that the surveillance devices have shown to be ineffective in slowing down this spiraling criminal behavior, especially when with this scene of violence, one talks about attacks with car bombs as well as the blocking of city streets and avenues. Facing this scenario, social networks such as Facebook, Hi5, and Twitter have been transformed into sites through which the population can be warned about danger circulating in the zones and avenues, as well as going out on the street during specific times. Through these means, it is possible to know which spaces of the city are living in moments of explosions of violence, since they warn about the danger zones and give real time knowledge of the existence of wounded in the streets and avenues, as well as civilians caught up in the cross fire originating from the drug traffickers as well as the army or police.

The objective of this research paper is to show how society uses social networking platforms to keep watch on the cities and to stay safe in them, while facing new expressions of organized criminal violence linked to drug trafficking. The idea is to show how social networks have taken their place in a new space of urban surveillance in order to warn the population of travelling in zones where groups of drug traffickers can be seen blocking the avenues and streets, escalating into armed conflicts. It's real time functioning amplifies its capacity to produce and transmit the information of alerts of possible risks and dangers to the population. A capacity that is difficult to achieve with more traditional forms of electronic surveillance, for example, based on video surveillance. To face this expression of violence video surveillance systems go and reduce their capability of prevention due to the fact that they are installed after the administration of risk based on places considered previously having high instances of crime, and also, because the transmission of the information that is gathered is habitually found linked to the mass media of traditional communication such as radio and television.

Social networks based on what Castells (2008) denotes as mass self-communication are characterized by being non-centralized forms of communication. They constitute a particular way in which the production of information in real time is alternative and horizontal, separate to vertical which is produced from governmental and corporate interests (Tubella, Tabernero and Dwyer, 2008). It is a mechanism that opens up a new form of information production to the citizenry, allowing it to make up for the inability of the government to warn of risks and dangers linked to drug trafficking violence. In this way, perhaps, it is a way that defines a new type of citizenship in relation to the use of urban spaces and their bond with government authorities. However, it is the citizenry that constitutes the logic of social exclusion. As stated in the works of Graham (2005), there exists a social inequality in the capacity of sorting the city as well as having access to it, in favor of those who are able to access and use information technologies. In Mexico, the digital gap prevents an ample sector of the population from access to the production of information that is generated on social networks (Arteaga, 2005). It also appears that a digital discrimination is established (Graham and Wood, 2003), in that a handful can use the benefits of the technology and its information to enhance their own security, while others, the majority, are excluded.

To understand how this scenario is configured, first, the role of social networks is analyzed as practices both of mass self-communication such as digitally mediated surveillance, as well as its expansion and consolidation in the particular case of Mexico. Second, the form in which these surveillance social networks form themselves in the context of the blockades and barricades which are constructed in the cities by groups linked to drug trafficking is analyzed. Third, the way in which the social networks present information, such as the forms of digitally mediated surveillance is examined. Finally, how these processes of surveillance allow the realization, as stated by Lyon (2003a), of the production and reproduction of the dynamics of social inclusion and exclusion will be reflected upon.

Mass self-communication and digitally mediated surveillance

The sense of the production of horizontal communication that generates social networks cannot be understood without analyzing that which distinguishes mass media (Jenkins, 2006). This can be defined by its capacity to generate massages that are practically spread to society as a whole (Hesmondhalgh, 2007). This type of communication generates a connection predominantly unidirectional (Castells, 2007), such as what is happening in the case of television, the press and radio, because the message is sent from one to many. On the contrary, social networks are characterized by "…the capacity of sending messages from many to many, in real time or chosen time, and with the possibility of using point-to-point communication, narrowcasting or broadcasting, depending on the purpose and characteristics of the intended communication practice" (Castells, 2009: 55). This is what is called the production of mass self-communication: a particular form of communication that articulates the potential capacity of a global audience with the production of a self-generated message, in which, also, the potential of the recipients is self-directed and the recuperation of specific messages or its content is self-selected (Castells, 2009).

This form of communication production is found anchored with the spread of the Internet and wireless communication on a global scale (Benkler, 2006). Advances in technology and software, as well as the reduction in the costs of its production, allows a larger number of people and social groups access to these platforms which make mass self-communication possible by means of SMS, blogs, podcasts, wikis, social networks (Gillespie, 2007), and microblogging. The expansion of this type of communication not only responds to its large accessibility, but that people found in them a space of horizontal information in which they express through messages: interests, wishes, fears, expectations and projects, documents and images (Downing, 2003). Its expansion also responds, as pointed out by Juris (2008), to that which results in an appropriate medium so that people, in their character as citizens, or also as part of social groups, define and defend their social and political expectations, as well as their interests, declaring in the same way their values and identity.

Mass self-communication is clearly an object of surveillance by governmental and private entities, which for different reasons—security, marketing, business, among others—tracks, records and continually and systematically processes the information which is generated by them (Lyon, 2003a). Like that, information is collected on who uses mass self-communication to construct profiles of ideological and political identities, as well as identity interests and networks among users and social groups (Lyon, 2007). Public and private organizations develop, in this sense, different ways to optimize digitally mediated surveillance obtaining personal information and to have knowledge of the activities that are carried out in everyday life. Corporate interests build data surveillance systems or "dataveillance" systems (Clarke, 1997) and data-double (Haggerty & Ericcson, 2000). Governments, in the same way, collect personal information not only to identify criminals and groups considered to be subversive or "revolutionaries", but also to follow political activists, political party members, and social movements (Lyon, 2003b; Haggerty, 2009). This places a risk to democratic institutions, in particular in the context where they are weak, as in the case of global south. In this way, mass self-communication results in a horizontal space of interactive communication construction generated from many to many, but can be the object of surveillance where the few watch many (Miller & Rose, 2009), using such information for their own interests or for the interests of others.

This has brought about the emergence of privacy advocates (Bennett, 2008), members of civil society who from different spheres try to do something with respect to the increase of the practices which tend to develop intrusive ways of obtaining personal information by electronic means. In various countries of the global north, the presence of movements which try to make the population aware of the risks that exist because of a lack of regulation, and transparency over the functioning of digitally mediated surveillance can be seen. A situation that contrasts with its fragile, and in some cases non-existent presence in the global south. A situation which perhaps owes itself to the expansion of mass self-communication, and electronic devices that serve as a platform, found restricted to certain sectors of the population, despite its significant growth in the past few years and as can be seen continuing.

It is certain that only 29 percent of the houses in Mexico have a computer in 2010, the year before there was 20 percent[1]. Although besides the fact that entities such as the Federal District, Nuevo Leon, Sonora and Baja California, 43.4 percent of the houses have a computer, where as in Chiapas, Guerrero and Oaxaca, only 14percent have access to one[2]. This information points out that even though there is more access to computers all over the country, this access is still limited to a large part of the population. However, the access to the Internet shows a large dynamic of growth. In 2000, there were 2.7 million Internet users[3], a figure which passed 32.8 million users in 2010[4]. However, hardly 22 percent of the houses in the country have an Internet connection. What this means is that the usage occurs at work or in places which rents the service. One factor which must be considered is that cell phones with Internet have become, in some cases, an electronic platform much more accessible. In 2009, 774 people for every 1000 inhabitants had cell phones[5]. It is significant that 8 out of 10 houses have a cellular telephone: 1.9 cell phones per house[6]. The use of mobile telephones as a means to connect to the internet passed 12 percent of users in 2009 to 30 percent in 2010[7].

About the Internet, different studies show that for 2010, 81 percent of Internet users were registered in a social network[8]; as in 2009 the percentage reached 70 percent[9]. In particular, the percentage of people registered on Facebook passed 23 percent in 2008 to 55 percent in 2009[10] and 86 percent in 2010[11]. In the case of Twitter, the number of users reached in January of 2010 a total of 146,000 registered accounts, of which, 42 percent were active, however by January of 2011, the percentage rose to over four million users[12]. Next to stand out is that 5 percent of the users in Mexico contributed 95 percent of the content. On average, Mexican users followed 20percent more people than those who followed them. However, the penetration on Twitter is also unequal. In 2009, cities such as the Federal

[1] INEGI. (2010). *COMUNICADO NÚM. 413/10.* Obtained March 4 2010. Available in: http://www.inegi.org.mx/inegi/contenidos/espanol/prensa/comunicados/modutih10.asp
[2] INEGI. (2010). *COMUNICADO NÚM. 413/10.* Obtained March 4 2010. Available in: http://www.inegi.org.mx/inegi/contenidos/espanol/prensa/comunicados/modutih10.asp
[3] Internet World Stats. México Internet Statistics and Telecommunication Reports. Obtained September 30, 2010. Available in: http://www.internetworldstats.com/am/mx.htm
[4] INEGI. (2010). *COMUNICADO NÚM. 413/10.* Obtained March 4 2010. Available in: http://www.inegi.org.mx/inegi/contenidos/espanol/prensa/comunicados/modutih10.asp
[5] INEGI. (2009). *Usuarios de telefonía móvil por países seleccionados, 1998 a 2009.* Obtained March 4 2010. Available in: http://www.inegi.org.mx/sistemas/sisept/default.aspx?t=tinf146&s=est&c=19453
[6] Asociación Méxicana de Internet. (2010). *ESTUDIO AMIPCI 2009 Sobre hábitos de los Usuarios de Internet en México.* Obtained March 4 2010. Available in: http://www.amipci.org.mx/prensa/historico/categoria/1
[7] IAB México, Televisa Interactive, Millward Brown. (2010). *Estudio de Consumo de Medios Digitales 2010.* Obtained March 4 2010. Available in: http://www.iabmexico.com/ECM2010
[8] IAB México, Televisa Interactive, Millward Brown. (2010). *Estudio de Consumo de Medios Digitales 2010.* Obtained March 4 2010. Available in: http://www.iabmexico.com/ECM2010
[9] Millward Brown Mexico, IAB México, DiPaola Márquez. (2009). *Estudio de consumo de medios digitales en México*.
[10] Millward Brown Mexico, IAB México, DiPaola Márquez. (2009). *Estudio de consumo de medios digitales en México*.
[11] IAB México, Televisa Interactive, Millward Brown. (2010). *Estudio de Consumo de Medios Digitales 2010.* Obtained March 4 de marzo de 2010. Available in: http://www.iabmexico.com/ECM2010
[12] Social Media Marketing. (2010). *Twitter en México 2011.* Obtained March 8 2011. Available in: http://mentedigital.com/site/?p=14

District showed a percentage increased of 60 percent, while in cities such as Monterrey, 26 percent, and in Guadalajara, 11 percent[13].

Unfortunately, the increase in the use of social networks, their unequal access can be a factor to explain the weak preoccupation of their users of digitally mediated surveillance; of which can be summed up that the protection of privacy is not considered a universal right within a framework of legal norms but a property right acquired by those who can afford it (Arteaga, 2010). As Zureik (2010) mentions, in Mexico the protection of personal data is a privilege from which a significant part of population is excluded. That large sectors of the population do not pay attention to digitally mediated surveillance does not mean that it does not exist. In Mexico however, social networks, in particular Facebook, Hi5, and Twitter have been transformed into mechanisms of mass self communication to allow users in real time to be aware of when and where confrontations between drug traffickers and the army and police are taking place. This guarantees that a determined number of users take steps to be protected, avoid risks and dangers in the city thanks to the information that authorities are unable to generate through official communications. Much less through local media outlets such as radio and television, who have been the object of reprisals when news linked to drug trafficking has been presented. In this sense, the use of Twitter guarantees anonymity to those who denounce and allows it to make up for the incapacity of the government to disseminate information in real time.

Blockades and social networks

On March 19, 2010, the city of Monterrey, located south of the border with Texas in the state of Nuevo Leon, lived through an experience never seen before: between midnight and six in the afternoon the next day, 31 blockades of the main avenues and highways in the metropolitan area occurred, all perpetrated by groups of drug traffickers. They also violently robbed more than 65 vehicles using guns, picks, sticks and even rocks; in some cases supported by state and municipal police, as well as groups of gangs which lifted the barricades. Vehicles included ambulances and civil protection automobiles[14]. The panic and chaos seized the population, who fled the blocked zones while groups of criminals linked to the Zetas communicated to guarantee the coordination of the actions in the highways and intersections. Even various military convoys, which were in the city to help halt the blockades, were attacked from pedestrian bridges and overpasses with grenades[15].

One day after, the scene was repeated in different zones in Monterrey from the early morning until 9 in the morning[16]. Now, many things are used to create the blockades, not only private vehicles, but also public transportation buses and large trucks. Groups of drug

[13] Vargas, Alan, *Estadísticas de luso del Twitter en México 2010.* Obtained February 4 2011. Available in: http://conecti.ca/2010/02/04/estadisticas-del-uso-de-twitter-en-mexico/
[14] Robles, Osvaldo. "Vive Monterrey narcocaos vial". Reforma. Obtained March 19 2010. 23 April 2010. Available in: < http://www.reforma.com/nacional/artículo/546/1091001.html>.
[15] Grupo Reforma. "Bloquean sicarios carreteras en NL". Reforma. Obtained March 19 2010. 23 April 2010. Available in: < http://www.reforma.com/nacional/artículo/546/1090676.html>.
[16] Grupo Reforma. "Repiten narcobloqueos en Monterrey". Reforma. Obtained March 20 2010. 23 April 2010. Available in: < http://www.reforma.com/nacional/artículo/546/1090826.html>.

traffickers stopped, as in the day before, drivers in order to remove them violently from their vehicles, firing guns or throwing rocks and other objects, forming barricades in the city streets, and nearby highways. The final results were large formations of lines of cars that were stopped, some of which for more than five hours. In this sense, the city was paralyzed for two consecutive days, something never seen before in any other urban Mexican space. In fact, also at the beginning of March, blockades from drug traffickers on highways were reported, but the city was saved as a space outside the fight between gangs. This was the case of the highways which connect Monterrey with other population zones in the neighboring state of Tamaulipas, in particular it's capital city Reynosa, where the blockades aimed to delay the arrive of military forces, which would support the fight against the drug traffickers[17].

The blockade of Monterrey, the second most important city in the country, had a major media impact, as it showed the strength of the drug traffickers to collapse the city. This impact increased more when on the third of April, in Reynosa, Tamaulipas, three blockades on the main avenues of the city were done, paralyzing it between nine and twelve in the morning[18]. In this case, there was also evidence of police collaboration with the drug trafficking groups, seizing with violence the vehicles of some drivers. In the case of Monterrey, it was detected that more than 150 policemen participated in this type of activity[19]. However, the role of the police in the blockades in both cities was one of support. As stated in an editorial in *The Washington Post*, the campaign of blockades shows, according to analysts and military experts, the presence of sophisticated and elaborate paramilitary tactics that are specifically developed by the Zetas in their confrontations with groups of drug traffickers in the Gulf of Mexico[20].

In addition, the strategy of confrontation, developed by distinct groups of drug traffickers, also is being used to fight the army. This can be observed for the first time in June 2010, after almost one month without blockades in Monterrey, the Zetas unleashed a reaction after the arrest of one of their leaders[21]. This group carried out 41 blockades important streets and avenues of the city and at the same time, attacked with guns different police stations. With what happened in previous blockades, where civilians were the object of violence, people decided to abandon their vehicles to look for shelter, while nearby businesses shut down temporarily. Blockades were also done when the army affected the distribution interests of the drug gangs. This is the case of 28 blockades that occurred when a military operation took control of a drug trafficker's safe house. These last ones let loose a wave of truck robberies and other types of large trucks to block the cities avenues and

[17] Grupo Reforma. "Bloquea narco vías de NL y Tamaulipas". Reforma. Obtained March 18 2010. 23 April 2010. Available in: < http://www.reforma.com/nacional/artículo/546/1090570.html>.
[18] Grupo Reforma. "Bloquea narco vías de NL y Tamaulipas". Reforma. Obtained March 18 2010. 23 April 2010. Available in: < http://www.reforma.com/nacional/artículo/546/1090570.html>.
[19] Carrizales, David. "Despedirán a 150 policías de Monterrey". La Jornada. Obtained April 6 2010. 23 April 2010. Available in: < http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2010º/04/06/index.php?section=estados&article=026n4est>
[20] Grupo Reforma. "Vive bajo terror Tamaulipas y NL.-WP". Reforma. Obtained April 21 2010. Available in: < http://www.reforma.com/nacional/artículo/551/1100633.html>.
[21] Cedillo, Juan. "Captura de capo en NL desata narcobloqueos". El Universal. Obtained June 10 2010. 8 September 2010. Available in: < http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/estados/76345.html>.

streets, setting off grenades, and destroying electricity transformers in order to leave different neighborhoods without electricity[22].

Certainly, the blockades are not just an instrument of reaction that faces military actions; they were converted into a clear strategy of attack. On August 7 of this year, there occurred 6 blockades in Monterrey, at 5 in the morning to prevent an army operation aimed to arrest a group of drug traffickers. The main objective of the blockades was the highway which connects the northeastern part of the city with the 7th military zone base, which is located in Salinas Victoria. It's the same highway which connects Monterrey with the Nuevo Leon International airport. It caused the Mexican Airport Operators to cancel, for several hours, both national and international flights, particularly those to the United States cities of Houston, Dallas and Atlanta[23].

The use of barricades using cars opened up a new form of violence by the drug traffickers in Mexico. They can paralyze a city for practically a day without the need to invest large amounts of cash buying sophisticated weapons, that are difficult to move and easily traceable, including those in the black market (Uesseler, 2007). The spectacle of the barricades in the avenues and streets is linked to the drama of the images of paralyzed cities, to the impotence of the population for avoiding it and the inability of the authorities to re-establish circulation and return the city to a calm state. In this way, those who perpetrate the blockades can suspend the cities' everyday life and show its vulnerability: in such a way that the population is submerged into a state of helplessness and generalized fear. The barricades using automobiles to block the cities avenues respond to, paraphrasing Davis (2007), the outstanding characteristics that make the automobile into the cheapest "air force", and allow it to be placed into the reach of practically anyone. The force of the automobile as a barricade lies in its "showiness", giving notoriety to the presence and activity of drug trafficking groups, not only to the press and television, but also to Internet social network sites, also having a low economic cost. The blockades allow the drug trafficker certain anonymity, leaving aside the arrest of the policemen who participated in the Monterrey blockades; the arrest of those involved has been minimal. In this way, these types of actions have a lower cost in terms of "personnel" losses. In the way that the blockades have been consolidated up until now as a form recurring each time To the point where the blockades are considered up to now as a recurrent criminal action which increases on a daily basis, not only in the northern zone, but also in other cities of Mexico such as Morelia, San Luis Potosí y Guadalajara.

The media impact of these actions is clear, in radio and television, every action made by the drug traffickers was practically transmitted live, but also information of the blockades was disseminated on social network sites such as Facebook, Hi5 and Twitter warning of the danger of going near these zones of the city; of circulate in specific avenues and of going out at specific moments. The construction of an environment of fear and violence can be seen reflected, maybe more interestingly, in the messages on Twitter sent by citizens

[22] El Universal. "Regresan narcobloqueos a Monterrey". El Universal. Obtained August 15 2010. 8 September 2010. Available in: < http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/estados/76346.html>.
[23] Cedillo, Juan. "Narcobloqueos en Monterrey provocan suspensión de vuelos". El Universal. 7 Obtained September 8 2010. Available in: <http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/estados/77279.html>.

recommending taking shelter from public spaces that lived and explosion of violence. This was the case in Reynosa, where information like this was disseminated via Twitter, reinforcing the sound of different caliber explosions and grenades that were heard in practically the whole city. In the same way, the population knew in real time the existence of wounded in the streets and plazas of the city, some of whom were civilians caught in the crossfire which originated between the drug trafficking groups and the army[24]. Like that, there exist elements to show how to establish a following of their users and tags in Twitter which contain information and data relative to blockades or clashes in urban spaces between groups of drug traffickers, police and the military. It is a particular way of collecting and processing automatically information with the purpose of administrating it to watch and warn the population of a city on the probable dangers travelling certain streets or avenues.

Cyber-surveillance and the administration of risk

Studies on surveillance are centered in general around how organizations are monitoring individuals (Bennett, 2008). Although following Lyon (2007), surveillance in the end directs its attention to individuals, which implies the analysis of how people interact with surveillance in their roles as citizens, workers and consumers. In this sense, it is interesting to see how acts of violence have been converted at times by those who are aware of it through social networks, in a sort of "lateral surveillance", like the neighborhood watch model. However, this last model works so that neighbors alert the police in order to face a criminal act, the lateral surveillance, in the case of the blockades in Mexico, refers more to an alert so that the population avoids getting close to zones considered dangerous. It doesn't seek out to prevent a criminal act or face it if it is happening, but tries to tell the population not to go near the space of the conflict because nobody can guarantee personal safety, nor even the State security forces. In this way on Twitter one can find warnings about blockades in Monterrey, Nuevo Leon: @DesdeLaRisca: "7:21p avoid downtown Mty traffic congestion then from # shooting near Padre Mier and Escobedo"[25] at 7pm; @LauMjdo: "*Shooting at* Barrio Antiguo. Can somebody confirm? CAUTION! ..."[26]; @Regina Montemayor: "*Shooting on* Humberto Lobo in *Monterrey*. Be careful "[27].
In Reynosa, Tamaulipas one can find similar messages: "Tampico 5 days of clashes. We feel afraid and helpless,"[28] wrote @lamadice; @Dcastellanost tweeted: "Different armed clashes last night in #tampico #tamaulipas"[29]; @chuymelo reported: "Shooting in #Tampico Bad guys scatter terror with grenades and machine guns in Colonia Petrolera University

[24] Notimex. "Narcobloqueos, balaceras y miedo paralizan a Reynosa". El Universal. Obtained March September 8 2010. Available in: http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/estados/77287.html
[25]Available in: http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:-mxTgMYV_q8J:twitter.com/chilaquilvisual+site:twitter.com+percent22balacerapercent22+percent22monterreypercent22&cd=13&hl=es&ct=clnk&source=www.google.com
[26] Available in: http://twitter.com/annapunk/status/15021574005
[27] Available in: http://twitter.com/reginus/status/27461168324
[28] El Universal (2010, 13 de octubre). Ciudadanos de Tamaulipas piden auxilio por balaceras en Twitter. *Globedia.* Obtained March 8 2011. Available in:: http://mx.globedia.com/ciudadanos-tamaulipas-piden-auxilio-balaceras-twitter

Avenue and Wisconsin"[30]. In Guadalajara, Jalisco, messages can be seen such as: @Toretto2181 warns: "Aqueduct on the street San Javier, SHOOTING AT THIS MOMENT, BE CAREFUL!!!!!! #GDL"[31]; in the same way @PacoVillagrana: "There is a shooting in the Aqueduct Zone and Circuito Madrigal #GDL #TraficoGDL #VivirGDL"[32]; finally @cesHAguilar askes: "Does anyone know what happened in Aqueduct and Pablo Neruda? There are army and helicopter movements #gdl"[33].

In many cases the information doesn't just make people aware of the danger that exists in some part of the city, but in how it is developing. This allows a particular logic of surveillance transmitted not by the visual images of what is happening, but by electronic means. Also, it transmits horizontally to other users, who then reproduce the information. For example, in the case of the army entering a neighborhood next to where a blockade can be found "…#reynosa#shooting in the media no information, only between us we have the nerve to circulate information"[34]. Also in many cases, highlighted in these messages is the fact that traditional communication means, radio and television, do not have any interest in informing the public on what is happening. However, maybe it is advisable to show that communication on Twitter to be many to many, self-generated, and self-directed, generates a collective watch as to what is happening. It can show for example the report that various Twitter users posted on clashes in front of an educational institution in Monterrey:

> 12:35 In the itesm can´t pass! And the guard doesn´t know anything¡
> 1:03 Barcelona in the Tec area from #mty... many explosions :S
> 1:03 Hearing gunfire in my apt. Also grenades, fuck, RETWEET please, everything is fucked.
> 1:06 Shit I am hearing a ton of gunfire: s very close to my house
> 1:13 Hearing gunshots, screams, exploding grenades, car alarms
> 1:13 The grenade was in the fucked up alley in front of the Tec and the military arrived
> 1:18 can hear sirens. I think I don't hear gunshots
> 1:21 Army in the Tec area. ITESM don't let students leave, Garza Sada and 2 de Abril. Gunfire and granades WTF!
> 1:32 First there were loud sounds and afterwards, but a bit farther I heard a gunshot and the theory is that it was 2
> 1:34 Gunfight and grenades in neighborhood Roma Garza Sada and 2 de Abril

[29] **El** Universal (2010, 13 de octubre). Ciudadanos de Tamaulipas piden auxilio por balaceras en Twitter. *Globedia.* Obtained March 8 2011. Available in: **http://mx.globedia.com/ciudadanos-tamaulipas-piden-auxilio-balaceras-twitter**

[30] El Universal (2010, 13 de octubre). Ciudadanos de Tamaulipas piden auxilio por balaceras en Twitter. *Globedia.* Obtained March 8 2011. Available in: http://mx.globedia.com/ciudadanos-tamaulipas-piden-auxilio-balaceras-twitter

[31] TWITTEROS ALERTAN DE BALACERA EN GUADALAJARA. (2010, 29 de julio). Obtained March 9 2011. Available in: in http://reynosafree.blogspot.com/2010/07/twitteros-alertan-de-balacera-en.html

[32] TWITTEROS ALERTAN DE BALACERA EN GUADALAJARA. (2010, 29 de julio). Obtained March 9 2011. Available in: http://reynosafree.blogspot.com/2010/07/twitteros-alertan-de-balacera-en.html

[33] TWITTEROS ALERTAN DE BALACERA EN GUADALAJARA. (2010, 29 de julio). Obtained March 9 2011. Available in: http://reynosafree.blogspot.com/2010/07/twitteros-alertan-de-balacera-en.html

[34] Balacera en Reynosa : Denuncian Balaceras en Reynosa a través de Twitter. (2010, 8 de febrero). *SDPNoticias.* Obtained March 9 2011. Available in: http://sdpnoticias.com/sdp/contenido/nacional/2010/02/08/28/580293

2:08 Army surrounding ITESM Mty, have not entered yet. Stay away. 7eleven on State avenue deserted
2:09 Can't leave ITESM MTY until 4am.
2:14 1 friend dead, 2 students wounded
2:22 The army entered the Tec campus but appears they fought with the narcos
2:25 Went to the pharmacy and ended up locked in the Tec Oxxo 40 minutes A soldier took my cell and later returned
2:32 In the Oxxo below the gap between the Tec and the Cones, the truck was there
2:35 The truth is I was fucking scared from the gunfire and grenades
2:38 Army looking for criminals inside Tec, students crying in the library
2:41 Turned off the library camara in the Tec they say army inside
2:49 To the students there go to the back of the library and turn off the lights
2:50 Army guarding library entrance
2:55 Up to now 2 students confirmed hurt
3:14 Just heard 2 more shots on Luis Elizondo and Garza Sada
3:24 By Río Panuco just hear shots far away
3:35 Army inside facilities
3:37 Up to 12:05 the news was that I went for aspirin. Then bursts and I hid. Fucking narcos
3:38 Students hiding in the Architecture zone of the Tec
3:51 Army entered Tec campus. Video from the Oxxo
3:55 Various tweets report soldiers inside Tec./ They entered, I saw
4:05 Confirmed, 2 Tec students hurt 4:10 Soldiers inside Tec!!
4:16 New grenade explosion in the TEC near dorms
4:20 I don't know if what I heard is real or not. But an explosion at 4:18 was real.
4:22 They told me in the Architecture building the guards won't let them leave by official order of the army and don't know when we can leave 4:40 Students can leave under their own responsibility (architecture zone)
4:44 Guards inside Tec say 6 wounded and 3 dead
5:12 Soldiers remain inside TEC nobody leave, hearing gunfire
5:25 Intense patrols now around the TEC, campus under seige, nobody leave
5:29 Nobody allowed near the TEC entrance
5:31 Soldiers take TEC police radios during the chaos, justified when informed a student was hurt (I heard) [35]

This narration took place between many by many, in real time and in an auto-generated way allowing the breakaway with the lack of information that television and radio had established. Also, to make up for the inability of government authorities to warn of the danger that passes at that moment in that zone. This is the reason why a large number of people began to give self-selected information, with the goal of knowing what is actually happening. Once that this type of knowledge passes, it can be seen that people search for users to generate information, and also to watch over periodically and systematically those who have previously reported blockades and clashes. In the same way, they search for tags such as #blockade, #shooting, #shots, in order to locate information and communication that allows them to establish if risk of violence exists on some avenue or street. In this sense a digitally mediated surveillance on two levels is established by the users of Twitter. The first one that must be seen is the capacity to transform Twitter in a mechanism for the

[35] Guillermo Guerrero. (2010, 25 de marzo). La Balacera del Tec, desde Twitter. Obtained March 8 2011. Available in: http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:7Epxy6nddIQJ:www.idosdelamente.com/2010/03/la-balacera-del-tec-desde-twitter.html+balaceras+twitter&cd=18&hl=es&ct=clnk&source=www.google.com

watching of what is happening in the city, not necessarily through visual means, converting it into an urban surveillance device. The second one refers to the searches that users carry out on Twitter in order to watch over places, avenues and streets where they might transit to make sure there are no violent events occurring.

It is convenient to mention that the dynamic of violence has generated on some occasions in which panic hash-tag can be seen, disseminating false news and rumors about clashes and blockades, demanding the use of agreements and ethics in regards to the messages about blockades. The community of users on Twitter are asked to always corroborate the information which is sent out. In other cases it is warned to avoid reporting on military and police operations, as the drug traffickers have access to the information on Twitter. Also, the communication established between users has evolved, although in a very weak form, in a certain "net activism" (Bennett, 2008). The lack of information by the traditional communication media is questioned, specifically television and radio, many of which are found threatened by drug traffickers and some of them are censored by the government; it criticizes in the same way established government policy for facing the trafficking of drugs. As warned in a message on Twitter sent by @Dcastellanost: "Diverse armed clashes were registered this evening in #tampico #tamaulipas Thanks!! @FelipeCalderon URGENT!! Changes forms of combat": This incipient "net activism" complements the information and data on the blockades in the cities, but are not the main content of the messages. This highlights the use of Twitter as a surveillance mechanism when it is related to drug trafficking blockades. Whoever uses Twitter routinely, as the people who place information on it, generate a particular social network for the information which is produced and consumed, but also because the majority of the population does not have access to the technologies of the information, or use or know how to use social networks. One has to ask therefore, what type of unequal societies produce and strengthen these self-generated, self-directed- and self-selected communication networks?

Gated surveillance communities

In Mexico, Twitter is also used as a means of communication for the protection and care of the population from truly violent acts. It has also become surveillance device in certain Mexican cities. However, the technology and software still remain expensive for a majority of the population: 56 percent of the houses in Mexico report that there is no access to information and communication technologies because of a lack of economic resources. Also, 54 percent of households state that there is no access to the internet for the same reason. But, the variable economy is not the only thing to take into consideration. Age is an important factor: 52 percent of computer users are between the ages of 12 and 24 years old, while 8percent are between 6 and 11 years old, the rest of the 40 percent are between the ages of 25 and 60 or older. The proportion of internet users are as follows: 48percent of the users are between 12 and 24 years old, while 13percent are 6 to 12 years old, the rest of the users, about 39 percent are between 25 and 60 or older[36].

In this sense, income and age are variables to take into consideration in order to understand where the users of Twitter are concentrated and, therefore, who has access to the information and communication on avenues, streets and spaces where drug traffickers blockades exist. Surveillance that cities can have is unequal, as Graham (2004) points out. In the case of Mexico, younger sectors of society from families with more economic resources to invest in technologies and the internet benefit more, or in their case, young

[36] Instituto Nacional de Geografía y Estadística (2009), Estadística sobre disponibilidad y uso de tecnologías de información y comunicación en los hogares. México : Instituto Nacional de Geografía y Estadística

people with access to economic resources for it, but also know how to use it. The security and watching over that allows these technological developments are only for some of the many, very defined who establish a horizontal communication among themselves. It can even be thought that these sectors erect an electronic wall that allows them to watch the city, guarding it from certain dangers in real time, establishing that way an administration of risk, thanks to the combination of several views taken from different areas and spaces of a "point-to-point communication". Following Ilcan and Phillips (2008), they established a particular form of governmentality of that which is social through transforming a certain knowledge that is denied to a majority of the population. Also, allowing a social construction of insecurity, as Monahan (2010) points out, anchored to a symbolic and ideological sphere of these groups and their technological capacity of surveillance. A dynamic that is found in communication media on the Internet, in particular periodicals, that use Twitter to retake information about blockades and distribute to other users of this network.

It is interesting to observe that this particular case of digitally mediated surveillance seems to reproduce the gated communities that have expanded in urban spaces of the country and Latin America in the last 10 years (Caldeira, 2000). The following ought to be highlighted: the security in Mexico translates into acquiring property, and for that, economic resources and the skills that most of the people are excluded from, are needed. Many of those who support social networks think that these resources guarantee a greater access to ways of expressing ideas, protesting, protecting and accessing information for the population. They soon arrive to the conclusion that as a result, a space to broaden the sphere of exercise of the citizens opens up, which is quite certain. However, they sometimes forget that at least in the case of many countries of the global South, some of these technological developments widen the breach between social groups, increasing the distance between citizens and generating, this way, the strengthening of some groups' abilities to keep an eye and administer risks in a better way, and in that sense, to establish the difference in the exercise of their citizenship. It may seem that the particular use of Twitter within contexts of violence, could add new elements to explain social exclusion in Mexico.

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