

Online Collaboration and Real-life Benefits

A Social use of Blogs in Peripheral Communities in Colombia

Master Thesis in Media Studies

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Acknowledgements

Coming to a foreign country in a foreign continent without much knowledge of the language spoken there was a new and possibly difficult experience. With help from Álvaro Ramírez Ospina and his family, though, the fieldwork I conducted in Medellín went smoothly and without major pitfalls. Mr. Ospina's help to me as a counsellor has also been significant all the way from the Autumn of 2008.

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Bergen, March 2010

Simen Brekke

Abstract

This thesis aims to shed light on the Medellín, Colombia-based blogging project HiperBarrio Convergentes. With theories of assessment in the field of Community Informatics, and in particular those of Dara O’Neil, it puts focus on a part of the blogosphere that in the twenty-first century has gotten steadily more influence, but has been given little interest in academic circles. By doing a short fieldwork and conducting interviews with the youth and organizers in HiperBarrio Convergentes, an outline has been given of the benefits that a project still in its infancy can give its participants. In the analysis, empiric data has been used to see if the theories have any relevance for this type of project. Blogging and citizen journalism has become a major part of the internet sphere, and projects similar to the one I investigate here, could in the future be a relevant factor in the lives of not only the people producing them, but also people in their neighbourhoods and others reading the blogs. This thesis shows that HiperBarrio Convergentes does not fulfil all of the aims that are presented in Community Informatics literature, but indeed has great relevance for the social capital and sense of belonging for the participants. Moreover, it suggests that in projects like this, it is not the technology that is important, but the face-to-face cooperation.

Denne oppgaven forsøker å kaste lys over bloggeprosjektet HiperBarrio Convergentes fra Medellín, Colombia. Med teorier vedrørende vurdering innen fagfeltet Community Informatics, og spesielt de tilhørende Dara O’Neil, settes fokus på en del av bloggesfæren som i det 21. århundre har fått stadig mer innflytelse, men som har fått liten oppmerksomhet i akademiske kretser. Ved å gjennomføre et kort feltarbeid og foreta intervjuer med ungdommene og administratorene som er aktive i HiperBarrio Convergentes har en oversikt blitt gitt over utbyttet som et prosjekt som fortsatt er i startfasen kan gi dets deltakere. I analysen har empirisk data blitt brukt for å se om teoriene er relevante i forhold til denne typen prosjekter. Blogging og borgerjournalistikk har blitt en viktig del av internett, og prosjekter lik det som her blir gjennomgått kan i framtiden bli en relevant faktor i livene til ikke bare de som produserer bloggene, men også folk i dere nabolag og andre som leser dem. Denne oppgaven viser at HiperBarrio Convergentes ikke oppfyller de mål som blir presentert i Community Informatics litteratur, men at det har stor betydning for sosial kapital og tilhørighetsfølelse for deltakerne. Dessuten antyder oppgaven at i prosjekter som dette er det ikke teknologien, men samarbeid ansikt til ansikt som er viktig.

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 The project

Blogs are getting increasingly more attention in every corner of the world and from all types of traditional media. This form of new media has made sure that individuals who are not employed by traditional media outlets now have a greater opportunity of sharing their views with other people. The interaction on these websites has for many people become a natural extension of face-to-face communication. Blogs were probably the first phase of what is now called social media that in the 21st century has started to steadily gain more significance. Created by your everyday John Smith, these websites can at some times have daily visitor numbers exceeding 10,000 individuals. In this thesis I research how a project where youth from an unprivileged neighbourhood can let their voices be heard on the internet by creating and maintaining blogs. Several scholars have acknowledged that blogs are an effective tool in bringing together societies from all over the world, and some of those scholars are connected to the organizations Global Voices and Rising Voices of Harvard University. Founded in 2004 at the Berkman Center for Internet and Society, Global Voices is a blogger community aiming to get attention to the “most important conversations and perspectives emerging from citizens’ media around the world” (Global Voices 2010). Its outreach project Rising Voices was started in 2007 to “help marginalized communities use citizen media to be heard” (Global Voices 2010). These two organizations create projects, and fund other projects that work to help peripheral communities and people in difficult situations develop and maintain blogs in order to build a “global conversation”. As can be read on their internet site, their aim is to

“(…) empower under-represented communities to make their voices heard online by 1.) providing financial support to outreach projects, 2.) developing a series of participatory media tutorials, and 3.) cultivating a network of passionate citizen media activists to help encourage and support the replication of outreach trainings” (Rising Voices 2010).

From the main site of Rising Voices, people can read about any of the projects and access their blogs. Bi-annually five new projects are incorporated in the organization, and there are currently 21 projects from every corner of the world that are connected to Rising Voices. Examples of projects that are funded by Rising Voices is the “Repacted” project in Kenyan displacement camps, where refugees after the violence occurring in Kenya in 2007 are given

the chance to tell their stories, and a Yemen Empowerment initiative, seeking to give a voice to women activists and politicians, otherwise overlooked in their home country.

As one of the projects that has gotten funding from Rising Voices, I have chosen the HiperBarrio Convergentes project as subject for this thesis. HiperBarrio Convergentes (HBC) is one of three groups under the HiperBarrio-umbrella, which creates projects in and around the city of Medellín in Colombia. The name Convergentes (on their website written out as ConVerGentes) was chosen democratically by the participants a couple of weeks after the group's initiation. The name has several meanings, which all correspond well with the intentions of the project; first of all it means "to see people", secondly it is a technical word for joining several media together or combining old and new media, and lastly it means to round up people. With funding from Rising Voices, the group was created in the *barrio* of La Loma in 2007 by the librarian in the public library in La Loma and Álvaro Ramírez Ospina, Associate Professor at the University of Bergen in Norway with background from Colombia and Medellín. The librarian had, prior to the creation of HBC, maintained a project in the library with interviewing inhabitants of age in the local community, in order to create a database with the history of and information about La Loma. La Loma is a relatively poor neighbourhood with some 17,000 inhabitants in the North-Eastern outskirts of Medellín, located in the hillsides between the borough San Javier and the municipality San Cristobal. The neighbourhood belongs both to the larger township of San Cristobal and the city of Medellín, and has only a small township centre with a couple of shops and restaurants. The only "official" buildings in La Loma are the library where HBC have their meetings, the school and the church, which are both located only a few meters away from the library. In addition to this, there is a small building not far from these houses that were supposed to function as a cultural centre, but which is closed and bereft of people most of the time. All of the three official buildings have been built by people in the local community through volunteer work some decades ago, when the land on which La Loma now is situated was mostly agricultural. The library in La Loma was the first affiliate of the Medellín main library established in the suburbs of the city, some fifty years ago. The neighbouring church has two smaller buildings which are to some degree open to the public, the residence of the priest being one of them. The other building functions as a meeting place for various types of organizations, and has also been used by HBC on some occasions.

Most of the people who live in La Loma work or study in the centre of Medellín, and to get there they travel by public buses, taxis or the metro, which is found in San Javier. Residing on a hill overlooking La Loma and San Javier, the public library is situated on a hill some five minutes by foot from the township centre “El Guamo”. The library and its collection of books are spread across two floors, with approximately ten computers on the top floor. In addition to the librarian who helped start HBC, there is one other person working in the library. The early work of interviewing elders done by the librarian created the foundation for HBC, but later the project has extended and now has other functions as well. According to their own web portal, what motivates and inspires the participants are “issues of transparency in social exchanges, the defense of The Public Good and the cooperation and participation of all human being and especially those historically neglected and underprivileged”(HiperBarrio 2010). This is being done with the help of blogs, podcasts, YouTube and DotSub video and by means of these media they can inform the world of their self-proclaimed interests of “Citizen Journalism, cultural and historical Memory of our locations, Fine Arts, Free Culture and self-expression” (ibid.). The project was initiated to tell people in La Loma and elsewhere about positive things that happen in that neighbourhood, to create a contrast to all the negative publicity it had gotten in the media in Colombia. Earlier, the media had only taken an interest in La Loma whenever there were violent conflicts between the various militant groups that occupy the area. La Loma and the neighbouring barrios have been subject to the violence of these groups for several decades, and are currently still affected by this violent dispute.

1.2 A complicated conflict

The conflict that has infected the Colombian society for so many years is a complicated one, and in this introduction I will only indicate the basic outline of it. After a tremendous rise in population in Medellín in the 1960s came the downsizing in industry and as a consequence: unemployment. This greatly affected the relatively poor barrio-neighbourhoods, and also La Loma. The downsizing happened at a time when the Medellín cartel, the world-famous cocaine cartel led by Pablo Escobar, started their road towards success. Other criminal groups of different valour and political inclination have also had major impact on the Colombian society, and left the politicians bereft of authority and the possibility of changing a volatile situation (Melguizo 2001:112-114). Drug-trafficking was for decades controlling much of Colombian society and certainly the northern neighbourhoods of Medellín, with La Loma being one of them (Melguizo 2001:117). With the death of Pablo Escobar in 1993 came a

hope that conditions in Medellín would improve and that the city's homicide rate would no longer be one of the world's highest (Melguizo 2001). The crime rates did drop, but the violence in the barrios paradoxically increased, following mini-wars between the different gangs over urban spaces: areas that became steadily fewer in numbers (Melguizo 2001:125). The various armed groups that have had a grip on Colombian society during these years are numerous, and together they have managed to keep the state from consolidating their sovereignty. These groups, which Melguizo characterizes as alternate powers, can be divided into *counterstate powers*, *parastate powers* and *organized crime*, but the lines between them are not clear-cut, and cooperation goes hand in hand with conflict amongst them (2001:111-112). Through various efforts the local authorities have managed to make Medellín a safer city, and tried to make the city's inhabitants, the *paisas*, proud of their own city. With the applauded library parks and a revitalization of public spaces in general, the authorities have opted for a city built on a fundament of knowledge and openness rather than violence and fear (Stroehlein 2008). The library parks is an initiative from the Mayor's office in Medellín to build several large library buildings spread across the city, where you can find computer labs and other facilities in addition to books, that are available for everyone to use. As the content in the blogs of HBC is a testament to, violent conflicts are still occurring in the densely populated city centre and its suburbs. The project in La Loma is in many ways part of this larger project of revitalizing and making safe the city of Medellín. Through initiatives such as the library parks the authorities are aiming to create a city that the inhabitants can be proud of and where the people need not be afraid. With its shared history of violence and bad publicity dating back 40 years, this is also a goal in La Loma and with HiperBarrio; to make the participants proud of their own neighbourhood.

1.3 Goals and achievements

From 2007 until 2009 there have been approximately 40 members who at one time have been involved in the HiperBarrio project and currently there are 20-22 active members. Not all of these members are equally active, but a few of them are putting a lot of effort in the project by representing it in various conferences and writing long entries in the collective blog. My research will be based mainly on fieldwork conducted in Medellín in the summer of 2009, with interviews of those involved in the project during visits to the barrio. Before my arrival in Medellín at the end of June 2009, Álvaro Ramírez Ospina had been in Medellín for six months, working with the project. During this period, the level of activity in the group had

risen significantly, after the work with the blogs had been *in limbo* for some time. During 2009, the project and its participants received two separate prizes, acknowledging the outreach of their work. Firstly, the project received the Golden Nica and the accompanying 10,000 Euros, a prestigious award in the Digital Communities category given by the Ars Electronica organization in Austria. This prize is one of the most sought-after awards in the realm of new media, and among the previous winners in HBC's category is the well-established internet encyclopaedia Wikipedia. Ars Electronica's reasons for giving the award to the projects in the Digital Communities category are all things easily relatable to HBC and Rising Voices in general:

“Digital Communities" focuses on innovation in human coexistence, efforts to bridge the geographical as well as gender-based digital divide, overcoming cultural conflicts and fostering cultural diversity and the freedom of artistic expression...Digital Communities are committed to achieving comprehensive human development, a key aspect of which is reconfiguring the relationship of power among citizens and political leaders, the state and its administrative bureaucracy as well as financial and commercial interests in the sense of increasing participation, strengthening the role of the civil society and establishing a framework in which democracy can flourish” (Ars Electronica 2009).

In the autumn of 2009, the two main organizers of HBC, Álvaro Ramírez Ospina and the librarian in La Loma, travelled to Linz, Austria to receive the award, and during this ceremony, Ramírez Ospina was given the chance to elaborate on the visions and goals of their project. The presentation made by Ramírez Ospina for the Golden Nica award ceremony shows the main reasons for developing this type of project in La Loma:

- A high percent of the population does not participate in the conversation
- Lack of access to Internet by vast groups of Latin Americans
- Peripheral communities with rich cultural roots and history
- A group of talented but unknown authors, artists, composers and performers
- Lacking the means to express themselves
- And a way to make their voices public, visible, relevant and influential
- The digital divide is a serious threat to Democracy (Ospina 2009)

To an outsider, the work in HBC seems to be done mostly in the personal and collective blogs, but the list of activities that the group engages in, which was also presented in the award ceremony in Linz, tells the story of a project that is maintaining bonds within and outside the group in a number of fashions:

“Externally our collective blogs Hiperbarrio.org, ConVerGentes-La Loma... Internally a list for discussion in Google Groups. The facilitators participate in another list that enables us to communicate with other projects. Just two weeks ago expanded and developed a range of new applications in Google apps. Document sharing, Wiki tools, Personal emails and chatting, Skype encounters, Saturday meetings” (Ospina 2009).

The second prize was won in the summer of 2009, when one of the girls from the project and the project itself received the award for best project in the “Social and Political Development” category from the Mujer Talento awards, held by the mayor’s office in Medellín.

1.4 About the thesis

Out of the fourteen respondents chosen for this thesis from the participants, there were eight girls and six boys. Two of the respondents were working full-time at the time of my visit, while the others were studying, and in some cases working part-time as well. The group consisted mostly of people from 18 to 21 years, having just started studying, with the exception of one of the respondents being 24 and the other 32, having studied and worked for some years. Nine of the respondents had been involved in the project since its beginning two years earlier, one had been involved almost from the beginning, one had joined one and a half years ago, one had been involved for one year while the oldest two had joined four months prior to my visit. The participants come from several social strata, from the lowest income stratum to the middle class, and this variety approximately mirrored the general population of La Loma. The level of English language skills was varied within the group, from some of the participants who hardly needed a translator during the interview to those who spoke little or no English at all. According to the three girls I met at my first visit to La Loma, the participants write almost every day in their blogs in the library. In addition, some of them have computers and internet connections in their homes. In general, they have meetings with the group in the library every Saturday, with workshops and discussions on who is going to write what in the collective blog the following week. The collective blog is the portal for the

group, where they have information about the project and links to the personal blogs of all the participants as well as links to the mother organizations Rising Voices and Global Voices and blogs from similar projects.

In this thesis, I investigate whether or not HBC is useful to the participants and the local community, and if so in what way. I will try to find out what the participants get out of being in the group, and see how the project influences the inhabitants of La Loma. To get this material I will conduct interviews with participants and organizers. In order to create a context for my analysis of the interviews and to better understand the project, I will look at the blogs that have been produced. Some factual material will also be collected by asking the organizers under more informal settings, without using audio recording. In addition to this, I will look at how this project and bloggers in general can function alongside or instead of traditional media outlets. In my analysis I will use a theoretical framework involving the topics of *citizen journalism*, *community informatics* and *community networks*. The project in La Loma is in one way representative of the other projects in Rising Voices due to the fact that all the projects have a higher aim of creating a global discussion. Therefore, some of the knowledge acquired in this thesis might be transferred to these other projects. Moreover, the specific aims of each project and the characteristics of each location make it impossible to use this thesis to show the qualities of every one of the projects. More than being a statistical analysis of one of the Rising Voices projects, this thesis is an effort in trying to shed some light on a specific project and a development within the new media sphere that may be relevant in the coming years. This is a type of project that has the potential of bringing about some significant change to the lives of people that are somewhat overlooked in other aspects of society. Rising Voices and its affiliates are relatively new components in the realm of internet, and with a focus on the work being done there; I hope to generate more interest in this socially progressive way of approaching new media. My thesis will be divided into four parts: *Field of interest*, a chapter with a basic outline of theories on the topics for the thesis; *Method*, with a summary of the fieldwork, interviews and other methods I have used to gather data; *Analysis*, with data from the interviews analyzed with means of the theories that have been outlined earlier on; *Conclusion*, with a summary of my findings and thoughts for future research on this topic.

Instead of the real names of the participants and the librarian, I have used fictitious names in this thesis. The only person whose real name is used is that of initiator and organizer Álvaro Ramírez Ospina.

2.0 Field of Interest

In this chapter I will give a basic outline of the theoretical background for this thesis, giving special attention to theories of community informatics and citizen journalism. In addition to these I will present the blog as a new format and show what possible outcomes may come from its use when combining it with traditional media. Lastly I will show what attention has been given to the HBC project by other scholars.

2.1 Web 2.0

Web 2.0 is a concept that came about after the burst of the dot-com bubble in 2001, and was coined by Dale Doherty of O'Reilly Media Inc., intending to express the optimism that still survived on the web (Anderson 2007:5). There is disagreement about the definition of web 2.0, but one can argue that it has to do with a reliance on the internet more than the PC as a defining factor, and in the words of one of those responsible for the term, Tim O'Reilly: "Web 2.0 is the era when people have come to realize that it's not the software that enables the web that matters so much as the services that are delivered over the web" (O'Reilly 2005). The differences between this updated version of the web and the older web 1.0 is also something widely debated among scholars, but one characteristic that seems well-established is the "harnessing [of] collective intelligence" (O'Reilly 2007:10). In a similar fashion to how Wikipedia and other websites are creating large databases with knowledge from millions of users-turned-producers, O'Reilly sees the *blogosphere* as somewhere that large conversations can take place:

"(...) the blogosphere is the equivalent of constant mental chatter in the forebrain, the voice we hear in all of our heads. It may not reflect the deep structure of the brain, which is often unconscious, but is instead the equivalent of conscious thought. And as a reflection of conscious thought and attention, the blogosphere has begun to have a powerful effect"

(O'Reilly 2007:10).

It is safe to say that the tools used by the administrators and participants of HBC are well within the confines of web 2.0, with the project's focus on social media and a clearer commitment to making the web all about connecting people and letting them contribute rather

than just consume (Anderson 2007:4). Thus, web 2.0 is a concept frequently used both by administrators and participants in HBC when discussing the tools they use.

2.2 Blog

A *blog*, or a *weblog*, is a website that is updated frequently and has dated posts that are presented in reverse chronological order (Anderson 2007:7). Most blogs nowadays have both text and images, and a great number also have either video or audio produced by the owner of the blog, or hyperlinks to audio and video produced by someone else. The term "blog" occurred as early as 1997 (Anderson 2007:7), but one can argue that blogs started to have relevance only after the turn of the century (Bruns 2005:201). Since then the number of blogs and bloggers have exploded, and the blog search engine Technorati has listed approximately 133 million bloggers since 2002, and claims that by 2008, 346 million people are visiting blogs worldwide (Singer 2009). These numbers may however be somewhat misleading, as the CEO of Technorati, Dave Sifry, believes what is called *splogs* "make up 90 percent of new blogs" (Keen 2007:85). These splogs are fake blogs designed to "trick advertisers and search engines and drive traffic and thus pay-per-click revenue" (Keen 2007:84). Nevertheless, the visitor numbers show how considerable the attention to blogs has gotten since 1997. One can imagine that one of the main reasons why blogging has become so popular is that it is often free to publish on the platforms and that you do not need much technical skills to be able to do it. Once you have chosen a template for your blog from the platform, the only thing that is needed is the input of content (Rettberg 2008:6). Most blogs are published by individuals and have a relatively personal content, while others are published by organizations or companies and have more formal and public content. The nature of the blog also has implications for the mode of addressing the reader, with a more personal form of address in blogs made by individuals. In the case of an organization creating a blog posts can be published by people affiliated with or hired by the organization, and typically there would be hyperlinks to web pages of collaborating organizations. In most blogs the reader is given the opportunity to comment directly on the posts. This opportunity can be found on all the pages of HBC, giving the producer and receiver the possibility to create a dialogue. A person who wants to comment needs not be a member of the site, nor give his/her full name, thus the threshold for getting involved in a blog is relatively low. Another feature of most blogs is a so-called *blogroll*; a list of other blogs or websites on either the left or right side of the main frame of

the website. This list, with its hyperlinks, creates intertextuality between webpages that are in some way or another associated. This aspect seems highly important to networks of blogs such as Rising Voices, since every one of the blogs in that network are in some way connected and might be interesting to those visiting them. In all of the personal blogs of HBC's participants, you will find a blogroll with hyperlinks to the other active members of the group, creating a virtual community and accessibility to the other blogs. Investigative journalist and editor Bill Allison writes that bloggers in general are not satisfied with what the traditional media are reporting, and they want more thorough reports on matters that are of their concern (Allison in Walsh 2007:219). Certainly, a wide variety of bloggers do not share that sentiment, and feel more than happy to simply inform the public of their personal life. This feeling of having traditional media that is inadequate does however coincide to a great extent with the principles that HBC is based on. The intent of the project and other projects connected to Rising Voices is to give people in peripheral communities a voice and give the news in those areas a different and greater depth than the one provided by established news media. In doing so, the bloggers may change the way other people view their community, and also change the way they consider themselves and their own community (Hall 2006:22).

Inicio Quienes somos En los medios

Rescate de la memoria historica y cultural de LA LOMA 2010

RSS de Entradas | Comments RSS

Buscar

De regreso al colegio y a la temporada de vanas compras

Publicado el Enero 16, 2010 por

☆☆☆☆☆ Califique esto

Aún no comienza la temporada escolar y los padres ya están quejándose de las cosas inútiles que piden en la lista de sus hijos. Fuera de esto, también se piden textos costosos que no alcanzan a trabajarse ni en un 40% de su contenido. La buena educación no equivale a gastos innecesarios; la buena educación depende de otras cosas que poco tienen que ver con inversiones vanas.

De nada sirve un texto escolar costoso cuando los alumnos cada día pierden interés por la educarse. La deserción escolar va en aumento y a los niños parece interesarles más los avances tecnológicos, los nuevos juegos de video y todas aquellas actividades sedentarias que los idiotiza horas enteras frente a una pantalla.

Cada día se hace más difícil erradicar este tipo de problemas. No es raro encontrar en muchos hogares a jóvenes y niños que han dejado tirados sus estudios, y aquellos que están estudiando lo hacen sin el mayor interés.

Nuestra labor quizás sea la de la palabra. Persistir y no cansarnos de hablar a nuestros pequeños, de hacerles entender, con mucho amor, que la única solución para erradicar los males que aquejan a la sociedad es tomar el camino de la educación.

Archivado bajo: [Educacion](#), [Juventud](#), [crítica](#), [infancia](#)

« [viaja al BarCamp Santa Cruz – Bolivia Barcamp Santa Cruz 2010](#) »

Golden Nicca 2009
Categoría: Comunidades Digitales
HiperBarrio
Historias Locales
Audiencia Global

Nuestros proyectos

CVG ConVerGentes

Campus Party™
Colombia

SOME RIGHTS RESERVED

Buscar

Nuestro mapa colaborativo

Loma Hermosa
Calle
Calle
Calle
Calle

Haga clic aquí para el mapa de la Vereda La Loma en Open Street Maps

Perteneceemos A:

RisingVoices

Procesos amigos

Fig. 1

The collective blog functions both as a site where the group can publish the posts that are delegated to the participants by the organizers, and as a portal to the personal blogs of each of the participants. In addition to this, the site includes links to the network that HBC is supported by, Rising Voices, and the different projects and activities that the group are engaging in. In this example from convergentes.wordpress.com you can see a link to Campus Party, a conference on new media that several participants took part in at the time of my fieldwork. Other links included in this example is a link to the website of mother organization HiperBarrio and a link to a map of the La Loma barrio made by the participants in HBC. On the right hand side of the webpage is a search engine that the visitors can use to find topics that have been mentioned in the collective blog earlier. On the left hand side are links to the RSS of this page, which enables the visitors to subscribe to the posts that are published on

convergentes.wordpress.com. At the top of the page are also links to a page where the group presents itself and to one which includes a list of mentioning of the group in other media.

Convergence is one of the 21st Century's great buzz-words, and in accordance with this, HiperBarrio has hit a jackpot with the second part of the name of the group in La Loma: *Convergentes* (Hall 2006:24). Originally meaning "bringing together different broadcast media", the term is now used more generally when defining a gathering of otherwise disconnected technical functions. The administrators of the project in Medellín are of course aware of this, since the project incorporates text, pictures, video and sound to convey its message. The pictures are taken by the participants and the audio and video are recorded by them, and in this way they are making use of the knowledge acquired in the workshops. Since 2007 the development within the field of blogs has been rapid, and bloggers are getting increasingly more attention in traditional media and in academic circles. The last few years we have seen examples in Norway and elsewhere of popular bloggers becoming celebrities by the mere fact that a large number of people read their blogs. An example from Norway is the teenager Ida Wulff, who has been in traditional media a number of times because of her blog devoted to her day-to-day life (For example: Kvam 2009). An example of a blogger who has gained even greater recognition and publicity is Perez Hilton, who has been a widely known international celebrity for several years (For example: Borgan 2007). The blogs of these two people are somewhat different both in content and style from those that will be studied in this thesis. Generally, the bloggers of HBC write more about the community in their neighbourhood and not so much about what they do themselves on a day-to-day basis. As Axel Bruns mentions, there is a number of types of blogs, but in this thesis only two specific types of blogs will be analyzed (Bruns 2005:201). The first type is the collective, citizen journalism-type where the participants of HBC take turns in writing articles on for example politics and matters of the community. The other type is the more personal blog that each member maintains and uses to write his or her personal opinions on matters of their interest, or to display their talent.

A term that has become increasingly relevant with the advent of blogs and other social media is *participatory media*, with what Rettberg defines as "many-to-many communication" (Rettberg 2008:31). This new form of communication is exactly what Rising Voices and Global Voices intend to make a relevant factor for those involved in the various projects.

Instead of having the mass media control the stream of information in a *one-to-many* type of communication, you can have a situation where non-professionals are able to communicate through blogs to readers worldwide about their lives and realities. In contrast to other media where one part does the writing and the other does the reading, blog writing is not necessarily restricted to the owner of the blog, but may also be done by the readers/visitors as they comment on the entries made. One of the advantages of blogs like the ones in HBC is the speed at which the words, videos, images and pictures are spread (Rettberg 2008:66). Just as fast as any mainstream media outlet could report on a major or minor incident, the bloggers can write their entries immediately after they have taken place. This interconnection of blogs and people is both a goal of Rising Voices, and a means to reach their higher goal of making people participate in a global conversation. As blogging researcher Jill Walker Rettberg writes, there is a lot of literature on blogs that is very optimistic as to how the blogs can empower those who earlier have not been able to take part in the public sphere (Rettberg 2008:108). But certainly, one has to evaluate and measure whether or not these people really can utilize blogs in a way that can change how their neighbourhood or society is looked upon. One of the many characteristics that we find when talking about the new media is a “new relationship between embodiment, identity and community” (Lister 2003:12). With the use of blogs, as a type of new media, people’s view of themselves and their place in the world might be somewhat changed (Lister 2003:12). The connections that the participants of HBC establish with people from other countries and even other continents could alter their experience of themselves in the world, and their experience of the rest of the world. This is also one of the key goals of the HiperBarrio project; to change the way people in Medellín and Colombia consider La Loma and the people living there and to put the barrio on the map, both literally and figuratively speaking.

2.3 Community Informatics

The text that I will most closely relate my work to is *Assessing Community Informatics: a review of methodological approaches for evaluating community networks and community technology centers* by Dara O’Neil (2002). In this article O’Neil discusses a number of factors that can be measured in order to evaluate the level of success of projects adhering to the field of *community informatics*. O’Neil has defined the concept of community informatics, and looked at new ways of evaluating their effectiveness. She believes that other ways than the

mere measuring of access to ICT in a community has to be put to use when evaluating *community networks* and *community technology centres*: the two main facilities involving community informatics. One of the key figures in the developing of the field, Michael Gurstein has made an attempt on a definition of Community Informatics in his book on that very subject:

“Community Informatics (CI) is the application of information and communications technologies (ICTs) to enable and empower community processes. The objective of CI is to use ICT to enable the achievement of community objectives including overcoming “digital divides” both within and between communities. But CI also goes beyond the discussions of the “Digital Divide” to examine how and under what conditions ICT access can be made usable and useful to the range of excluded populations and communities and particularly to support local economic development, social justice, and political empowerment” (Gurstein 2008:11).

Belonging to the academic discipline of *information systems*, in community informatics “insights on community development from other social sciences disciplines” are combined with a cross- or interdisciplinary approach to investigate how ICTs can be used in community action (Gurstein 2008:11). O’Neil believes one can use a set of factors in connection with different subjects to measure if using community informatics in a project is useful or not. The subjects that I have found to be closest related to the project in La Loma are: *community involvement* and *attitudes and awareness*. By using the factors within these two groups one can establish what types of changes a project can give to the local community and the participants in the project, and what changes are made in the participants’ view of themselves. In addition to these two groups I will use factors from *access facilities*, *user information*, *information content and structure*, *community characteristics*, and *operation and management* to a more or less degree.

2.4 Community Networks

Community networks are digital bulletin boards that are locally grounded, and are by some scholars believed to improve and rebuild community life (Schuler 1994:39). The term involves a process to

“(...) advance social goals such as building community awareness, encouraging involvement in local decision making, or developing economic opportunities in disadvantaged communities...The most important aspect of their community networks, however, is their immense potential of participation” (Schuler 1994:39).

The aims and accomplishments of these networks are varied, and the size of them likewise, but they all have in common that some qualified staff is needed in order to create and maintain the network (Schuler 1994:39). HiperBarrio is understood to be one of these networks and the area of La Loma is a community in the way that O’Neil understands it. Dara O’Neil found in her study that there are five key areas that the assessment of community networks and community technology centres is based upon (O’Neil 2002:79). I will make use of these five areas to examine how the project in La Loma is functioning. They are as follows:

1) Strong democracy, which is a democracy where the members of the community are actively involved, and where the voter turnout is high. To create a strong democracy one needs political engagement not only on an organizational level, but also amongst individuals, on a neighbourhood level (O’Neil 2002:79). O’Neil thinks that ICT might fulfil this requirement, and make the community fit with the theory of a public sphere where all members share the same information (O’Neil 2002:79).

2) Social capital and a certain amount of societal engagement are necessary prerequisites for maintaining some degree of quality of life. Through the use of ICT and community networks, one may establish social relations and networks, which might encourage political activity and cooperation, and contact between people that might otherwise never have met (O’Neil 2002:80). This might be important to get the feeling of having some impact on the society in which you live.

Through **3) individual empowerment** and not only collective action with other people can individuals improve their lives through the use of ICT and community networks. Because these networks, and the work required by them requires that you gain certain knowledge, they might help people control social, economical and political factors that have impact on their lives (O’Neil 2002:80). It is safe to say that the technological world in which we live demands that individuals in increasing degree gain knowledge and competence to make use of the new

media (O'Neil 2002:81). By getting insight in and first-hand experience with ICT individuals may expand their access to the globalized world.

The concept of a **4) sense of community** is certainly an important one when speaking of community networks. But a lot of the previous studies of communities have laid too much emphasis on local, geographical circumstances, and have avoided discussing the type of communities that exist regardless of geographical proximity. When studying ICT and community networks, one has to examine whether or not or in what ways these concepts might strengthen the ties between geographically separated citizens, and between citizens and the government (O'Neil 2002:81).

A lot of scholars feel that the use of ICT will have positive outcomes for the **5) economic development opportunities** in a society, among other things by making marketing and establishing of business-contacts and networks more accessible. Other scholars, on the other hand, think that the use of ICT might put a brake on the economical development, by making geographical distances even more important (O'Neil 2002:82). This fifth and last concept from O'Neil is probably not closely associated with the project in Medellín at this stage, but given the inclusion of the participants of HBC in the developing of new HiperBarrio projects, the HiperBarrio project has already started to make this area relevant. With substantial economical funds coming from various sources, the project has the potential of giving the economy in La Loma at least a small boost.

2.5 Citizen Journalism

Citizen journalism is a relatively new genre within the field of journalism, and it is primarily in the 21st Century that news written by ordinary citizens are brought out to a big audience (Gillmor 2006:xx). In citizen journalism it is not professional journalists who produce articles in newspapers or TV channels, but your common man who witnesses incidents in his local community and with the help of cheap online tools passes on his knowledge on the internet (Glaser 2006). Since the staff in traditional media do not have the opportunity to get an overview of everything occurring in the world at all times, articles written by people who are not in the traditional media may contribute in creating broader news coverage (Glaser 2006). In the aftermath of the attacks on American soil 9/11 2001 we experienced how eyewitnesses

can help in developing the information flow both in traditional and new media (Glaser 2006). In that case, video and pictures taken by people in the vicinity of the World Trade Center were used by the big media networks to sustain a constant flow of new experiences from the attack to a global audience (Glaser 2006). The notion of citizen journalism in itself has been subject to a lot of debate both among journalist and citizen journalists, in part because some feel that the professional title "journalist" should be more protected. Similar expressions to citizen journalism have been proposed, such as *grassroots journalism* and *citizen media* (Glaser 2006). In this thesis I will use the expression citizen journalism to describe the work being done in HBC, because that is the expression used by the administrators and participants in the project to define it, and that is the expression I feel in the best way conveys the purpose of the project. There are some people who think that blogging is closer related to the principles of journalism than the journalism performed in traditional media itself, since a blogger reports on what is happening on a day-to-day basis, without as much commitments and bias as someone in a news corporation (Bruns 2005:214). Nevertheless, it is questionable whether someone without the right education and the economical resources in traditional media corporations could produce as professional news articles as journalists in traditional media. As Andrew Keen comments, in a blog the writer may claim rumours and their own opinion to be mere facts, and do so without having to think about any ethical restraints (Keen 2007:46-47). Sure enough, the bloggers' work may be just as good as the work of any journalist in traditional media outlets, but without the professional and organizational structures, a blog-reader has no way of telling truth from fiction (Keen 2007:45).

2.6 Democratizing the Media

In Colombia, performing your profession as a journalist might be quite harmful, in contrast to the situation in Norway. According to the organization "Reporters without Borders" and their list from 2008, Colombia is one of the most hazardous countries in the world to be a journalist, with its 123rd place among 173 countries (Reporters without Borders 2009a). From 1992 to 2009, 42 journalists were murdered in Colombia because of their profession, making it the 5th worst country in the world to be a journalist, according to the "Committee to Protect Journalists" (CPJ.org 2009, news.bbc.co.uk 2005). Norway, on the other hand, is among the safest countries to be a journalist, with its 3rd place in Reporters without Borders' statistics over safest countries to be a journalist (Reporters without Borders 2009b). The low position

possessed by Colombia in those statistics can in part be due to the relatively large number of journalists being injured or killed on the countryside, a problem that is greater there than in the urban cities (Uribe 2007). Even though the problem may not be as big in Medellín as in more rural areas, the participants in HBC have to tread carefully and avoid criticizing the paramilitaries and other militant groups too harshly. This situation creates a working-environment for the traditional and new media where self-censorship is relatively common. A participant in HBC, Andres, has avoided getting unwanted attention from powerful people by hiding his criticism behind metaphors and fictional tales. Others have used poetry in conveying their message in an understandable, but non-provoking way. As one can observe in countries where it is difficult for people to voice their opinions, blogs can contribute in promoting communication and giving the world a new impression of the places where the blogs are originated (Bruns 2005:2). Although blogs may still be in its infancy when matched against the established print media, some scholars and technology idealists see the new media as potential of creating a whole new and greater democracy. Like self-professed new media sceptic Andrew Keen experienced during the New York City event Personal Democracy Forum, the new media was seen as a revolutionizing factor: “Democratizing technologies such as blogs, wikis and social networks, they promised, would radically empower the electorate...technology could perfect democracy” (Keen 2007:208-209). Keen is on the other hand very sceptical of this belief in the new media as revolutionizing the public sphere.

One of those who indeed sees new media as a positive factor, Axel Bruns thinks that an important aspect of blogging is that it can encourage dialogue between producer and receiver to a larger degree than television and print newspapers (Bruns 2005:214). Instead of the receiver getting information on an incident from only a couple of journalists, there are now a wide variety of bloggers producing articles and comments on the same occurrence. In some cases the bloggers might have access to more information on the incident than the journalist, because they might be geographically and socially more closely connected to it. Some online newspapers have seen the value of this and given the bloggers the opportunity to post hyperlinks to their blogs on the newspaper’s website, if the blogger has written something in connection to their newspaper article. (For example: Glesnes 2009). Certain online newspapers are also giving the audience an opportunity to create blogs on their websites (For example: VG.no 2009). As written by Axel Bruns, the traditional journalism needs to open up to more direct contact with their audience (Bruns 2005:214). Some scholars do however see the problem with amateurs pretending to be professional journalists on the internet, in that

they do not have the same expertise as someone who does this type of writing for a living. One of citizen journalism's harshest critics, Andrew Keen, can testify to this: "The simple ownership of a computer and an Internet connection doesn't transform one into a serious journalist any more than having access to a kitchen makes one into a serious cook" (Keen 2007:47). While professional journalists do their work based on education and day-to-day reporting, Keen sees the citizen journalist as merely offering up "opinion as fact, rumor as reportage, and innuendo as information" (Keen 2007:47). Moreover, Keen sees the amateur journalist as someone who "trivializes and corrupts serious debate", with his/her views on trivial subjects (Keen 2007:54). Certainly, there are some blogs that deal with matters less trivial, and the blogs in HiperBarrio are examples of this.

To one of the great defenders of citizen journalism, Dan Gillmor, one of the big advantages with this type of journalism is that it can "address niche markets otherwise ignored by mainstream media" (Gillmor in Keen 2007:51). The projects of Global Voices and Rising Voices enable people to tell stories from their own neighbourhood that the traditional media would never have written. One of the key motifs of HBC is to record and publish the history of La Loma and thus make it accessible both to the people within the community and from other places. These stories, however important to the neighbourhood and however interesting to readers from other parts of the world, seldom catch the attention of established news media. As legal scholar Cass R. Sunstein writes in his book on new media's influence on the public sphere, the internet has allowed for a "tremendous growth in niche markets, serving groups both large and small", and according to him this is a trend that will only continue (Sunstein 2007:14). Following this trend comes the possibility for internet surfers to find material online that earlier was difficult to get hold of (Sunstein 2007:12). What the internet has inherent is therefore a *democratizing function*, making every issue important and every individual capable of telling people about them (Sunstein 2007:14). This possibility of sharing huge amounts of information on the internet does however create a risk of information overload, and a net that requires great abilities from its users in filtering whilst surfing (Sunstein 2007:51). The citizen journalism and the large amount of blogs do certainly create an internet where one has to be careful in considering what is false and what is true.

In the traditional media, there are certain agencies that function to censor or edit the material which is printed or in some way publicized. Whether it is the editors of a newspaper, or government officials, in some way or another all traditional media have some form of regime

of control, performing so-called *gatekeeping* to control what is spread in the public sphere (Rettberg 2008:103). This gatekeeping

“(…) simply refers to a regime of control over what content is allowed to emerge from the production processes in print and broadcast media; the controllers (journalists, editors, owners) of these media, in other words, control the gates through which content is released to their audiences” (Bruns in Rettberg 2008:103).

The editing and censorship is close to non-existent in the blogosphere, since the bloggers for the most part do not have any editors or owners. During the 2009 riots in Iran, the traditional media were quite effectively silenced by the Iranian authorities, so the best information that was distributed to other countries from the riots came from blogs and other new media (Bright 2009). At other times, however, authorities such as in China, exert their power by shutting down blogs and other user-created online media (Usher 2006). However, this lack of ownership and censoring mechanisms also entail that material of low quality and with little interest to people are posted on blogs as well, making it more challenging for the average internet surfer to find good information. Andrew Keen comments that this insisting material created by a growing mass of amateurs is bad not only for the professional journalists but also for the greater public. We, the readers, have the need for experts on various fields to help guide us through this jungle of information (Keen 2007:45). Another aspect of blogs and other social media that can be problematic for the consumers of this new media is the fact that the producers can hide their names behind fake identities. With an identity which is now referred to as a *sock puppet*, the creator of a blog can write more freely on potentially difficult matters. With this increased anonymity, then, the trust on the part of the consumers is lacking (Keen 2007:76). Most of the people affiliated with HBC write their posts with fictitious names for various reasons, and the aforementioned security issue is certainly one of the primary ones. Nonetheless, it would be easier for the visitors to trust the content if it was posted under full and real names. This “crisis of trust and confidence”, as Andrew Keen claims it to be, is not a problem in the world of mainstream news media, where acts of misrepresentation may harm the reputation of the media outlet and cause even greater damage to the journalist doing the misdeed (Keen 2007:77).

2.7 Earlier Writings

Although an academic paper has yet to have full focus on HiperBarrio or its founders, there has been some mention of the project by a few scholars. Jan-Ove Olsson has written about the library in La Loma in his Master thesis on learning within the organization Medellín Digital (Olsson 2008). In his thesis, Olsson analyzed HBC and the library from a pedagogical point of view, and thus it was not related to media studies. By making several visits to La Loma and the library and by talking to the librarian and other people involved in the subgroup of HiperBarrio; VideoBarrio, Olsson focused on the network that the library is connected to; Red de bibliotecas, and the role of the library in the local community. In addition to that thesis, David and Leonardo Ramirez have written a short text about the diffusion of knowledge through web 2.0, where HBC is mentioned (Ramirez and Ramirez 2008:6pp). HBC is here presented with their aims and relation to the aforementioned network of libraries as an example of how one can use web 2.0 to diffuse knowledge. In Adrienne Russell and Nabil Echchaibis book “International Blogging” from 2009, the umbrella organization of Global Voices is discussed as an example of an online project that functions as a gatekeeper of the blogosphere (Russell 2009:4pp). Through their different activities that support the development of blogs, Global Voices is one of several projects that is creating a “global village” online, something many internet users are awaiting but which does not emerge on its own (ibid.). From 2004 through 2009 a great variety of books have been written on blogs and on how it is possible to use them for democratic purposes and business purposes alike. There are, however, a limited number of books that have taken into account the possibility of using blogs in the way that Global Voices and Rising Voices are and have been using them.

3.0 Method

Following the outline of theories in the preceding chapter, I will in this chapter show how I put these theories to use, by presenting the fieldwork that I conducted for this thesis. Secondly, I will go into detail and discuss the various aspects of the interviews that were conducted during the fieldwork. Lastly, I will give an outline of the analysis that I will do of my collected material and show what implications such an analysis might have in accordance with aforementioned theories.

3.1 About the Fieldwork

To write this thesis I underwent fieldwork in Medellín in the course of three and a half weeks in the Summer of 2009. During my visit I stayed at a barrio some 40 minutes from La Loma by public transport, but in the same part of the city. I visited La Loma a total of five times during this time, and on four of these occasions I did interviews with the participants in HBC. All in all I did interviews with fourteen of the participants in addition to an interview with the librarian. The interviews were conducted with the help of a translator, who translated from Spanish to English and vice versa. The translator for ten of the interviews was my counsellor for this thesis, Álvaro Ramírez Ospina, in three of them it was an English-student from the University of Antioquia, and in the last one it was Ines, one of those in HBC with the best knowledge of English. The interview with the librarian was conducted partially with Álvaro as the translator and partially with the man I was staying with in Medellín, a Colombian student with good knowledge of English. The interviews with the participants were conducted in the library in La Loma. The interview with the librarian was not conducted in La Loma, but rather in a park in the centre of the city. The interviews with the participants lasted from 18 to 53 minutes, while the interview with the librarian lasted 50 minutes. The original interview-guide for the interviews with the participants consisted of 25 questions, while the revised version (see Appendix 7.2) had 22 questions. All of the questions were written out in both English and Spanish, and during the interviews I asked the respondents each question in Spanish (or English if they were competent enough in that language). Generally, I did not make use of follow-up questions, but some questions had to be rephrased or repeated in order to make them understandable to the respondent.

During my first visit to La Loma I also conducted two more or less spontaneous interviews with three of the participants and the librarian respectively. The interview guide that I made use of here was supposed to be a guide to my participant observation, but functioned as an interview guide as well. At one point, one of the most active participants in the group guided me to the library in the neighbouring barrio of San Javier, one of the five so-called library parks scattered around the city. During this visit I got to see the computer facilities and learn of the mayor's mission behind deciding to create this network of public libraries. The library in La Loma is connected to these library parks in the library network (Red de bibliotecas) in Medellín. The library that will open in the township centre of San Cristobal will be a new addition to the library parks. At the end of the makeshift tour in the library in San Javier I continued the informal interview that I had begun with Isabella and two other girls at my last visit to La Loma. Close to the end of my stay in Medellín, I attended the award ceremony "Mujeres talento 2009" together with many of the participants and the administrators at a conference centre in downtown Medellín. Ines from the project had been nominated together with the group for their work in HBC, and with the award that she won at the ceremony both she and the project received substantial funds from the mayor of Medellín. This award and the Golden Nica award from the same year are the two single most important acknowledgements that the group has received from official bodies since its initiation.

According to Professor in Media Studies Helge Østbye, fieldwork is often used in media studies to shed light on hypotheses regarding the production of mediated messages (Østbye 2002:100). The production of blogs and other mediated texts from the participants in HBC could therefore be analysed by applying this method. The mixing of fieldwork and interviewing in some or another form is also common, and proved to be fruitful for this research as well (Østbye 2002:100). It was important for me to undergo a fieldwork in Medellín because I wanted to see the place where the participants live in order to better understand their situation. To read about a place and a situation is one thing, but to see it firsthand is something very different. As I have understood from the administrators, there is no coincidence that it was exactly La Loma that was chosen to be the site of HBC. The history of the neighbourhood, especially in regards to the violent conflict, made it an especially suitable venue to start such a project. Another reason for doing fieldwork is that I could not fully comprehend the social dynamics in the group and in the local community without meeting the people in the project and talking to them face-to-face. The short

fieldwork that I conducted certainly did not enable me to understand it fully, but it made me more aware of how the social relations within the group are.

3.2 Qualitative Interviews

What I wanted with this thesis was to shed light on the HBC project and the people involved in it, and the easiest way to get an insight into the project was to ask the people themselves about topics relating to it. In addition to the interviews I intended on doing a small-scale enquiry into the blogs of the project and the personal blogs of some of the participants in the project. Catherine Marshall and Gretchen B. Rossman write that interviews should be based upon a theoretic framework (1989:30), and my thesis was based on the theories of Dara O'Neil and the other scholars mentioned in the literature chapter. I chose to use qualitative rather than quantitative interviews because the number of participants active in the project was not big enough to make the results of a survey interesting, and because I wanted to find the particularities of each respondent's experience with the project. As Helge Østbye explains, qualitative interviews are often used in media studies to analyze the production and receiving of mediated texts, in this case the production of blogs (2002:99). At the beginning of my work with the thesis, I intended on practicing a more open form of questioning, in line with the interactionism described by David Silverman (2004:94). This, however, proved to be a method that would not produce the best results according to my intentions. In addition to the fact that I wanted interviews that had answers which could to some degree be compared, my reduced knowledge of Spanish language would have made it difficult to sustain a good flow with an open form of questioning. During my fieldwork, the interview guide got altered, however, by my counsellor and I, in order to generate the wanted information, so the questions are different in the first four interviews than in the remaining fourteen.

An important aspect I wanted to research during the interviews was the social relations within the group; the group dynamics. As this project is both a digital and a social one, the relationships between the participants and between the participants and the administrators are essential in maintaining a good working environment. Any friction or tension within the group would be easier to find and understand with the use of both fieldwork and interviews. The interviews that were conducted with the fourteen participants took the shape of structured interviews, in the sense that the questions were written out beforehand and were the same in

every one of the interviews, although the answers might somewhat vary (Østbye 2002:102). The informants, when using this interview-type, are relatively free to project their feelings in their own words. The reason for choosing this type of interviews is the possibility of comparing the answers by the different participants. In the interview I conducted with the librarian in La Loma some questions were similar to the ones I asked the participants, in order to get several perspectives on the same issue.

A problem that proved to be greater than I had anticipated was the language-barrier. Since I had only limited knowledge of Spanish, and most of the participants in HBC had just some knowledge of English, it was necessary to use a translator. Unfortunately some of the information from the respondents' answers was lost during the translation, something even I with my basic knowledge of Spanish was able to detect. Despite the information that was lost underway, the answers from the respondents seemed to me to be multifaceted and surprising. The main points were never lost; it was only smaller details, such as metaphors or examples that failed to come across. The fact that three different translators were used was also somewhat unfortunate, since some time had to be used before I could find out together with the translator how the interviews should be conducted. The dynamic between interviewer, translator and respondent seemed to be important in determining the degree of success of the interviews. Aside from that, it became evident that Alvaro's knowledge of Norwegian helped a lot, since some limitations in the other translators' knowledge of English made it more difficult to gather all aspects of the answers. Having two languages that could be used interchangeably, made the translation all the more easier.

A factor in these interview sessions that should not be underestimated is the fact that he who functioned as the translator during most of the interviews was the same man who initiated the project, and remains one of the key organizers. Although I got the feeling during my short trips to La Loma that the group was a transparent entity, and that the participants could address whatever they wanted in the presence of the organizers, it would be perfectly understandable if they indeed held back some information during the interviews. Most of the questions in the interview guides were not very interrogating, but some of them required answers from the participants that could well have been in conflict with the organizers, and therefore the translator. Nevertheless, it is well worth noting that several of the respondents had negative things to say about the project in addition to positive ones.

After the first round of interviews was conducted, Alvaro and I revised the interview guide, to remove the questions that were redundant and edit those that were not precise enough.

In addition, we changed details in the translation of the questions that I used when asking the questions. One might have thought that the first interviews were therefore not as good as the later ones, but further inspection showed that the two interview guides did not call for a big difference in quality in the answers. One thing that was significantly improved, however, was the use of time, so the last interviews were conducted over a substantially shorter period of time than the first ones.

3.2.1 Informal Conversations

At my first visit to the barrio, I met three of the girls from the project who showed me around the neighbourhood and told me the history of the project and their own involvement in it. During this tour of La Loma I met Suso, an elderly and poor man for whom the project had gathered money and helped build a new house. We got to see the house they had built for him, and in a joint operation of translation to and from Spanish I learned some of the history of the neighbourhood from the girls. This conversation was more or less a semi-structured group interview, where I had a number of topics and questions that I wanted answers to, and the girls came with answers to these, and other input, as we went along (Østbye 2002). This interview was close to what Steinar Kvale and Svend Brinkmann consider being a factual interview, where the main focus is getting the facts straight and gain appropriate background information (Kvale 2009:150). This contrasts to the rest of the interviews, where the aim was to gather the sentiments and feelings of the participants, rather than mere facts. This informal conversation was effective in answering three questions that Marshall and Rossman explain should be important in qualitative research, namely; “how, where and with whom a particular phenomenon exists” (1989:55). Since the low frequency of blogging over a long period of time had been a main issue for the organizers, “how often” was certainly also a relevant question to answer. In the period before Álvaro Ramírez Ospina came to Medellín in January of 2009, the maintenance of the blogs on the part of the participants had been somewhat neglected. After January the publishing started to pick up, and during and after my fieldwork the participants published at a regular and frequent basis. Aside from the level of activity in the group falling whenever Alvaro was not present, he had himself witnessed a tendency of a regular decrease in activity. When some or several of the participants took part in conferences or other events, like Campus Party in Bogotá, to join in workshops or represent the project,

there was a lot of enthusiasm in the group and lots of posts got written in the collective and personal blogs. But in the time after these events the level of activity suddenly halted significantly and for some time afterwards stopped completely. During these events, the participants often worked more than eight hours a day, attending meetings and holding presentations, and it is easy to understand if the intense workload and constant focus on the project during these conferences made the participants want to concentrate on other things for a while afterwards.

3.2.2 Setting

With the library in La Loma as the regular meeting place for the participants and administrators, this was the obvious site to conduct the interviews. The choice of this as the venue, however, proved to have consequences for both the interview-situation and for the production of data. Since the larger part of the interviews was conducted in a public library during its opening hours, the amount of noise was at times substantial. This made it somewhat difficult to comprehend everything that was said when transcribing the sound material afterwards. Other than that, at times, the translator, respondent and I were distracted by other participants in the project who were interested in what we were doing. As Helge Østbye has also realized, the setting where an interview is taking place should be void of disruptive elements (Østbye 2002:103). With the frequent visits from other participants in the group to the site of our interview, I cannot be a hundred percent certain that the respondents felt they could say whatever they wanted. On the other hand, the library was a site that every one of them was familiar with, and hopefully that had a positive impact on the interviews.

3.2.3 Interview-guide

After conducting the interviews in La Loma and when reviewing the interview-guides, some things came to mind that could have been done differently or eliminated altogether. In some cases my questions were very leading, in that the answers were already a given, so the respondents had little opportunity to give certain valour to their answers. An example of this is a question where I was hoping to find out how important the comments on the blogs are to the respondents. The question, from the revised interview-guide, was “How important are the comments written by visitors on your blog?” With this question I take for granted that the comments indeed have some importance to the respondents, while that might not have been the case. Another question that could have been rephrased somewhat is “What do you get out

of being involved with the project?” In this case, the respondent could get the feeling that he/she should have gained something from their participation, while in fact the project could merely have been a hobby to him/her. One thing that became evident when reviewing the answers from the interviews was that when the questions dealt with two different matters, often only the first one I mentioned was commented on by the respondents. An example of this is the question “What are your thoughts on HiperBarrio and Rising Voices, both negative and positive?” This problem could have been avoided by dividing the question into two parts or just deal with one of the organizations. The question “Do you feel that you would have been able to create and maintain this type of project without the assistance of the two organizations?” was asked in both interview guides, and although it was presented differently each time, I realized that it was somewhat redundant. The negative response to this question from all respondents was no surprise, given the importance of both organizations in the creation of the project. Had it not been for the work being done by the organizers, it seems far-fetched that the youth, without much knowledge and expertise in information technology, would join together to create a project similar to HBC.

3.2.4 Transcribing

All of the interviews were taped, and the first four interviews were also quite extensively recorded in hand-writing as the interview went along. The hand-writing proved too time-consuming for me and distracting for the respondents and so it was dropped for the last ten interviews. Recording equipment, like the one I used, makes it easier for the interviewer to pay full attention to the conversation, which proved to be true also in my case (Østbye 2002:105). Nevertheless, it seemed that when the respondents were given the time to reflect more on their answers because of the pauses caused by my writing, their answers were sometimes more extensive than when I did not jot down any of their responses. When I relied only on the recording equipment, the answers in many cases were shorter and more abrupt, perhaps because the respondents were not given enough time to reflect on what they said. Due to my limited knowledge of Spanish, the transcription of the interviews is based mostly on what the translator told me, although some parts in Spanish I could make out after having discussed the same subjects a number of times. Some quotes from interviews that have been transcribed from English have been edited to be more understandable, but without changing the basic content.

3.3 Choice of Respondents

The respondents that I interviewed were the most active of the participants in the project at that time, and were all involved in the other meetings I attended while in La Loma. The sampling of these respondents is a type of *homogenous sampling*, where the members of a subculture, in this case HBC, are interviewed in order to get the full picture of the social processes within the group (Ritchie 2003:79). What I sought after by interviewing the most active participants was what Michael Quinn Patton describes as *information-rich cases*: who could give the most insight in the social relations and successfulness of the project at that time (Patton 2002:230). Many of those most active at the time of my fieldwork had participated in the project from the beginning, and this also suggested they had insight into the dynamics and practices of the group. The process that led to the selection of respondents was however somewhat random, and in retrospect one can say that it would have been better with a more heterogenic group of respondents. Those who were interviewed were those present in the library the days I was there, or it was the most active of the participants. Unfortunately I did not have the opportunity to interview participants who were no longer active in the group. However, not all of the respondents who were interviewed were very active at the time. Some had joined the project recently, and others had begun stepping out of the group due to other commitments. It would have been optimal to interview people who at that time were just joining the project, or had been members for a short time, to compare their answers to those of the active and less active participants. It would also have been useful to hear if those who had quit the project were able to apply their knowledge from the project to other areas after leaving the group, and to hear why they quit. The interviews with people who were starting to become active in the group let me see what impression they had of the project, thus their reason for joining, and their expectations for the project.

3.4 Analysis

My analysis of the interviews is connected to the interactionist tradition which tells us that the respondents not only construct narratives in their answers but also construct a social world (Silverman 2004:126). For me, as for any other researcher following this tradition, the most important aim of the research is to “generate data which gives us an authentic insight into people’s experiences” (ibid.). I wanted to know what the project of HBC was able to give the participants and administrators alike, and according to sociologist David Silverman

qualitative interviewing is a good way of “exploring the points of view of our research subjects” (Silverman 2004:127). Their answers do of course not in any way tell an objective and complete “truth” about their project and community, but in this thesis the aim is rather to “represent the person’s view fairly and to portray it as consistent with his or her meanings” (Charmaz in Silverman 2004:127).

According to Silverman there are at least six categories of knowledge that can be produced during a qualitative interview, and to some degree all of them were covered during my sessions with the participants and the administrator of HBC (1994:91). First there is the “Facts”, which in my case were the biographical information of each respondent, and the history and background of the organization. The latter was for the most part discussed during my interview with the librarian and the informal conversation at my first visit. Then there is the “Beliefs and Facts”, which in the interviews concerned the media in Medellín and Colombia and the project in connection with the local community. The questions where “Feelings and Emotions” of the respondents were asked for were those regarding their own place in the community and the project, their identities, their gains from the project, the aims of the project and the future of it. The “Standards of Action”, which tells something about what should be done in a particular situation, was only related to one question, namely “When you have problems in the group, how do you feel that they are managed?” This question is maybe even more relevant to the category of “Present and Past Behaviour”, and this category also came to the surface when asking about the lacks of the project if they felt there were any. The last category of “Conscious Reason”, I believe was relevant to most all of the questions, and certainly the more open-ended ones, such as “What do you get out of being involved in the project?” All in all, the type of knowledge that was most important during my interviews was the “Feelings and Emotions”, since the success of the project is very much related to how the participants regard it.

3.4.1 Entrée

To be able to gain what is often called *entrée* into a community, you need someone who can give you that access (Østbye 2002:117). In my case, it was my counsellor who gave me both the *informal* and *formal access* to both La Loma and HBC. Being one of the administrators of the project, he was very much an authority figure to the youth involved in the project, and maybe due to this we had little difficulty in convincing them to being interviewed or assisting

me in my observation. His function therefore came close to what Østbye describes as a *key informant* (2002:117). The contact between the participants and I was from the start informal, and since they were interested in my thesis on a basic level, there was no need for me to describe my mission in great detail in order for them to assist me in my research. The course of making a formal inquiry to the group that is sketched out by Østbye was therefore neglected, since the access to the community was already ensured (2002:117). The fact that I came to La Loma and the project together with Álvaro Ramírez Ospina and consequently was associated with him as an authority figure and organizer may also have caused my informants to withhold information. One could imagine that certain aspects of the project that the participants thought of as problematic or negative were only discussed among the participants and would not come into light in settings where authority figures are present.

3.5 Field Notes

During and after my visits to La Loma I extensively noted all observations that could relate to my hypotheses and to the social relations in HBC. Also after my visit to the library in San Javier and the award-ceremony at the end of my stay I wrote field notes. These notes I hoped could be comparable with the answers from the respondents, to find inconsistencies if there were any. As Helge Østbye mentions, through observation and by using field notes, the researcher is able to confront his or her understanding of the research subject with the understanding of those people being observed (Østbye 2002:109). During my fieldwork in Colombia, the field notes were in principle similar to two of the types of field notes Schatzman and Strauss have proposed; *observational notes* and *theoretical notes* (Schatzman and Strauss in Østbye 2002:109). In accordance with their definitions, the first notes were mostly descriptive, explaining what I observed during my visits while the second ones were interpretations of what I observed and therefore not as descriptive (ibid.). Prior to my arrival in Colombia and after finishing my fieldwork, I wrote what Schatzman and Strauss define as *methodological notes*, with the intent of providing a critical view of my own fieldwork and the notes I made during it, and making constructive considerations of what should be done during the fieldwork (ibid.).

3.6 Interpretations

One can say that the theoretical basis for this thesis is connected to the methodological discipline of hermeneutics. In this view, our understanding of texts from situations not familiar to us should be made by taking into account the social conditions and context of that time and place (Gripsrud 2002:130). When looking at the texts produced by the participants in HBC one has to be aware of the social and cultural conditions that lay the foundation for the organization and which steer the judgements that are made. The violent conflict that has had its hold on the Colombian society and La Loma for so many years, as well as the relative poverty in La Loma, both create a certain context from which all of the blog posts need to be understood. The nature of the conflict is difficult to fully understand without detailed knowledge of it, but it is probably necessary to understand the inhabitants' point of view. In addition to this, the recipients of the texts that are interpreted cannot avoid their own social and cultural conditions when seeing them (ibid.). Certainly, far from all of those who visit HBC's pages live under conditions similar to those in La Loma. By putting the conditions of those separate times and places in conjunction, the interpreter is enriched and changed (ibid.). Other than this, both the visitors to HBC' blogs and I are affected by the social and cultural conditions in which we have lived. The Colombian society is in many ways the opposite of the Norwegian society, with its climate, both in terms of weather and people. What needs to be done in a fieldwork like this is some sort of *cultural translation*, an anthropological method of seeing through the eyes of those interpreted in addition to through ones own eyes. To fully comprehend the realities and understandings of the respondents from a culture as different from my own as the Colombian, I would have needed to take their point-of-views. Unfortunately, the time I spent in Medellín did not allow for me to perform any sort of cultural translation or see the Colombian society through the eyes of the people I interviewed. In order to fully understand the social dynamics in a group such as HBC, a researcher with such a different background should have knowledge of the language spoken at the location and a lot of time to observe the processes in the group. What I came to understand during my short stay in Medellín is that a project like HBC, where the participants are busy with studies and work most of their time and the project is something that at times comes in the background, is maybe not easy to study by doing participant observation. Nevertheless, if one is to understand all the social dynamics and processes in a group like this, participant observation of some kind is necessary. What could be done in a similar situation is to do a participant observation in the confines of the library, and conduct short as well as more

extensive interviews with both organizers, participants and other people who visit the library, in addition to people from other organizations that are connected to HBC. This would certainly be desirable in order to establish the thick description that is needed to do an adequate research of this project and its achievements.

4.0 Analysis

In order to get an understanding of the work being done in HiperBarrio, I will in this chapter first do a short analysis of both the collective and the personal blogs of HBC's participants. Secondly, I will make some observations of the visitor numbers to the collective blog over the course of one year. Lastly, I will make use of the theories presented in the preceding chapters, with greatest attention given to those of Dara O'Neil, to discuss the interviews conducted with participants and organizers from HBC.

4.1 Blog Posting Analysis

To get an insight into how often the bloggers write their entries, and what topics they write about, I decided to analyze the entries for one month, from the December 23rd 2009 to January 23rd 2010. In this analysis I have looked at the entries and corresponding comments in the collective blog. This specific period was chosen to get an understanding of how the project was running closest to the completion of this thesis. During the period, a total of 11 entries were written by the members of HBC. Two of the entries were written by the same person, paradoxically one of the members who at the time of my fieldwork seemed to be moving away from the group. Two of the other entries were written by the organizers of the group; Álvaro Ramirez Ospína and the librarian. From December 28th to January 14th, a period of three and a half weeks, no entries were published. The second longest period without activity from the group lasted for four days. In reality, one might say that the participants wrote the 11 entries during a period of ten days. During this time, the entries were published every day or every other day. Apart from the two entries written by the organizers, and one entry by one of the males from the project, all the entries were written by female participants.

In total, there were 55 comments to these entries, with 11 comments being the highest number of comments to a single entry, and one being the lowest number. There was, therefore, five comments written on average to every entry on the collective blog. Out of the 55 comments, 44 comments were written by participants or organizers from HBC. This suggests that a global conversation that the mother organizations are hoping for is maybe not as visible on HBC's website as is the conversation between the people involved in the project. Following one of the entries, five comments were made by the publisher of the entry itself. In these

comments, the publisher thanked the readers for their comments. Two comments were made by people not involved in the project, but living in Medellin. The last two comments were written by Spanish-speaking people, not living in Colombia.

The themes of the entries were quite varied: from the project's involvement in a film festival, to encouragement to make contributions to survivors of an earthquake in the Caribbean state of Haiti. Four of the 11 entries dealt with topics relating to work being done in HBC, making this the most frequently occurring topic. A reason for the large amount of posts relating to HBC in this period might be that the participants and organizers were very anxious to expand the project at this time. The second most frequent topic was on the issues in the local community, with a total of three entries. The last four entries dealt with Colombia in general and the rest of the world. The four entries that dealt with HBC consisted of first-hand recollections of their involvement in an Antioquian film festival and the involvement in a conference held on social media. In them, the writer told the readers of how their involvement in the two events made the project and the work being done there more visible to the outside world. Out of the three entries written on topics relating to La Loma, one was about the once again resurfacing violent dispute in the neighbourhood. Another was a profile article on one of the inhabitants in La Loma, who told the story of a political conflict in the area between conservatives and liberals, dating back several decades. The last entry relating to La Loma gave a detailed description of how Christmas celebrations in the different areas of the barrio take place. In one of the entries relating to Colombia as a society, the author criticized the government for not taking responsibility for the low wages that grow only marginally every year. The other entry relating to Colombia, which one might also say relates to the rest of the world, is an encouragement to young people to not throw away their lives playing computer games, but rather invest their time in an education.

In general, one might say that in the collective blog, the participants write mostly on topics concerning the work being done in HBC, and the comments are written by people associated with the project. Moreover, there are only two comments to these entries that are written by people living in La Loma or Medellin, who are not associated with HBC. If one is to take this finding as representative of the collective blog at other times as well, this does not show that the project has managed to reach out to the local community to a large degree. The comments that are written might however not be an adequate representation of the people reading the blogs. The people reading the blogs could be a more heterogeneous group, with a greater

contingent of people from other projects and other parts of the world as well. One has to take into consideration that not all the people who visit the blogs write comments to the posts. Although the participants write to a great extent on the work being done in HBC, the focus is mostly on the work being done in relation to other events and organizations, i.e. the project's relationship with the rest of the world. The internal affairs of the project are never dealt with in these entries.

14 comentarios



Fig. 2

This figure shows a typical sequence of comments given to a post to the collective blog. The post in question deals with the participation of one of the participants in the BarCamp conference in Bolivia, and the comments are congratulations from participants and

organizers in the project. Over each comment there is a small poll, where the visitors may rate the comments by giving their thumbs up or down.

To match the findings from this small enquiry into the collective blog, I have also looked at entries in the collective blog that were published during my fieldwork. Since there was an extended holiday at the time of my previous examination, I found the need to analyze entries from a more typical period of the project's lifespan. In this case I looked at ten days in July of 2009, up to the day of my departure from Colombia. During this period there were written ten entries, but at two occasions two entries were published the same day. The main issue for the whole group during this time was the nomination and winning of the Mujeres Talento Award by one of the most active participants. In accordance with this, three of the entries dealt with this award ceremony, and one entry was actually published the same evening that the ceremony took place. An equal amount of entries had as the topic the recurring violence, and what it meant to the inhabitants in La Loma during that period of time. The entry that was published the same day as the Mujeres Talento award ceremony had received the most comments out of all the entries that I have looked at in this enquiry, with 28 comments as of February 2010. For the most part, these comments are congratulatory remarks from people both inside and outside the group, as well as links to other pages where the award is mentioned. In addition to these topics, the bloggers have written about the participatory budget in Medellín, the celebration of Colombia's Independence Day and a small summary of all that happened to HBC the preceding year.

4.1.1 Personal Blogs

In order to get a view of how the work in the personal blogs of the HBC participants is in relation to the collective blog, I gathered information about the five last entries from six different blogs. The frequency of entries in these blogs is much lower than in the collective blog. This follows naturally from the fact that the organizers of HBC delegate the responsibility of writing entries each week in the collective blog to the participants. In the personal blogs, on the other hand, the participants write whenever they feel like it and have the necessary time. The frequency is quite different in each of the blogs, so in the one that is updated most often, a new entry has been published approximately every week when outside the holidays. In one of the blogs I have looked at, the blogger wrote the last entry in

September of 2009 (Coronel Murión 2009), and in one of the other, the blogger wrote the last one in October of 2009. In the other four blogs, the writing has continued almost up to the date of writing, spanning from the end of January to the beginning of February 2010. In other blogs, a new entry is published once a month, while at other times there are several months between each entry. Generally, one can say that the participants whom I thought to be most active during my fieldwork are in fact the ones who publish most often. The ones who publish most infrequently are those who write poems. One of the personal blogs I have looked at belongs to the most active participant in HBC (Cosas del alma 2010). Not surprisingly, most of the entries in her personal blog are therefore about the different events that she and the group take part in. Three of the entries that I have read from this time period are a sort of travelogue from the group's trip to BarCamp, a conference on new media held in Bolivia that she also attended. What comes as bit of a surprise when going through these personal blogs is that one of the participants who seemed to be drawing herself away from the group at the time of my fieldwork is still writing, albeit quite sporadically (Angelgoth 2010). This participant was by far the person who I had the hardest time getting answers from during the interviews, and during the meetings I had with the group as a whole, it seemed that she had already decided to keep her distance to this project. Although she does not publish on her blog as frequently as the ones who are most active in HBC, one of the entries I looked at does in fact deal with matters concerning the project. Two of the personal blogs in this enquiry are devoted to the poems of the blog owners themselves (Helel Ben Sahar 2010). In one of them, all of the poems deal with the reoccurring violent conflict that has once again taken hold in La Loma, and the consequences it has for the inhabitants (Baúl de letras 2010). The entries in these blogs have gotten fewer comments than most of the other entries in this small enquiry, and far less than the entries where the bloggers write about HBC.

4.2 Visitor Numbers

On the collective blog of HiperBarrio Convergentes, the group has set up a site counter at the website clustrmaps.com. This counter shows how many visitors their blog has and from which countries the visitors have accessed the blog (Clustrmaps 2010). The counter is set to zero every year in February, therefore it is not possible for an outsider to view these numbers on the Clustrmaps-site after February 2010. The data that the counter has produced can certainly be of great relevance to this thesis, insofar as it gives an insight into how well the

project manages to reach out to other communities and engage in a global conversation. The numbers that I have looked at on the clustrmaps.com website has been gathered in the course of approximately one year; from February 13th 2009 to February 14th 2010. Not surprisingly, the country from which the most people have accessed convergentes.wordpress.org is Colombia with a little over 9,100 individual hits, which is not far from the total number of hits from the rest of the world. One has to take into consideration that included in that number is also every visit from the participants and organizers of HiperBarrio. The South American countries dominate the top of the statistics, with most hits from Mexico, Peru and Venezuela, and USA in third place: all of them with numbers going from 1,100 to 2,000. This shows that HBC is quite successful in reaching areas where Rising Voices does not have any other projects. What does come as somewhat of a surprise is the relatively low number of visits from Bolivia (184) in comparison to the aforementioned South American countries. One could have anticipated a much higher number when thinking about the contact that has been developed between HBC and Rising Voices-companion Voces Bolivianas in three Bolivian cities. Other than that, there are very few visits from other countries where Rising Voices have projects. This is however not as surprising, since Spanish is not widely spoken in those countries, and since HBC only recently started translating their blogs into English in great numbers. Apart from the Spanish-speaking parts of the world, the largest amount of visitors comes from Western Europe and USA. If one is to take these statistics as evidence of how much HiperBarrio is managing to take part in a global discussion, it is fair to say that it is a discussion being held in Spanish. This could therefore be an indicator of how translating the blogs into English would help the project in expanding their impact. Certainly, another factor that is very important in that matter is the *digital divide*, which tells us that the number of internet connections per capita in Western Europe and USA is far higher than in other parts of the world (ITU 2005). According to statistics from 2008, there are approximately 3.7 million computers in Colombia (Cafeguauguau 2009), indicating that some 8.6 percent of the country's 43 million inhabitants own a computer (CIA 2010). In comparison, in a country like Norway approximately 88 percent of every household has a computer (Pilskog 2009). Other statistics show that there are more than 17 million internet users in Colombia using those computers. With a population of some 43 million, approximately 39 percent of the Colombians are using the internet (CIA 2010). In Norway, on the other hand, 86 percent of households had an internet connection in 2009 (Pilskog 2009). These statistics illustrate the digital divide; a factor that has to be taken into consideration when analysing the underrepresentation of African and Asian countries.



Fig. 3

This map shows the projects that were affiliated with Rising Voices as of March 2010. Several other projects that were organized by or connected to Rising Voices earlier have stopped their activity or their affiliation with the organization prior to this.

4.3 Identity

A blog can be used in many ways and to several ends, and in addition to it being a “vehicle of democratic expression”, it can also be used to revive tradition and explore identity (Russell 2009:8). All of these three factors are incorporated in the project in La Loma, and in their work the participants hope to use their blogs in all of these ways. From the onset, and even prior to the project’s development, a main focus has been to gather cultural and historical

information from the neighbourhood. In that way, amongst other things, the project is trying to revive the tradition inherent in that society. As researcher of journalism Mark Tremayne mentions, the art of blogging can have consequences for the construction of one's own self; the identity (Tremayne 2007:90). The space on the internet that the blogs are representative of is one that allows for another exploration of each person's self than "normal social interaction" might allow (Tremayne 2007:90). Some evidence of this could be found in the interviews with the youth from La Loma; for example in the case of Felipe, who says that his blog is a "space where I can express myself". Ines has similar feelings, saying that "it [blogging] has helped me as a person. When I write I feel more free." Other participants also agree that the blogs are letting them express themselves in a fashion that they otherwise would not have had access to, and that this is important to them.

If the "real world" does not allow for a full exploration and development of one's identity, the blogs can help to mature and test greater parts of it (Turkle in Tremayne 2007:90). This maturing process is something Pedro is a testament to, a participant from the onset and a graphic designer student who has helped in developing the design of the project's collective blog. "It makes me feel that I am a participant in the transformation of the barrio towards the world. And I have gotten responsibility, a more responsible attitude," he said. The words of Mark Tremayne correspond well with the thoughts of the members of HBC: "Blogs provide an outlet – a place to express individual identity while also seeking a social identity with others through shared experiences and meaning" (2007:90). Although the individual project of self-realization is an important one, there would be a black hole without the social identity that both the individual blogs and the collective blog can help develop. HBC is connected to other projects under the umbrella of Rising Voices, and the participants have contact with the participants of these projects. It is another South American project, Voces Bolivianas from Bolivia, which the participants of HBC have the most connection with and feel closest to. One of the newest participants in the group, Felipe, said that with the connection they have with other groups they are able to build their knowledge together, by learning from each other. One of the ways that this has happened is when some of the participants in HBC collaborated with Argentinian bloggers in creating a so-called *blognovela*: a short story with several writers and editors that was published in six parts in 2008 (Nunca Será Suficiente 2008).

4.3.1 View of Themselves

A factor related to the attitudes and awareness within the group and among the individuals connected to the group is “Perceptions of neighbourhood characteristics”, which is also related to identity (O’Neil 2002:7). Because most inhabitants in La Loma do not work or study in La Loma, but rather in other barrios in Medellín, most of the time they spend there is used indoors in their homes; sleeping, eating and spending time with their family. In order to get to work or university, the people have to get down from La Loma in the hillsides overlooking Medellín to the city centre, where they stay most of the time during the weekdays. Therefore, as some of the respondents point out, there is not a great feeling of togetherness within the community. This type of community corresponds with something that Lyn Simpson describes as an un-civic community, where only weak social networks are developed and “Poor awareness of community activities leads to a lack of concern and consequently poor involvement and little cooperation” (Simpson 2005:111). In her article on community informatics, Simpson looks at how social capital, in her view a determining factor for making a CI-initiative successful, is a product of community-generated networks and associations, of which La Loma is lacking. The sentiment of little cooperation in La Loma was also shared by the participants in HBC. Blanca explains what the perception of La Loma was when they started with the project; “The community was very apart, socially, and we wanted to change this, to make the community more social (together)”.

According to Douglas Schuler it is difficult to define what a community is in clear terms (Schuler 1994:16), and in addition to this the inhabitants of La Loma have a hard time defining what community they are a part of. Belonging to both the township of San Cristobal and the city of Medellín, the barrio La Loma lies on the borderline of rural Medellín, and as several of the participants explained has a history of being forgotten by the authorities in Medellín due to its location. A project like HBC is of course not large or substantial enough to change the attitudes of some 17,000 people in the blink of an eye, but could possibly change the identities of the participants and the ones closest to them. What the project has the potential of doing is making the participants more aware of their local community and the role they can play in it. This relates to “Sense of place”, one of Dara O’Neil’s indicators under the headline “Attitudes and awareness”, which is meant to measure people’s feeling of themselves in their own city, community, country etc (O’Neil 2002:17).

María was one of the respondents that seemingly had gained the most from the project, and especially when it came to her place within the local community. Several times she emphasized how her involvement in the group had made a significant difference in how others view her and changed her place in the community: “I have opened myself more to other people, to young people, to neighbours, and I am also able to express what I know (...) and people know me” (María). Earlier she had been more shy, but with the tasks involving the project she was forced to interact with her neighbours and other people in the local community, gaining new friends as she went along. “(...) you are forced to talk to people. And then you interact with them and you begin to make friends, to friends that you never have talked to”, she says. This transformation is something that seemingly has happened to other participants in the group as well. Blanca, from whom I had a hard time getting answers from during the interviews, and who still seemed to be quite shy when having to deal with a lot of people, could relate to what María was saying: “I was very shy before, but now I am more social, and this is a way to get in contact with people. If I wasn’t in the project, I might just be at home studying or doing something different.”

4.4 Conversation

A significant difference between the traditional media, such as newspapers, and new media, like blogs, is that the traditional media to a far greater degree involve a vertical form of communication, while new media seek to incorporate a more horizontal form of communication. In traditional media, the communication is mostly one-way, in that the journalists write articles to the readers, while the readers seldom write articles for the journalists, making the communication vertical and top-down. In new media, on the other hand, there is more focus on conversation between all users, with the division between producer and consumer less distinct. This makes the communication between for example bloggers more horizontal than between producer and consumer in traditional media.

An important part of blogs is the comments that visitors write to tell their opinion about the posts and their topics, and such is the case for the blogs of HBC. All of the respondents from the group were convinced that the comments were essential, and that there was no reason for them writing the blogs without this form of feedback and inspiration. Under the main topic of

“Usage information” in Dara O’Neil’s article, the indicator that is closest related to the comments on the blogs and the possible global conversation is “Level of two-way information flow” (2002:17). There is a great importance of there being some sort of two-way information flow in the blogs in HBC, as this element is one of the defining ones in the blogosphere and web 2.0 in general.

In both the collective and the individual blogs of the group in La Loma there are comments to most of the posts, sometimes from people within the group and other times from outsiders. Oftentimes these comments start taking the form of a conversation between several individuals where a multitude of opinions are voiced, especially if the subject is political. At other times, the comments are encouraging remarks and appraisals of what has been written in the post, be it a polemical piece or a poem. Mariela from the group also remarked that some comments took the form of being constructive criticism, by making her aware of misspells or other errors. Other respondents agree to this, in that the comments can make them more aware of what they are writing, both with regards to content and grammar. When they receive a comment from someone outside or internally in the group, it is relatively certain that they get more inclined to visit the other person’s blog. In that way, whether it is intended or not, the commenting on other blogs can be an effective way of promoting ones own blog. As Isabella, one of the most active of the participants, told me: “If you comment to other blogs, the bloggers return to your blog and there is a network of persons who comment.” The main goal of the mother organization Rising Voices is to let people from peripheral and unprivileged communities take part in a “global discussion”. The greater part of the participants in La Loma felt that they were in fact engaging in that kind of a discussion, but there were also some that did not feel that way. Of those, Jose thought that his interests and what he wrote about in his blog did not make for a discussion in the manner proposed by Rising Voices:

“(…) that is because of the way I handle my blog, how my approach to blogging is. It is because I’m not too interested in politics or the things that are usually talked about in blogs. What is interesting is literature and philosophy, and there is very little of that (…)” (Jose)

Most of the participants in HBC are very content with the way the project has progressed and the impact that the participants have on their own society, but as mentioned not all of them feel they are engaging in a global conversation. A stated principle and a main reason for the

creation of Rising Voices was this global conversation, which from the get-go was what the initiators at Harvard University hoped for by funding projects.

The motivations that the participants have for being involved in the project and for managing their blogs are, as this example demonstrates, diverse. Some of the participants, like Teresa, feel motivated to continue in the project because it gives her an opportunity to help the community, and says “I feel discouraged when people are dedicated only to writing. I want people to be involved not only in the blog, but also in the social work”. Others, with Jose as the primary example, have as a motivating factor that they can publish their art, their poetry, in addition to what they write in the collective blog. Being a literature student, Jose’s main concern is his and others’ writings, and he does not want to partake in what he calls the “banalities of internet”, for example chatting. As he says, “I am using the internet in a more productive way. I’m contributing in a way that I think is interesting.” Other participants, like Andres, use their blogs both in a socially conscious and a catharsis type of manner. In his creative work, Andres expresses his feelings in relation to the problems he and others have faced in La Loma during the violent conflict, thus trying to influence and engage others while expressing his thoughts:

”(...) when I write in the blog it has been a freedom kind of experience. Many things have happened here, and now a group of young people can finally tell what they have inside. It would have been very benefitting for any place in the world,” (Andres)

he explains. Organizer Álvaro Ramírez Ospina informed me that before joining the project, the overall technical skills of the participants were generally quite low, and that the only activities they were doing online were chatting and e-mail. Their knowledge of blogs was little or non-existent and even the librarian, who has been a principal organizer from the beginning, attended the first work-shops to get a general understanding of blogs and the software needed to produce them. Most of the participants acknowledged in the interviews that blog as a medium was an important part of the project, and a prerequisite for bringing about the results that have come out of the project. At the same time, many saw the blogs mostly as a vehicle for spreading the texts and media that were produced by the participants, more of a means to an end rather than a goal in itself. Says Isabella, one of the participants who has been most active since the start of the project:

“I think that this media of communication helps us to share information to other people in the world. We work with video, pictures, with blogs, with podcasts. All of these tools help us to convey information and not only to convey information, but also to show many faces of our reality” (Isabella).

Through a wide variety of work-shops held by organizer Álvaro Ramírez Ospina, other organizers and people outside the group, the participants have been taught how to manage software programs that enables them to improve their blogs in different ways. Guillermo, who has been able to apply his knowledge from HBC in his daytime-work, needs little time to reflect on what technical skills the project has given him: “(...) manage the platform [blogplatform], blogs, podcasting, editing and writing text. I have learnt advertising, videocameras, photography, the importance of alternative media and also how to use the social web.” Ines has similar feelings about the benefits that these work-shops have given her and the other participants, and adds to the list: “The photographic techniques, moviemaker for making videos and sequences, the platform for blogs itself, Flickr for uploading pictures, microblogging in Twitter.” Guillermo is more enthusiastic about the achievements that can be applied by using the blogs, and sees it as essential for the project to gain importance in other parts rather than just La Loma:

“It’s like the axis of the project and all the projects that have followed, including learning about the web 2.0. And it shows in the stories that we have ‘Local stories for a global audience’. That is what we work with, to be known around the world” (Guillermo).

In evaluating a community informatics initiative it can be important to find out if the motivating factors for the participation of those involved match the goals of the organizers and organization (O’Neil 2002:7). In order to get perspectives from both sides of the project, I did an interview with the librarian, who was one of those initiating the project and to this day remains a coordinator. The questions for this interview were somewhat different from the ones I used when interviewing the participants, but the overall purpose of the interview was very similar; to get the respondent’s view of himself both in relation to the project and the local community. During this interview I also intended on gaining some more background information on the project and the community, since I anticipated that he would be qualified in answering questions about this. By comparing the answers of the participants with those of the librarian, I could find any differences in the way they envision the project to be and how

they consider it to be working at that moment. The goals of the librarian, as earlier mentioned, changed over the course of time, and the motivational factors of the participants may also have changed. As I learned when asking the participants how they got involved in HBC, many of them saw the project mostly as a hobby and their involvement followed as a result of spending a lot of time at the library in the first place. Although some of the participants' view of the project seems to have changed somewhat, others seem to still like it more as a hobby than anything else, and this corresponds with what I was told by the organizers. In the collective blog the participants feel that they function as citizen journalists, while in their personal blogs the hobby-aspect of the project is more important to them.

4.5 Sense of Belonging

Out of the fourteen participants I interviewed, twelve live in the community of La Loma. Of these twelve there is however some that did not feel very involved in or at home in the community before they started working with HBC. Ines, for example, told me that prior to her involvement in the project all she did was staying at home, or studying at the university. "Before I didn't even know my neighbours," she said. Because the people in her neighbourhood read her blog they asked her about it, and in such a way she got to know them. Isabella has the same sentiments as Ines, when saying:

"The project teaches us to understand the community, to feel part of a community. To begin to work for them, write their histories, help people like Suso. We, the community, are very important and we help them and they help us. We work together" (Isabella).

The cooperation within the group, as with the cooperation with other people is also an important factor in making the project successful, in Isabella's opinion: "(...) before HiperBarrio I hated to work in groups and now I love it. You learn how to understand the other person, to work with this person." Because the inhabitants of La Loma live in a geographically large area and the neighbourhood belongs to both Medellín and San Cristobal, the community is without strong ties and commitment. Ines explores this problematic issue when answering the question of whether or not enough attention is given from media and authorities to La Loma:

“(…) in La Loma there is the problem of identity. Many people don’t feel like they belong to Medellín and don’t feel like they belong to San Cristobal. Medellín is a city and San Cristobal is a municipality. They don’t say that they are from Medellín and they don’t say that they are from San Cristobal, they say they are from La Loma. There is an understanding that La Loma belongs to Medellín, but La Loma belongs to San Cristobal, and San Cristobal belongs to Medellín, so they belong to both, but they don’t feel like they belong to any of them. So that is why the government doesn’t support them that much, because they don’t think that they belong to this part (to Medellín), that is why they forget them…It’s a problem of identity, because they feel they don’t belong to this place (…)” (Ines).

4.5.1 Violent Conflict and Violent Homes

The violent conflict has been a fact of life in La Loma for several decades and still is, but it took some time before organizer Álvaro Ramírez Ospina decided to address the issue with the participants. After the project had been up and running for over two years, he sat down with the participants and asked them about how they were affected by the conflict. When asking whether someone among their closest relatives had been shot or killed during the last few years, he got a positive response from two or three of the participants. When he asked about not only the closest relatives, but also more distant relatives and friends however, it became clear that every one of the participants had been affected in one way or another. Needless to say, the conflict has had a major impact on the lives of all of the participants, and is still an important factor in the lives of all of them and their families. Through this project, and for example the theatre group in La Loma, however, the kids are allowed and encouraged to express their thoughts and feelings by means of poetry and other art forms. The conflict is unfortunately not the only problem concerning the participants in HBC. In several of the families of the participants alcoholism is a major issue and due to this and other underlying causes, such as unemployment, some of the kids in HBC have been subject to physical and mental abuse. To them, then, both the library and the blogging community of HBC may function as a safe haven and a place where they can meet likeminded people who also need somewhere to go other than home. This was never expressed by my respondents during the interviews, or when I talked to them in other situations, but is something Álvaro Ramírez Ospina, with a lengthy and close relationship with the participants, has come to understand.

4.6 Empowerment

According to communication studies researchers Andrea L. Kavanaugh and Scott J. Patterson, to be able to achieve something together as a community there has to be some sort of communication between the members (Kavanaugh 2001:3), and a project such as HBC can facilitate as a medium for bringing about that communication. “Social capital, in part, refers to the amount and quality of communication about a community that takes place among its members within their social networks” (Kavanaugh 2001:3). With a tighter knit community comes the possibility of greater civic engagement and according to Kavanaugh and Patterson; an increased quality of life for the inhabitants (*ibid.*). In trying to improve life in the barrio and strengthen the ties in the community, the people involved in HBC have initiated several projects, some more successful than others. One of the less successful was a celebration of the group’s 2nd anniversary where they wanted to inform the rest of the neighbourhood about their work. Due to organizational problems by the participants there was however a very poor attendance from the rest of the community.

One of the more successful projects is the building of a new house for Suso; an elderly, poor man who used to live in a shack made by metal plates. The group collected money and with the help of contributions from other people were able to build a new and better home made of brick. Mariela mentions this as a way that the group can reach out to the community. By being in the project, she feels that she has become more concerned for the community, and she is now able to see ways that the group and her can get involved in La Loma. Another way she mentions that the group can get involved is through their work in the participatory budget, an initiative from the mayor of Medellín to let civic movements from every barrio have their say when creating the city budget (Urán 2004). The mayor at the time of my fieldwork, Alonso Salazar Jaramillo has started taking the views of the citizens into consideration in the development of the city. The openness and interaction between the citizens that HBC initiated corresponds well with the participation that the mayor is aiming for with initiatives such as the participatory budget.

Amanda, one of the most active of the participants, concludes that the project now is a place where the people involved can gain some influence, and a space where the community can

inform about their needs, that the group in turn can inform others about. As the group's candidate from the youth of La Loma to the local Budget Decision-Making Board, Amanda says she is committed to show the rest of San Cristobal the accomplishments of the project. If her campaigning is effective, the project will get more funding from the community. The fact that the people in La Loma and the participants in HBC are able to influence both their own community and the local authorities, exemplifies what Dara O'Neil means by "Capacity for collective action", which is one of the factors that can be assessed in relation to community informatics. As Lyn Simpson explains, community informatics have the possibility of giving power to the members of a society: "CI initiatives provide innovative ways and increased opportunities for community members to interact both locally and globally, often stimulating a greater range of economic, social and civic activities" (Simpson 2005:2). This is one factor that I did not anticipate to be of importance for the project before my arrival in Medellín, but it became evident that several individuals, and in fact the group as a whole were able to influence the politics and social life in their environment quite well. This is also correlated to the broader topic of "Individual Empowerment", one of the five key areas one can use in measuring the level of impact by a community informatics project (O'Neil 2002:3). A way of analysing this level is by looking at the extent to which an individual is able to have a "(...) meaningful participation in an increasingly digitized community" (O'Neil 2002:4).

One of those who have been able to apply knowledge from the project into a job relating to the local community is Guillermo, who some months before my fieldwork, recommended by the librarian, and after a tough screening process was selected to do a full-time job as a liaison between the locals of San Cristobal and the entity in charge of building the new library park in San Cristobal. Certainly, not all of the participants are equally involved in community projects, and most of them do not have the time to do other things besides studying and working with HBC, so Guillermo is one of those most devoted to community work. The extent to which other members of the local community are able to participate in civic engagements and other organizations was not measured in my research, and thus I can only testify to a very small part of La Loma being more active because of HBC. Another one of the participants who feels that she can use the knowledge from HBC in other parts of her life is Renata, who also participates in the youth environmental group "Penca de Sábila" in La Loma:

"It's very cool, because I'm in the eco-group. It unites many groups; I have gotten the opportunity to create a blog for the environmental group. Each group has its own blog, and

they begin to comment on each other. And then we are letting ourselves known to the city, so it is very cool” (Renata).

What Renata expresses also shows how HBC and other social groups in La Loma have managed to better the communication in the community, by creating dialogue amongst its inhabitants.

An interlinked factor proposed by Dara O’Neil is that of “Sense of ability to mobilize politically” (2002:17). The participants who are actively using their positions as authorities within the field of informatics, such as Guillermo and Amanda, are evidently aware of their possibility to change or influence the politics in their community and are enthusiastic about it:

“I found that my participation that the community gave me, by making me a delegate for the young people, to represent them, it is a space where we can get ourselves known to other young people, and to integrate us in other groups; cultural, theatre etc. And it gives us empowerment so that each person can use their talents and utilize themselves” (Amanda),

says Amanda regarding her involvement in the participatory budget in San Cristobal. Without the medium of blogs and the possibility of voicing their opinions through them, she feels that the youth’s place in society would not have been that substantial: “It is what we write and the information that gives us acknowledgment and importance”, she says. A lot of writers on blogs nowadays acknowledge the power of blogs in making both politics and journalism more horizontal (Russell 2009:2). The work that Amanda and others from HBC are doing mirrors the model of trying to make the politics more horizontal, and less top-down.

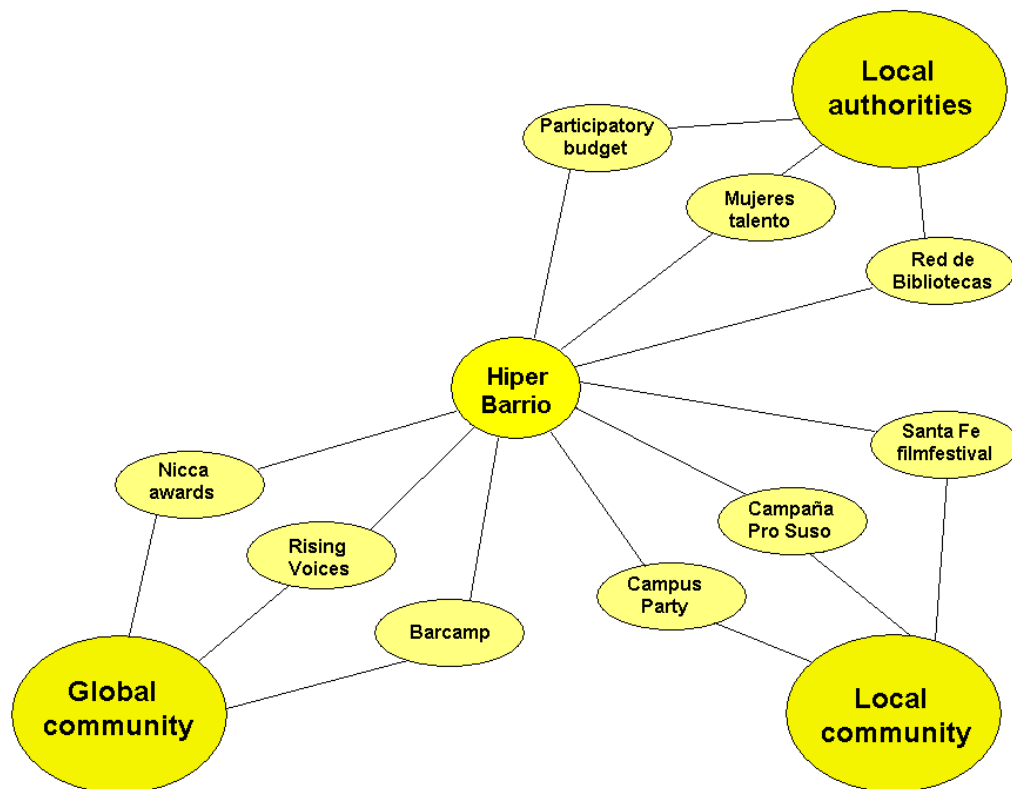


Fig. 4

The bloggers in HBC get in contact with people on various levels and in several different spheres. This figure goes some way in illustrating in what ways and through which channels those connections are established. The projects that are shown in this illustration are examples gathered from the activity in the group during 2009/2010.

At this stage in the project, most of the posts in the blogs of HBC are not translated into English, due to the lack of resources and time. As I realized during my fieldwork, however, several participants are starting to learn English, motivated by their participation in HBC. One of those most interested in learning a second language, Ines said that “(...) this project has motivated me to learn much more English, because in Rising Voices many people speak English, and I want to read their blogs as well”. The general sentiment within the group also suggested that there was a need for people to improve their English in order to be better prepared to disseminate and receive information. Says Guillermo, one of those with substantial English-abilities and a desire to also learn other languages:

“I think we need to be better prepared; we need more knowledge and preparation, especially because of the language barriers...in order to represent the project more in other languages, to have other languages to express ourselves” (Guillermo).

4.6.1 Changing Goals

In order to receive funding from the Rising Voices organization, Álvaro Ramírez Ospina and the other organizers had to submit an application with answers to several questions concerning their motivation and visions for their project. In this application it is written clearly what the objectives of HBC were from the onset, and how the organizers intended on reaching their goals. The defined main target audience, as stated by the organizers, fits well within the targets of a community informatics initiative if one is to follow the thoughts of Dara O’Neil: “The main target audience are the rest of the people of La Loma. Our aim is that the community may be able to represent itself with its own stories, portraits and ideas” (Ospina 2007). Interestingly, other people than those living in close proximity to La Loma are not among the main target audience according to the organizers. Seemingly, it is not that articulated that the mission of the project is to connect with other bloggers and visitors. This, however, seems to have become a goal for the project in the last year or so, with more focus on translation into English and in general a greater concern given to getting the project known outside of Latin-America. In the application it is stated: “The secondary audience are all other Internet individuals or similar groups who happen to be interested in the reporting and stories being gathered by the citizen journalists of La Loma“ (Ospina 2007). A stated goal of the project, however, shows that the organizers hoped for there to be some sort of conversation between their own bloggers and the wider online community. At first, the main purpose of the project (aside from collecting community history) was to broadcast videoclips made by the participants, but later on text and pictures became just as important in conveying the message they wanted:

“We will measure the impact by the number of videoclips and reports produced during the five month period by the new citizen journalists. We will also pay close attention to the comments received and the reaction of the audiences inside and outside the barrio to the challenge (we expect them to be noticed by the Colombian blogosphere and hopefully in Main Stream Media)” (Ospina 2007).

As the librarian in La Loma told me during my interview with him, the main purpose of HBC originally was to collect histories and recollections of the inhabitants in La Loma, both old and young, to build a database of the historical, collective memory of the barrio: “We hope that the old and young generations in the barrio will develop an interest in finding reflections of them in the Internet: a collection of images and memories of the cultural, social and political life of the barrio.” This goal, if still present in today’s HBC is at least somewhat modified, as there is less focus on the memories of what has happened in La Loma in earlier times, and more focus on what is happening there in the present.

From the start of the project, the organizers as well as participants have been fully aware of the many difficulties that may arise due to the lack of freedom of expression that is caused by influence of various militant groups:

“The main challenge so far is dealing with security. La Loma (like some other poor barrios in Medellín) were under the influence of guerrilla groups in the past and in the hands of paramilitary groups until recently. Paramilitaries have surrendered their weapons to the authorities but still continue to have some political presence and hidden influence. This has an impact on the freedom of expression in the barrio as it does in all areas of public life in Colombia, where journalists train themselves to walk on the tightrope of heavy and violent competing interests and agendas” (Ospina 2007).

Since the initiation of HBC, however, no violence has been brought upon those affiliated with the project due to their writing, and a reason for this may be the participants’ ability to hide their criticism behind more artistic ways of expression.

In the application, the organizers were also asked to set up a budget for one year with an estimate of how much money was needed from Rising Voices to fulfil the plans they had for the project. With a maximum total of US\$ 5,000, the project intended on, amongst other things, to buy several cameras and voice recorders to record interviews with the inhabitants. Other than the mere financial needs, the organizers were asked to propose different ways that Rising Voices could provide other means of support to the initiation of the project:

“Hosting server and maintenance. Contact with other groups similar to ours in order to share experiences, problem solving and good alternative ways of making these projects sustainable.

We think Rising Voices could become a great network of similar blogging experiences of groups trying to expand participation and freedom of expression in underprivileged regions around the world” (Ospina 2007).

The librarian in La Loma had, prior to the involvement from Álvaro Ramírez Ospina, initiated a project of collecting memos from elderly people in the barrio to create a database with the collective history of the community. According to the librarian Miguel, the main principle of HBC was to educate the kids in becoming journalists so that they could participate in the collecting he had begun;

“Later, the blogs and webcasts and some other things came, but the initial thing was to make journalists, to recover the memory, to regain all the memory that was lost because of the violence. The problem is not always violence; the problem is that we forget all the histories and memories” (Miguel).

Media theorist Geert Lovink’s concepts follow along the same line when writing about the forces in the blogosphere that are trying to level out the hegemony of mass media: “Blogs zero out centralized meaning structures and focus on personal experiences, not, primarily, news media” (Lovink 2007). The personal experiences have been and still are essential to the project in developing a history of the community that is pure and uncompromising to the extent possible. The prospects of the project have since then begun to change, and the work that is being conducted is therefore not solely devoted to the collection of memories. As time has shown, the work has also had implications for those conducting the task:

“The beginning of the project was to tell stories, and that was later the base, the centre...but that centre started to grow and touch other things, and later we realized that it was not only about histories or recovering memories, it was about making citizens. These people started thinking about themselves, and thinking about where they were growing up” (Miguel).

When asked about the aims of HBC, Isabella, one of the most active members of the project, identified the gathering of stories as the principal aim. Generally, though, there did not seem to be an understanding among the youth that this was an important aim. “The history is not

only the past, it is the present,” Isabella says, thus identifying another one of the other big tasks of the participants; to function as citizen journalists in their local community. Due to the fact that journalists cannot cover everything that happens in Medellín at all times, the participants of HBC can function as citizen journalists with their writings both in the collective blog and their personal blogs. As Amanda tells me, “(...) we are able to tell what is happening here and what young people do”. As earlier mentioned, the citizen journalists that the participants in the project are aiming to be cannot replace the journalists from traditional media, but rather function in relation to them and as a supplement. The fact that most citizen journalists, the participants in HBC included, acquire a great deal of their information from the traditional media outlets is one of the reasons that citizen journalists probably never could cover the same amount of news alone that the traditional media can. In addition to this, the introverted aspect of the project is not compatible with basic journalistic principles. Whereas a local newspaper would write only about what happened in the area where it was published, the posts on the collective blog of HBC are to a great extent writings covering the activities of the group. If one is to take an even more critical view of this project, the variety of topics is not very substantial, and the occasional irregularity of publishing makes it difficult to trust as a reliable news provider. Having said that, this project is one of the more successful projects of this kind, in that the participants have managed to make a difference in their local community and in the way other people view it.

The interviews showed the different sentiments in the group as to whether or not the project should be constituted as a fully grown organization. This process was well underway at the time of my fieldwork, and was something the organizers were very positive about. Several of the participants were however critical to the fact that the project was to be made more institutionalized. This tension might have risen due to diverse motivations for involvement from the different people involved in HBC, from just having it as a hobby to using the project in a political fashion, by spreading polemic texts about the local and national politics in Colombia. If the goals of the participants and organizers alike had been more homogenous the project might have been even more successful. If this were the case, the participants who were reluctant to make the project more institutionalized would not have been forced to follow a course they did not fully support.

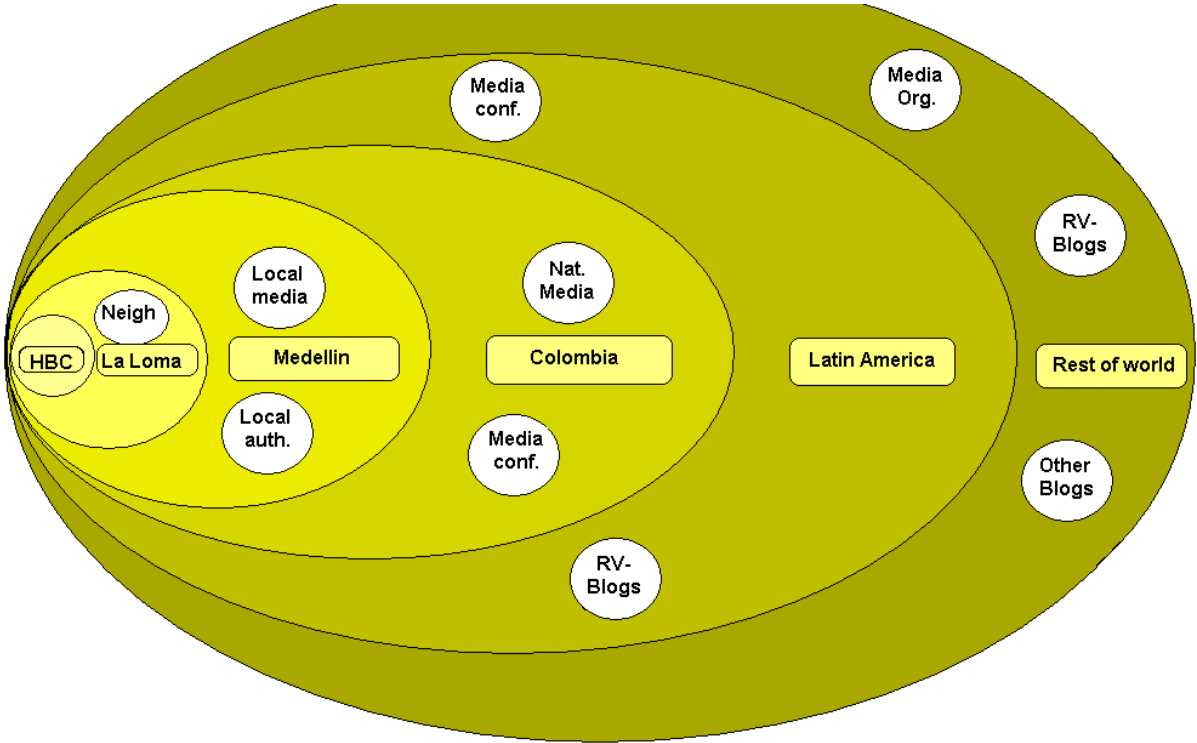


Fig. 5
Through the collective and personal blogs and the activities that take place in relation to HiperBarrio Convergentes, the participants come into contact with people from not only their own neighbourhood but from other parts of the world. This figure can function as a guide to the different spheres that the participants take part in through their activities.

Abbreviations:

- HBC = HiperBarrio Convergentes
- Neigh = Neighbourhood
- Local Auth. = Local Authorities
- Media Conf. = Media Conferences
- RV – Blogs = Rising Voices-Bloggers
- Media Org. = Media Organizations
- Nat. Media = National Media

4.6.2 Making Visible

The barrio of La Loma has been, and still is, suffering from the conflict between several militant groups, and this conflict has been the main focus for traditional media coming to the barrio. When asked about whether or not La Loma has received a sufficient amount of

attention from the government and traditional media, Felipe, a law-student and newcomer to the group answers

“(…) the public administration leaves the community, the municipality by itself. It is a peripheral community, and that has made it possible for alternative figures, like military groups with arms to take hold of sectors in La Loma…they don’t see the needs of the people, the poverty or the economical situation…so the state doesn’t really participate in an integral way as it should be” (Felipe).

A widespread notion amongst the participants in HBC is that the journalists from newspapers and other mainstream media are drawn to their community only when there are violent outbreaks. “(…) maybe if someone says that six or seven people are killed, then we get attention. But if we do something creative for the kids, if we have a reading group for the kids it will be in silence, total silence,” says Andres, one of the creative souls of the project. Part of the motivation for many of the participants is therefore to try to let outsiders know of the positive things that are happening in La Loma, in addition to all the negative ones. It had been neglected by both authorities and media earlier, but to some extent, this project has helped in drawing attention to La Loma, as Jose explains:

“(…) before it [La Loma] was much stigmatized, because it was violent and dangerous, but now it is we who are doing the job of making it visible, to show that we exist, that we are on the map. La Loma wasn’t on the map of the city, literally, but now we are making it visible” (Jose).

Isabella shares the same sentiments, and adds that one has to have a balanced view of society in the media, and that is where blogs can play a role:

“It is very important to let the people talk about the good things and the bad things, the two sides of the coin. I think that the new media let them to do it, and free. Free in the sense of the money and in the sense that it lets us talk about everything” (Isabella).

4.6.3 Media Criticism

When the paramilitaries began again spreading pamphlets and fear among the inhabitants in March of 2009, the participants felt that the media wrote about the incident in a sensationalistic manner. The term *yellow-press* was mentioned in conjunction with this incident by several of the participants, and the general feeling was that the media were only concerned with the number of fatalities rather than the relevant background information. One of those who reflected the most on this topic was Javier: “The main news in Colombia, the big headlines is ‘this many people died’...it gives good rating to them, but they don’t explain people why it happens.” Although the positive initiatives of the mayor’s office are getting attention from both media and authorities, the structural problems are according to the members of HBC not assessed. Isabella expresses this when saying:

“(...) in this moment they are coming to La Loma and San Cristobal to talk about the library park, but the problems, the big problems of the community is not looked at by the government; health, education, public spaces etc.” (Isabella)

Although some scholars and blogger pioneers herald the possibility inherent in blogs to criticize and work against the establishment, others point to the bloggers being mainly conservative and far from progressive. Geert Lovink believes that blogs in general “fit perfectly well into the concert of the big media”, because the bloggers are themselves shaped by the media landscape they are supposedly questioning (Lovink 2007:2). This position contrasts to what I heard from the participants in HBC, saying they function in opposition to the big media. With that in mind, it is worth considering that the content in the blogs of HBC is often based on articles from the traditional media outlets. Thus, the traditional media to some extent sets the agenda also for citizen journalists, when the content is not drawn from the citizen journalists’ own neighbourhood. As Andrew Keen writes, when discussing even the most prominent and widely-read bloggers: “much of the real news their blogs contain has been lifted from the very news organizations they aim to replace” (Keen 2007:52).

4.6.4 Technology Determinism

Although one can say that the project creates bonds and connections in the local community and within the project, it is not certain that the blogs are a determining factor in that work. The blogs, and the workshops in relation to them, are just vehicles for providing those

connections, which could possibly have been created by other means as well. One could imagine that the same results could have been achieved through creating a local newspaper or a local radio station. These kinds of media outlets could also function as a meeting place for people from the local community as well as a provider of news from that area. Considering the relative small amount of computers and internet connections in Colombia and La Loma, one could even imagine that those media types would have a greater impact in the local community and towards local authorities. The advantage with internet and blogs, then, is the low cost that it requires for maintenance after it has been set up, in comparison to other media. The social benefits that the participants mention as being a key factor in HBC is not necessarily something that come out of the specific media type, but rather out of the fact that the members of the group come together and create something in cooperation. In that respect, it is possible to say that it is the use of the blogs which is important, not the technology in itself.

4.6.5 Learning for Life

One of the questions in my interviews was related to the extent to which the participants were able to use what they learnt from workshops in the project in other parts of their life. Guillermo, one of the youngest members in the group, explained how he was able to use his knowledge in his job as a link between the mayor of Medellín and the San Cristobal township: “They tell me that I may be working with their website, creating a blog for the library park in order to generate statistics, links, different ways to communicate with the community through blogs.” Although the blogs and the tools that the participants are taught are just vehicles to get across their message, there are a number of participants who are able to use this knowledge in their studies or work. This work that they are able to do for others is related to the indicator “Participation rates in community organizations (civic, faith recreation etc.)”, which according to Dara O’Neil can have importance for strong democracy, social capital, individual empowerment and sense of community (2002:17). Like a number of the other indicators, this one can therefore have importance for several aspects of the lives of those affected. In my research I have only interviewed people connected to HBC, thus the rest of the community is not taken into account, and the findings will necessarily not mirror the general participation rate in La Loma. One might suppose that the kids who are involved in HBC are more active in for example civic organizations than others in the community. The interviews I conducted showed, however, that the project functioned as a stepping stone for a

number of the participants to get involved in civic organizations or to get jobs related to the work they have done in HBC. Those who were not active in other organizations had too much work with their studies to be able to get involved other places.

4.7 A Digital and Real-life Community

Although the blogs and the community in which HBC is connected to are online, not all of the interaction between those in the project takes place on computers. There are certain aspects of the project that was perhaps not specified aims, but nonetheless have been important in the process of building the project gradually. A key factor in that respect is friendship, and the ties that have been built between the participants. As Ines tells me in her somewhat broken English: “With the project I have new friends, and that is very beautiful for me, because I didn’t have friends before the project.” Javier, one of the participants who was newest to the group at the time of my visit also concludes that friendship is a key aspect of the project: “It is not just a digital community; we have also started creating bonds and friendship between one another.” During my visits to the library it also became evident to me that the group would never have functioned as well had it not been for the relationships that have been formed. Sociologists Jeffrey C. Bridger and A.E. Luloff point to how the relationships that are created in the community work that HBC represents can foster a growth of social capital:

“As individuals come together to work for their community, valuable relationships can be developed across the diverse interest lines that exist within communities. These relationships contribute to the growth of social capital as they create new information sources, reciprocal obligations and expectations, increased trust and shared norms” (Bridger & Luloff in Simpson 2005:9).

The term ‘social capital’ was never articulated by the respondents during my interviews, but there is little doubt that the project has meant a lot to several of them in terms of strengthening it. One of the respondents, Blanca, does however feel that the connection between the participants is not as good as it should be: “I feel that there is a lack of togetherness with the members of the project. I feel that the people are very apart from one another, we should get together.” At the time of my fieldwork, Blanca was one of two participants who seemed to be drawing herself away from the project, because of her commitment to another project in La

Loma: one dedicated to the environment. To me, it seemed like there were a number of cliques in the group that may or may not have had an impact on Blanca and Renata's decision to loosen ties with the group. Although most of the participants agreed on that there was a great sense of togetherness in the group, my observation while staying in La Loma showed me that the quite different personalities in the group created at least some tension.

During my visits to the library and the group I witnessed a small-scale conflict between the organizers and one of the participants, because the participant had neglected her responsibilities. This misunderstanding was resolved by direct confrontation and dialogue, as was the way of dealing with problems in the project according to the participants. When asked about how they solve problems within the group, all respondents agreed that dialogue was the preferred method, and that there was no need to identify those responsible for the problems, but rather resolve them as a group. An important aspect of the project in La Loma is that in the project, the youth are given the chance to learn together, as a group. According to the librarian, the time constraint of some of the participants makes it difficult to hold on to this principle, because they never get a chance to meet as a whole group. Generally there seemed to be a high "level of harmony" in the group, an indicator proposed by Dara O'Neil under the larger subject of "Community characteristics" (O'Neil 2002:17). As in most other groups, there seemed to be smaller cliques, but all in all the group seemed to be working as one organism. The level of harmony in the rest of the community seemed to me to be changing somewhat depending on whether or not there was a presence from the paramilitaries and other armed groups. Other than that, my visit to La Loma was too limited for me to make a general judgement about their society. Before Álvaro Ramírez Ospina's arrival in Colombia in the winter of 2009, the participation rate had been low for a long period of time. When the bloggers did produce something it was done mostly in their personal blogs and not in the collective HBC blog. This shows how the project and its participants are dependant on close follow-up and motivation from the organizers. Although one of the two organizers was present in La Loma during the time that Álvaro spent in Norway, the productivity in the group was not maintained at a high level. After Álvaro's arrival in early 2009, the productivity level increased substantially, and the regularity of the posts improved.

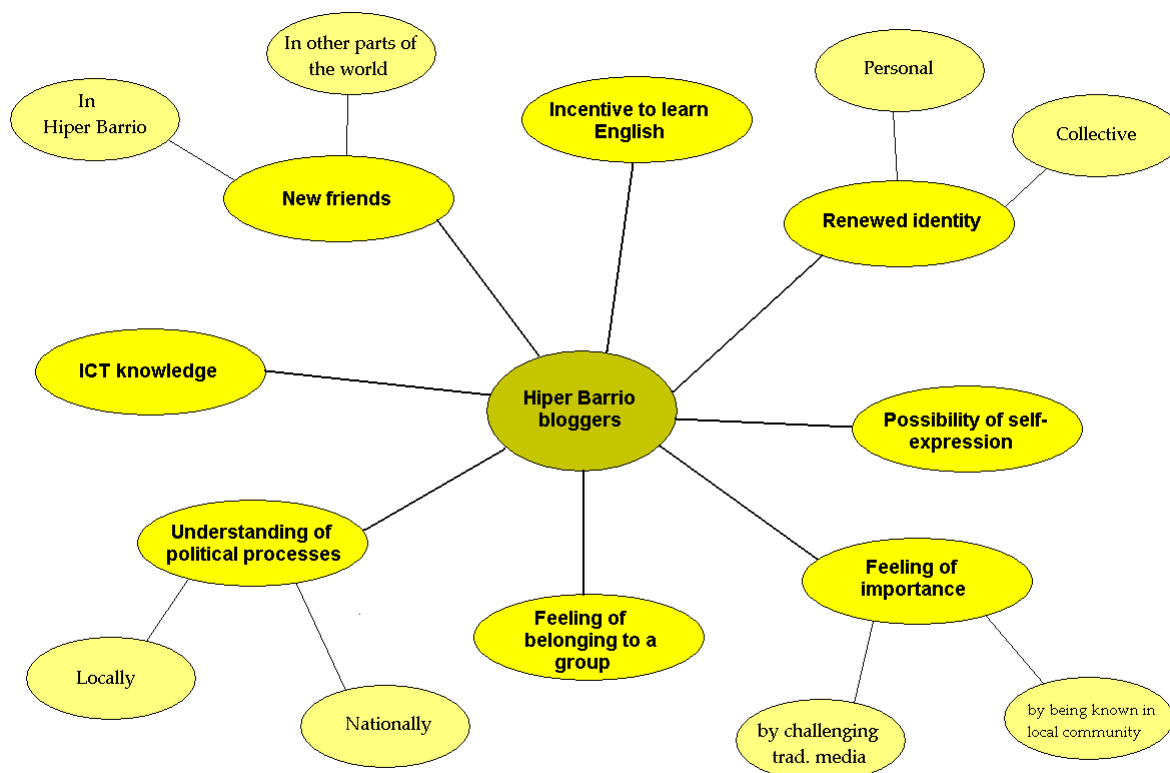


Fig. 6

This figure shows the different benefits that the kids in HBC seemingly get through their participation in the project.

During my visits to La Loma I was informed by the librarian of the plans the group has of building Wi-Fi receivers, so that more of the participants can connect to internet from their homes. Until the group has begun producing the Wi-Fi antennas, the relative lack of internet connections remains an obstacle for the project, according to the librarian. The participants who do not have internet or computers in their homes only have access to the computers in the library a few hours in the afternoon and at the time of the group's meetings on Saturday. At the time of my fieldwork, there were many who did not have access to internet other than at the library, and did not always have time to update their blogs. This is related to the indicator "ICT access facilities" that Dara O'Neil mentions, where the access to ICT for people in the community is measured (2002:7). The project itself has not significantly affected people's access to internet in La Loma yet, since the library already had provided for computers and internet connection prior to HBC's initiation. But if the plans of making Wi-Fi receivers are realized, the project certainly could make a substantial effort in increasing the

level of ICT access. A related indicator is “Information and technical literacy”, to the extent that one needs access to ICT facilities in order to develop such literacy (O’Neil 2002:7). All of the participants in HBC had, according to the organizers, some experience in handling computers before they joined the project, but their capabilities have improved significantly since they joined. With regular workshops where the organizers or outsiders teach them how to produce blogs, podcasts, video and other publishable material, the participants are gaining expertise that they in some cases have translated to other aspects of their lives. Prior to and during my fieldwork, the original HiperBarrio group in La Loma was underway in forming two other groups in similar neighbourhoods in the state of Antioquia. In the creation of these new groups, the intention was to have one of the more experienced and active participants in HBC function as a mentor, and help the new citizen journalists in creating their own projects. In that way, the information and technical literacy acquired by participants in HBC could be brought to other areas and more people through the principles of Rising Voices. In doing so they learn while tutoring, according to one of the mentors Isabella: “In this group I learn to be able to teach what I know. I learn to make tutorials; I have never made that before. I’m learning to comprehend, understand.” What the organizers are doing when creating new groups in other neighbourhoods is working with their “outreach efforts”, one of O’Neil’s indicators that is connected to “Operation and management” (2002:7). According to initiator and organizer Álvaro Ramírez Ospina, the plan is to extend the project to a number of other neighbourhoods in Antioquia over the course of some years. The attempt to spread HiperBarrio to other similar neighbourhoods in Antioquia was well underway in the Summer of 2009, with mentoring from participants in HBC and contacts developed with the local authorities in the two areas; Carmen el Viboral and Ituango. At that time, the new projects seemed to have a bright future, but in the period after my fieldwork the projects have proven to fail, mainly due to organizational difficulties. After some trial and errors in Carmen el Viboral and Ituango, the organizers decided during the Autumn of 2009 to try once more to extend the HiperBarrio project to other locations. This time, five locations were chosen to get their own project, some inside the city limits of Medellín and others in other villages in Antioquia. After the tutoring in Ituango by one of the members in HBC proved at least somewhat successful, the organizers decided to put to work five other participants to help tutor and organize in these five new locations. The process of choosing tutors/organizers was however significantly altered, so as to make it more professionalized. Those participants who wanted to be in charge of one of the new projects had to interview with the staff before being chosen. Álvaro Ramírez Ospina and the other organizers from HBC had managed to receive

a substantial amount of funding from the Red de Bibliotecas-network and indirectly from the Bill and Melissa Gates Foundation, which they could now use as wages for the tutors/organizers.

In La Loma, they are also working to extend the project and connect it to other groups. Isabella informed me of meetings they have had with other groups in the vicinity of La Loma. An example is the meetings in the San Javier library with groups from Comuna 13, the neighbouring barrio infamous for its strategic part in the violent conflict. She says that they have meetings with other citizen journalists, where they work with videos and where they get to know the other groups and examine the traditional media. It was during one of these meetings that Javier, one of the newest members of the group, learnt about and became interested in HiperBarrio. An important factor when discussing this project is “Length of operation”, another indicator under the umbrella of “Operation and management” (O’Neil 2002:7). Most of the participants did not have a timeframe for how long they would continue being active in the project, but some had to take their workload in their studies or jobs into consideration when answering. In some respects it is important for the project to have participants who dedicate themselves over a long period of time to make the outreach efforts of the project successful. All of the participants who are now using their knowledge from HBC in other fields have participated in the project a number of years.

5.0 Conclusion

5.1 Findings

In this thesis I wanted to shed some light on the HiperBarrio Convergentes project and the participants involved in it, as well as do a minor investigation of the achievements that have been made since its inception some two and a half years ago. Through interviews with the participants and organizers, the benefits of the project as well as its shortcomings have to some degree come to light, and the degree of success of the project, at least in the local community, has been assessed. What I found through my work is that HBC meant a lot to most of the participants in the project, but in various ways. To some, the involvement had opened their eyes to their own community, or rather opened the eyes of others to them. For other participants their involvement simply meant that they got new friends. The participants whose identity positively changed the most were those who translated the knowledge that they acquired in the project to other organizations or in their studies. The most visible ways that the project had enhanced the lives of those involved was in bringing the youth together and creating a social meeting place for them. The social aspect was an important one for all the respondents, and seemed to be a prerequisite for keeping the group together and the motivation at a high level. The blogging seems effective in changing the realities and identities of the participants because it does not take a great effort to make them feel like they are engaging in a global discussion. It is a medium that quickly and easily puts the participants in contact with other people. Those who are involved in HBC are generally quite active in the project, and by engaging in other people's blogs and projects they rapidly become connected to them. The fact that it is virtually free to develop blogs like those used by HBC suggests that this project could be transferred to a number of other locations, as long as there is internet connection.

From the start in June 2007 HBC has seemingly come a long way in attracting attention to the positive aspects of La Loma, and certainly has made contributions to enhancing the lives of those involved in the project. With the recent consolidation of the project as a non-governmental organization, the organizers hope that the participants might get hired to do work for other organizations. At the same time, an expansion of the project to five other sites in and around Medellín gives an opportunity for several participants to function as mentors for other youth and inform them of the benefits that a project like this can generate.

Through their blogging, the participants get more attentive to what and how they write, both through the process of writing and from the feedback they receive. With the feedback from other people and the fact that they produce what they upload, the participants also get the feeling of being seen and that they are engaging in something useful. This stands in contrast to the kids that Ines showed me who were just hanging around the streets of La Loma without anything to do. It is essential for the participants that they feel they are sharing their experience with other people, both within the group and in the rest of their society, and the response from other people is an essential motivation for their continuation in the project. Like Andres from the group says, they have gotten acquaintances and friends from across the world, but in La Loma they are still a small group with limited outreach. In many ways one can say that the project in La Loma, and probably a lot of similar projects, is locally based but globally directed. The social gatherings and most of the activities in the group take place in the local community, but the group aspires to direct their communication to other countries and parts of the world.

The community in La Loma has a dramatic history due to the violent conflict that has possessed the Colombian society for so many years, and unfortunately there are many communities in Colombia and elsewhere that share a similar history. The organizers in HBC have acknowledged this and were, at the time of writing, working to expand the project to other communities in Antioquia. What the administrators and participants have done in La Loma can quite clearly be transmitted to other communities, but in doing so there is a need for close follow-up from key figures, who not only show an interest in the beginning but also in the continuation of the project. When the project was administered with a steady hand and with close guidance from Álvaro Ramírez Ospina, the group worked adequately to serve the mission of both the project and the mother organizations. When that guidance disappeared, however, the regularity of the blogs and the motivation in the group dropped substantially, and so the citizen journalism-aspect of the project was lacking. With the money that the people in HBC have gained through their awards in 2009, they are more capable of expanding the project, and reaching out to other communities in Antioquia, which is an overarching and definite goal of the administration. Several of the participants were anxious to extend the project to other communities, much more so than getting their own project to be more institutionalized. At the time of my fieldwork, the administrators were busy consolidating the project as a full-grown organization, legally-speaking. This was seen as a negative

development by some of the participants, but it might be necessary in order for HBC to have greater impact in the local community, both politically and culturally.

In transparent societies like the Norwegian one, blogs may play a different and perhaps less important role than in the less transparent Colombian one. In the Colombian society, blogs have a greater potential of putting diversified issues on the local and national agenda than what the traditional media write about. A project like HBC has done this to a certain degree, by getting attention in La Loma through newspapers, magazines and TV-stations, and thus putting the barrio on the map, both literally and figuratively speaking, as one of the respondents told me. Independent of whether or not the participants have a great influence on the local and regional politics, they certainly feel like they take part in the decision-making. Some of the respondents in my interviews were very optimistic about the impact that the group and the participants individually can have on the local authorities, and this certainly has heightened their sense of empowerment and increased their self-esteem. The aim of this thesis was from the onset to investigate the participants' own experience and sentiments more than finding the real influence they might have. Many of the participants pointed out that they now are able to use the internet in a meaningful and productive way, compared to before the workshops and before them joining the project. The participants have themselves grown to become resources for other people, both in the local community, in the neighbourhoods that the project is expanding to, in other organizations and in their work and studies.

5.2 Improvement

An important question in this research was if the project has potential for improvement. The answer to that was, from most of the participants, from the librarian and from Álvaro Ramírez Ospina that it certainly has. During the interviews it became apparent that the librarian was the individual who saw the most potential for improvement, while the participants in general were quite happy with the progress in the group. This was maybe not surprising, as the librarian probably had higher visions for the group than the participants, who at times considered it more like a hobby than anything else. Several of my respondents acknowledged the advantage of them learning English, in that they get connected to more people and other projects, which in turn would let the project have greater impact on a larger scale. The project seems to have changed the participants' relation to and view of the rest of the world, since they now easier can interact with people globally, which is a main aim for the mother

organizations. Another important issue when looking at the successfulness of this project is the amount of available time with the people involved. According to the participants, the project is time-consuming, and this, in addition to the lack of internet connection in many of the homes is problematic for a number of the participants. A project like this requires participants to have sufficient amount of time and willingness to get fully involved. Otherwise tension might arise, like I experienced during my visit.

This case study suggests that some of the literature on blogs and citizen journalism is overly optimistic and close to being technology deterministic. Although it is perhaps true that these new media can alter the realities of both producer and receiver, it is maybe not so much the technology that propels it as the collaboration in a project like HBC. If the participants in a project like this had only seen each other via computer screens it is probable that they would not have been as positive about their gains from the project than when they are learning and creating together face-to-face. The theories of Dara O'Neil could probably be applied to some new media projects, but if one uses HBC as an example, her theories seem too far-reaching and optimistic about the benefits of ICT and community informatics. The five areas discussed in O'Neil's paper that I sought to investigate only to some extent fit the project in La Loma. Those that fit the best with HBC, in my opinion, were *Social capital*, *Individual empowerment* and *Sense of community*, in that the respondents themselves gave answers that to a large degree suggested that HBC had an impact on these. All these three areas deal with the way the participants feel about their place in the local community, and seemingly the project has done most to improve on this issue. A thread that runs through every one of the three areas is self-esteem, and the way that this project could increase it. The violent conflict has had great impact on how the people in La Loma view themselves and their community, but a project like this could do some good in restoring the self-esteem of those affected. The two areas of *Strong democracy* and *Economic development opportunities* could only to some extent be applied to HBC, but in the future one could imagine that both of them could be important factors for this project also. With the anticipated expansion of the project, there is an opportunity for some of the most knowledgeable HBC-participants to have a paid job as tutor and administrator for the new projects. The work in HiperBarrio can go some way in enhancing the lives of the participants and the people closest to them, but I have my doubts about it improving the lives of other people in the local community to a large degree. The visitor statistics from the Convergences site tells the story of a project that does indeed manage to engage people from other parts of the world, but the question remains if it has the

same effect on the people in La Loma. An example from HBC that goes some way in showing that the outreach of the project is more global than local is the celebration of their second anniversary in the spring of 2009. Although the participants had spent a lot of time spreading the word of the anniversary and the showcase of the project they intended of having, only about 20 people came.

In some regards one can say that much of the literature on blogs and similar new media is overly positive when it comes to the ways in which they can function as substitutes for traditional media outlets. The professional skills that journalists acquire through their education is something you have to be careful not to underestimate, and is maybe something that bloggers cannot fully learn just by writing blogs. Some literature on bloggers is very optimistic about their ability to almost replace the traditional media outlets, but in addition to the professional skills of the journalists, the media outlets have resources and economy which can hardly be matched by amateur bloggers. Having said that, the blogs can at some times supplement the traditional media by giving some insight to geographical areas and topics that are not adequately covered in newspapers, television and radio.

If other scholars were to write about the same or a similar project, there are certain measures that should be taken. First of all, an investigation such as this would be far easier to conduct with a sufficient knowledge of the language in the area in question. In addition to this, it would be advisable to include every type of participant, especially those who have left the project and those who do not participate a great deal. To see how significant the influence of the project is in the local community, it would also be interesting to make a survey of a representative group of inhabitants from the area. In addition to this, interviews with people involved in the participative government or similar authorities that the group is working with, should be conducted. This thesis is in some ways a pioneer work in that it gives considerable attention to a type of project that has gotten little or no exposure in academic writing earlier. Before starting to work on this paper, my only experience with blogs was with the type of personal blogs that probably most other people identify as blogs: an introverted, self-assuring and tabloid website with no or limited interest to other people than those closest to the blogger. After getting to know the projects of Rising Voices, and especially HiperBarrio, I have realized that not all blogs are equally introverted and that there actually is some sort of discussion going on in the blogosphere. Although there are, as Andrew Keen can testify to, a lot of “anonymous, self-referential writers who exist not to report news but to spread gossip”,

this project is an example of a part of blogosphere that has another function (Keen 2007:47). This global discussion clearly has potential of broadening the minds of the bloggers and erasing the geographical limits even more than internet has already done, and this is something that clearly characterizes the work being done in HiperBarrio. The work in HBC is directed just as much, and even more, towards the rest of the world than towards the local community. Nevertheless, as this thesis shows through the interviews with the participants, the project has opened some doors to the local community and the broader community of Medellín at least for the participants themselves. With the recurring violence there was great potential for the inhabitants of losing pride in their own community as well as belief in a better and safer living environment. Like Ines mentioned when we were talking about the media and their reporting from La Loma: “If someone says that you are bad you will be bad, because the word has power”. The participants and the local community are in need of something to be proud of in their own neighbourhood, and something that can foster new relationships. This thesis has shown that HiperBarrio can go some way in realizing this for several of the inhabitants, but it has also shown that other and different projects are needed to get the interest of the whole of La Loma. A project like this can only engage a small part of the inhabitants within a community.

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7.0 Appendix

7.1 Transcribed Interviews

This list of interviews includes all the interviews conducted with participants and one organizer during my fieldwork in the Summer of 2009. Four of the interviews; with Guillermo, Isabella, Jose and Pedro, were conducted using the original interview-guide, while the others were conducted using the revised version (see appendix 7.2). Some of the questions are in these transcribed versions left unanswered by the respondents, and there are mainly two reasons for this. In the interview with Jose, the first part of the interview was conducted without a translator, therefore only a small part of the answers were comprehensible to me. In most other instances, the lack of answers is due to the fact that the questions were made redundant by answers to the preceding questions.

7.1.1 Interview with Amanda

1) *What do you get out of being involved with the project?*

To learn a lot. To learn how to manage the blogs and the tools. And another use of internet. Before, we had just limited ourselves to checking the mail or Facebook etc. Now we have different media, like blogs, which have information that is more instructive, which in a way or another helps me in my studies. And another important thing is that we are able to tell what is happening here and what young people do.

2) *Do you in any way feel more connected with other groups after working with the project? If so, in what way?*

3) *Do you feel that the project has in any way strengthened the ties of your own community?*

Yes, now I can focus on expanding what I am learning in the group and be a delegate in the participative young (?) (Government?) that is voting(?) and I just launched myself as a candidate to represent the group, to show the community what we do. And I could call on more people to come and see what the group is doing. I couldn't come because I was in a meeting with the participative budget in San Cristobal. She asks herself: So what is the project now? It is somewhere we can get power, and a space so what can ask the community about its needs and inform others. That is the project I have to present to the participative project. It is the money that the community gives to cultural projects in the different barrios in the corregimiento.

4) *How important are the comments written by visitors on your blog?*

They are essential, because they give you...they give strength to the writer, so that they can continue or stop. To feel that someone is interested in what you are writing, can be good or bad, but for someone that is important. It is essential that someone writes to you.

5) What kind of comments do you get from other people on your blog?

Depends on what I publish. If the article is about politics, I receive comments from people who agree or support what I write, and there are others who comment “I like/I don’t like”. It depends.

6) What do you know of the organisation Rising Voices?

In this media, it is one of the most important organizations and has gotten a lot of attention in the last years. And it has gotten to countries that are principally not on the technology highway. It is basically a global organization, one of the best on the internet, and which is supporting us now.

7) What is your opinion on the objectives of Rising Voices?

They are very clear on trying to reach to all parts of the world, and this is essential; they are expanding. And when they reach vulnerable places like this, for example, they are really recognizing other territories. That is basically it.

8) What do you feel that the project is lacking?

We are very diverse, the people in the group. This diversity of different (?)...they conduct studies that they can focus and try to find how they can make the project stronger in their own area. In my case, for example, I found that my participation that the community gave me, by making me a delegate for the young people, to represent them, it is a space where we can get ourselves known to the other young people, and to integrate us in other groups; cultural, theatre etc. And it gives us empowerment so that each person can use their talents and exploit their own person.

9) When you have problems, how do you feel that they are managed?

With dialogue. Everything goes from the fact that communicate to Miguel, to the other participants that we have a voice. That they make known that they have a voice, so that they can say if something not good is happening, so that they get to know what is going on.

10) What do you feel that you get by contributing to this project, which you could not have managed on your own?

Acknowledgment, I think, to belong to the place that I live. The people, my friends, I would not have met without the group.

11) In what ways do you feel that the blogs are important to the outcomes of the project?

They are the tools that show us to the world. It is the principal tool, the means and the media that let us get known. It is what we write and, the information: that is what gives us acknowledgment and importance.

12) Do you feel that you are in any way engaging in a form of global conversation?

Yes, because to feel that someone of another country describes or have opinions on what I write or in one or another way has opinions on my writing: that is a form of indirect global conversation.

13) What type of knowledge have you gained by participating in HiperBarrio?

All the management of websites: the tools.

14) In what ways, if any, are you able to apply these to other aspects of your life?

I think that it is a personal growing process in managing me, to feel more secure in what I write and what I publish, it's like I've grown more.

15) Do you feel that the type of community where you live get enough attention from the government and traditional media, both national and international?

No, but I think that maybe now, because we live in one of the zones that are close to the areas most affected by the violence, their eyes are fixed upon us. But before that we were totally ignored by the government. That is why it was blown up, all this violence.

16) What are your thoughts on HiperBarrio and Rising Voices, both negative and positive?

Negative: the lack of time, and the fact that many have other occupations, both study and work. That affects the participation of many in meetings: that limits us. Not everybody has access to the internet; therefore it is more difficult to publish. And a blog needs to be actualized (to be refreshed). That is the negative. These two things affect a lot. Many of them fade away for weeks or months or they don't publish. That is the negative.

When it comes to the positive, many of them already have dreams and ideas, and through these blogs and the project, they feel that they are able to show their capacities and talents and knowledge. That is basically it.

17) Do you feel that you would have been able to create and maintain this type of project without the assistance of the two organizations?

No, I think not. To feel the support of the organization nationally and internationally is a motivation to many to publish and to write. Alone, we wouldn't be able to, or it would be more difficult.

18) For how long do you think that you will continue being involved in the project?

I think that as long as...it requires a lot. We have to keep on learning, to get more tools and to continue advancing. As long as the project allows me to do that, I will be there. To the day that I can't because my studies take all my time. For the moment I don't have any limited amount of time. The group is actually very open. You can get in and out, according to each one.

19) What motivates you to participate in Convergentes and what discourages you?

What motivates me? I think that to learn with other members, to share with other members, and to know that this person shares this with you. The workshops, the acknowledgment that you get, that motivates.

What discourages me? That I can not give my very best, because of lack of time, my studies; because I don't have access to internet. That is negative part of it.

20) Did you write something on your blog about the threatening pamphlets in March this year?

No, I commented. There were many comments I made on other blogs, but I didn't publish myself.

21) How do you feel that the newspapers and television channels reported on the pamphlets and the return of the violence?

I think that it's a yellow press, like they just write to attract more rating, they exaggerate. It's actually scary, because the citizens get scared. I think we have to be very critical of everything that the traditional media write. It is damaging the country and the city and the continent. We have to give other roads to information, to be able to really present that information.

22) How did you get involved with this project?

I was a user of the library. I am very accustomed in coming here, so it was very easy for me. Miguel just called a group of kids. And we got together with the group, and that same weekend we began with the workshops. And also with the help from students from the University of Medellin and EAFiT and two Professors from the University of Antioquia. That's how the project began, they just gave us the tools, capacitated us. There were several kids who were regulars of the library. So we got the diversity from different areas and different interesting venues.

7.1.2 Interview with Andres

1) *What do you get out of being involved with the project?*

Very interesting to publish poetry, which is one of my passions. That people from other places read is very gratifying.

2) *Do you in any way feel more connected with other groups after working with the project? If so, in what way?*

Yes, with both groups and individuals. They made something called a Blogonovela, we got to know other bloggers from Argentina, and we had a very good relationship with them. The other passion, which is comic theatre, a clown. Also through my blog I was able to meet someone who is a good friend now, and who even came to visit me in the festival MiMaMe and he is a Spanish clown. It was through my blog that he decided to come to Colombia, and through him I got to meet one of his colleagues. His colleague in Spain.

3) *Do you feel that the project has in any way strengthened the ties of your own community?*

Yes, especially my connections with the young people around. I have been in the same school, but we never talked, we never saw each other. Some of them are my friends, of course. But it was never possible to meet, to have a real meeting.

4) *How important are the comments written by visitors on your blog?*

I don't know in which order they are important, but they are very gratifying. It is very nice to come home and see what they have written, that they have something to say about it.

5) *What kind of comments do you get from other people on your blog?*

Usually, I am not a very egotistical person, but I will say they are very positive. People like my blog. I have more and more visitors. That is very nice (agradable). (Alvaro asks how many visitors he has) More or less 50 every day.

6) What do you know of the organisation Rising Voices?

When we began we also met David Sasaki himself. Basically what we know is that they are a group of people who decided to connect people around the world.

7) What is your opinion on the objectives of Rising Voices?

The idea to take people from one place to another, and break all barriers of communication, relations without access to technology is very beautiful. It is very nice to see, even if we have to use Google Translator to be able to talk to people in other places. The closest people are the people in Bolivia. We have talked about video; we have sent video to each other. That is another opportunity to see people inside of the business.

8) What do you feel that the project is lacking?

Principally, I think... (he asks himself what is missing), maybe what is missing is we have to project ourselves more. We have people we know from all over the world, but not here so much. What we need is more presence inside the community.

9) When you have problems, how do you feel that they are managed?

Depends on the type of problem also. There have not been any difficulties that we could not solve. I remember when we started, only for spelling, I had comments, very unsettling comments from someone I didn't know, and when I learned that it was a person who had done a lot for the project I saw that I had been impolite (a little too much to the point). There are things that have a solution. You could be in disagreement with someone, and a part of you, the opposition is one of many.

10) What do you feel that you get by contributing to this project, which you could not have managed on your own?

Primarily to learn, because one the internet, apart from messenger, it was a black hole (to him). To be able to publish myself, and to share things that are important to me, so that other people see that it is important to me, I would not have been able to do this.

11) *In what ways do you feel that the blogs are important to the outcomes of the project?*

Primarily, despite the fact that the group has done many things (that was the pretext in the beginning) in order to get together, to do several things, to publish a part of the story, among other things. It has been an entry-point. The blogs have been very important, if you see it that way.

12) *Do you feel that you are in any way engaging in a form of global conversation?*

Yes, in many ways, because we invent the blogs and applications come up, and then you have to be present in many ways. One day I can comment on a text from a person in the States, and change the windows, and I can talk to someone in India.

13) *What type of knowledge have you gained by participating in HiperBarrio?*

I have learnt about citizen journalism, which I think is very agreeable, because in the fine arts, where I am, you can show you art to people and they will give you feedback, your own creative label.

14) *In what ways, if any, are you able to apply these to other aspects of your life?*

For example, with the knowledge from citizen journalism, it is very interesting, because in the faculty of the arts I am doing interviews with professors and with master students in Antioquia. In one way or another, what I have learnt here in citizen journalism has made me able to do it in a very easy way.

15) *Do you feel that the type of community where you live get enough attention from the government and traditional media, both national and international?*

No, maybe if someone says that six or seven people are killed, then we get attention. But if we do something creative for the kids, if we have a reading group for the kids it will be in silence, total silence.

16) What are your thoughts on HiperBarrio and Rising Voices, both negative and positive?

I think it is something...as I said, when I write in the blog it has been a freedom kind of experience. Many things that have happened here, and now a group of young people can finally tell what they have inside. It would have been very benefiting for any place in the world.

17) Do you feel that you would have been able to create and maintain this type of project without the assistance of the two organizations?

In one way or another...we didn't know anything about it when they came with the idea. It is very sad to know that there are not very good teaching tools in the school in La Loma or anything like that. So I remember in the six years I attended the school, I only used the program Paint to paint on the computer in all the technology-classes. I didn't have the faintest idea that there were thousands of possibilities with the same equipment that we have.

18) For how long do you think that you will continue being involved in the project?

I am not very much present at the moment, but when I have the time to help from the outside, or at least present my blog and read the others, however long my friends in the group will continue blogging, I will be there.

19) What motivates you to participate in Convergentes and what discourages you?

The things that motivates: the possibility to have a voice, a voice that is more than what we see. One of the necessities that human beings have is the possibility to communicate. We use our whole life to say to other people what we think. It is a possibility of reaching for others who identify or at least listen.

20) *Did you write something on your blog about the threatening pamphlets in March this year?*

I didn't write, not in a very explicit way, but something very rich in metaphors and metonyms. Art allows you to say things that you wouldn't say in a very explicit way.

21) *How do you feel that the newspapers and television channels reported on the pamphlets and the return of the violence?*

I think that the traditional media are forms of personal interests of some people. Therefore it is important that citizens begin to tell their point of view, to tell what is happening.

22) *How did you get involved with this project?*

It was like a roman senate (laughing). When all of them began in the project (he entered in a very special way, Alvaro says to me). When they began the process I had been very busy in the university, I was beginning the first semester, and I was nine hours in class in the university. Then were all the workshops...(?). Then I had just gotten connection to internet at home, and Jose, I was with him, and he said. I'm going to show you the blog we created in the library. You have to explain to me, what is this, I said. That was a place where I could write and people could read it in the internet. And I said, okay, I want to. Teach me how to do it. So I created it outside of the project. First I had only created four parts, and I said to Miguel: I want to belong in the group. And he looked at me with the furious library eyes that he has, and I said "you have lost all the process in the beginning process". If the kids think that it is fair at this point, I don't have any problems with it. So he made an appointment with me at six o'clock in the library. And to make an ode to democracy, they decided to have a vote to see if I could come into the project. All votes were in favour, except for two, and Miguel was one of them. Miguel and Anna, the two library people, in spite of the fact that Miguel is my godfather (!)

7.1.3 Interview with Blanca

1) *What do you get out of being involved with the project?*

I think: many friends, community work, acknowledgment, much knowledge.

2) *Do you in any way feel more connected with other groups after working with the project?*

If so, in what way?

Yes, (In what way, I ask). When other people read your blog and you see that it is from many places.

3) *Do you feel that the project has in any way strengthened the ties of your own community?*

Yes, I think a lot. You walk and you see that this is someone who has done something positive for the community.

4) *How important are the comments written by visitors on your blog?*

I think this is the result of what we have worked with in the blog.

5) *What kind of comments do you get from other people on your blog?*

At the present time I have never received any bad comments. In the comments, people ask for information about the neighbourhood and the community.

6) *What do you know of the organisation Rising Voices?*

The organization was the one that created the project, and has been the one that has supported it.

7) *What is your opinion on the objectives of Rising Voices?*

I think that it is an organization that has given us an opportunity to get in contact with people from other places and that those people get in contact with them.

8) *What do you feel that the project is lacking?*

I feel that there is a lack of togetherness with the members of the project. I feel that the people are very apart from one another, we should get together. I feel that the knowledge they get, they should spread it to other people.

9) *When you have problems, how do you feel that they are managed?*

When there is a problem, they get together and talk about the problem. They get together and try to look for solutions to the problems.

10) *What do you feel that you get by contributing to this project, which you could not have managed on your own?*

It's like taking (something) apart. I was very shy before, but now I am more social, and this is a way to get in contact with people. If she wasn't in the project, she might just be at home studying or doing something different.

11) *In what ways do you feel that the blogs are important to the outcomes of the project?*

It's information, information that we create, and we expect to get it (tell us something?) in the future. It's the testimony of our past life for other people to see it.

12) *Do you feel that you are in any way engaging in a form of global conversation?*

I write for other people to see it, and other people write for me to see it.

13) *What type of knowledge have you gained by participating in HiperBarrio?*

The tools of the Web 2.0. Every tool we can handle.

14) In what ways, if any, are you able to apply these to other aspects of your life?

Transmitting that I belong to the young people here. What we do to implement, what we do in the blogs, in order for other people to know about the group.

15) Do you feel that the type of community where you live get enough attention from the government and traditional media, both national and international?

I think that La Loma does not receive enough; I think it should receive more. Maybe because La Loma is a place far away, maybe therefore it does not receive the support it needs, like a good health centre, a terminal for transportation (in La Loma, I ask) Yes. When talking about communication, we are almost the only ones who are (?) this, communication. The only time they come here is if there is a conflict, violence in the area. When it happened, the media came. The government sees them as something very much apart.

16) What are your thoughts on HiperBarrio and Rising Voices, both negative and positive?

When it comes to negative ones. I don't know too much of Rising Voices, but the people in charge have to be very dynamic with the project. They feel that they should have more time for them, they have not had too much time for them before. But when they have time for them, they get good results. (I ask if she's talking about Miguel og Alvaro). No, I talked about David Sasaki. He is a good person, but doesn't have the time. That is the negative part, and the positive part is almost all the things that we have done. Now that they see the many needs of people, they see their own impact on the people.

17) Do you feel that you would have been able to create and maintain this type of project without the assistance of the two organizations?

No, because of the lack of contact with the government, and the lack of motivating them (they would not have any guidance). The condition is like: study, go to work, study, go to work. The people didn't have too much confidence about this (project), but now it is having an impact and good results and they have analyzed it and found that it is something good and have found that it can have a good impact on the community.

18) *For how long do you think that you will continue being involved in the project?*

It's relative for me, because (laughing) you take a responsibility to do certain things that make it hard to do other things that are also a priority for them. In the vacation it is understandable that they could not do too much, but the most important thing is the (?) and the spirit. She feels that this could motivate because when it is not possible for me to be involved I sometimes feel afraid and I'm getting backward and I feel a little bit dis(integrated?)

19) *What motivates you to participate in *Convergentes* and what discourages you?*

It is discouraging when someone is called to do something, and not all the members assist. The lack of motivation of others also cause discouragement. Another thing that has discouraged me is the irresponsibility of other people; when they have to do something and they don't. And the lack of communication is also something that discourages me. We want to have a group that is very compact, in all senses, with communication. When they do any activity, some of them have to do something (they are already engaged) and they don't tell the rest of the group about it: that makes them feel angry. (I ask what motivates) (laughing). I feel encouraged when I get to know other peoples' cultures and get to know peoples' minds from people from all over the world. This is why we are here, because we get to know people from other places, and you are from another place (referring to me) (laughing). The community is very apart, socially, and we wanted to change this, to make the community more social (together).

20) *Did you write something on your blog about the threatening pamphlets in March this year?*

No (laughing), Isabella was the one who wrote. (only Isabella, I ask). As far as I know, yes.

21) *How do you feel that the newspapers and television channels reported on the pamphlets and the return of the violence?*

It is relative, because some of them exaggerate the information, they are very yellowish. They exaggerate what has happened, they show more than they should. Some of them come just to see what could be done, they don't enclose themselves only to showing the news, they also come to see what could be done.

22) *How did you get involved with this project?*

I used to come to the library, then Álvaro did a get-together with them and explained to us what the project was about and that is why they started writing histories about the neighbourhood.

7.1.4 Interview with Felipe

1) *What do you get out of being involved with the project?*

Knowledge and understanding and listening to what the others say and why. I have gained knowledge and a space where I can express myself, especially in the virtual world.

2) *Do you in any way feel more connected with other groups after working with the project?
If so, in what way?*

The great advantage of HiperBarrio is that it gives you the possibility to connect to other people and with them try to build up knowledge.

3) *Do you feel that the project has in any way strengthened the ties of your own community?*

I don't live in La Loma, but I have begun to understand the social dynamics and it also helps me to create some concepts and comprehend something as a student in law and political science.

4) *How important are the comments written by visitors on your blog?*

Very important, because the input makes me reflect on what I have tried to teach in the blog.

5) *What kind of comments do you get from other people on your blog?*

Most of them are people giving their opinion of what I have written. Usually I talk about politics, so what I try to do is both (?), sometimes in the conjunction with what is happening, and sometimes it is about the structures of what is happening in Colombia.

6) *What do you know of the organisation Rising Voices?*

It's a tool/web (?) of communication of Harvard.

7) *What is your opinion on the objectives of Rising Voices?*

Like I said, it's (?) of Harvard and its objectives I know well (?)

8) *What do you feel that the project is lacking?*

To expand/multiply the project. Some things you can improve, but generally it is very good. It's very interesting.

9) *When you have problems, how do you feel that they are managed?*

We are a group in which we solve problems/differences by means of dialogue.

10) *What do you feel that you get by contributing to this project, which you could not have managed on your own?*

The re-evaluation of what I learn, the knowledge in itself has been a dynamic process. It has been like a jour(?) of what is happening in the digital world. The articles help me and evaluate what I am writing, trying to find new ideas. I am also learning about the digital world and what is happening in the world.

11) *In what ways do you feel that the blogs are important to the outcomes of the project?*

They are like a way of expressing that we are a community and also individuals, and there we construct knowledge and ideas. That is the way we contribute to the work of the group.

12) *Do you feel that you are in any way engaging in a form of global conversation?*

Yes, because in my blog I have my place in the world. It's a way of representing what I perceive with my eyes (?) and what is happening, and I am part of the net.

13) *What type of knowledge have you gained by participating in HiperBarrio?*

To listen, to express and before I did that also, but I am more conscious of that now, what is happening outside. That is what I am trying to elaborate, building, in the virtual world as part of the collective group.

14) *In what ways, if any, are you able to apply these to other aspects of your life?*

The virtual world primarily lets me express myself, and the knowledge that I have enables me express and construct something.

15) *Do you feel that the type of community where you live get enough attention from the government and traditional media, both national and international?*

No, the public administration leaves the community, the municipality by itself. It is a peripheral community, and that has made it possible for alternative figures, like military groups with arms to take hold of sectors in La Loma. They really get powerful with the power of the arms, which is the only way they have done it (?) during the last 199 years of history. And what happens is they don't care who is going to fall (?), and they just wipe out what is happening. They don't see the needs of the people, the poverty or the economical situation. When they take away the legal organizations, let them home (?). So the state doesn't really participate in an integral way as it should, with integrity.

16) *What are your thoughts on HiperBarrio and Rising Voices, both negative and positive?*

More positive, I will say. It is first and foremost an organization with a lot more future. So it's a work that wants to be done with integrity, integrating into other parts. The project in itself wants to be integral, inclusive, participative and new scenarios of community.

17) *Do you feel that you would have been able to create and maintain this type of project without the assistance of the two organizations?*

I don't know if I know the exact response, the support is important. The help to making the project visible globally is important.

18) *For how long do you think that you will continue being involved in the project?*

I don't know. I am here. I don't know. Forever? I don't know.

19) *What motivates you to participate in Convergentes and what discourages you?*

The people, the knowledge, a space to express myself, those are the most important aspects. (I ask: And nothing discourages you?) No.

20) *Did you write something on your blog about the threatening pamphlets in March this year?*

No (I ask why), because I didn't have a blog then.

21) *How do you feel that the newspapers and television channels reported on the pamphlets and the return of the violence?*

Pretty yellowish/sensationalistic. It was another stage in the violence in Colombia, an escalation of the armed conflict.

22) *How did you get involved with this project?*

I came here, because I was doing some work for a corporation. We were trying to identify young people. I met the group and liked a lot what they were doing, and at the end of the process I asked if I could join. And after 4 months I'm still here and I like what we do.

7.1.5 Interview with Guillermo

1) *What do you get out of being involved with the project?*

Many things, but basically knowledge, working for the community. Knowledge of the tools on the internet. How to work through the different websites.

2) *Do you in any way feel more connected with other groups after working with the project?*

If so, in what way?

Yes, aside from working with the local community I am working in a more universal community, and that opens doors to more knowledge and maybe a job in the future.

3) *Do you feel that the project has in any way strengthened the ties of your own community?*

Yes, because we all are from an urban tribe, we are very different in the group. We get ideas from each one, and the result is quite gratifying, very good, it has functioned quite well. Because to be together will make you stronger, as the saying goes (laughing).

4) *How important are the comments written by visitors to the blogs you have written? Do you feel it to be important that you know that other people are reading/visiting them?*

Very important, because it means that what you write is important/relevant, not only on a local level but on a global level. Therefore the comments are important, because you realize if they like the post or not.

5) *What kind of comments do you get from other people on your blog?*

Like "I like your post" or "Why don't you write about this", and sometimes "I don't like it". It varies a lot, it depends on the theme you are writing on. When he is touching on violent things, I get many comments, and some of them say "I like it" or "I don't like it", but it varies a lot. (Do you write poetry also, I ask) No, not I. I tell stories about life, the experiences, what

happens in the community. That is what my blog is about. Other ones deal with politics or things like that.

6) What do you feel are the aims of HiperBarrio?

To extend the group to other places, locally, in Colombia. To generate cultural spaces, for knowledge. I think those two are the most important ones. To work with the community.

7) What do you know of the organisation Rising Voices?

It is a section of Global Voices, they get some money in order to create communities in peripheral areas in several countries, with people without much resources. That is what I know.

8) What do you feel are the aims of Rising Voices?

Create a cultural space for people who don't have access, because of lack of money. In order to get to knowledge, it's to generate possibility to express them.

9) In what ways do you feel that the project is lacking?

There are more positive things than lackings, because they are giving us access to spaces that we would not have access to, and there are some very good points in it. I don't feel that there is anything lacking. I wouldn't be able to name them.

10) Who is responsible for these problems?

11) How do you think that one could improve these areas of the project?

12) *What do you feel that you get by contributing to this project, which you could not have managed on your own?*

Community work is the main thing, because it's been very good in learning me in the web, it has been a very good learning process (autodidacta). But the main thing has been the community work. So in a way I feel that I have been good in learning by myself.

13) *In what ways do you feel that the specific type of media is important to the outcomes of the project?*

It's like the axis of the project and all the projects that have followed, including learning about the web 2.0. And it shows in the stories that we have: Local stories for a global audience. That is what we work with, to be known around the world.

14) *Do you feel that you are in any way engaging in a form of global conversation?*

I think we need to be better prepared; we need more knowledge and preparation, especially because of the language barriers. We are not enough prepared to participate. We need more discipline, in order to get thoughts and initiatives. In order to represent the project more in other languages: to have other languages to express ourselves. (In English or in other languages, I ask) Principally in English. I have been a little bit interested in French. What I want to study most is German. (they are kidding)

15) *If so, is this important to you?*

16) *What type of knowledge have you gained by participating in HiperBarrio?*

Everything: manage the platform, blogs, podcasting, editing and writing text, I have learnt advertising, videocameras, photography, the importance of alternative media and also how to use the social web, like LiveMocha. (they are kidding)

17) *In what ways, if any, are you able to apply these to other aspects of your life?*

It's very good for what I work with; they are offering me a good proposal in the work for the municipality. They tell me that I may be working with their website, creating a blog for the library park in order to generate statistics, links. Different ways to communicate with the community through blogs. So it has been very important for my life, for my new job. (Alvaro says: this is a very new job. He asks how long. One month. Alvaro says: And it's been already relevant). At my school. It depends on what I'm going to study, but it has been relevant already in my school-work. I have studied music and also management of events, and it has helped me there too.

18) *Do you feel that the type of community where you live get enough attention from the government and traditional media, both national and international?*

No, because in the government there is a lot of lacks. We have many social problems; lack of housing and the government does not pay attention. That is what we are doing the blogs; showing on the local level and also on the national level what is going on. And we all have rights, we also have rights.

19) *Do you see there to be a need for new type of media, like internet, where members of impoverished communities are able to voice their thoughts?*

Yes and no. Yes, because the communities have a lot to say, and sometimes they manifest it, they just talk of violence and...all the things that the government doesn't...that is why it is important, because they can say it in those alternative media. And no, because we don't get to express ourselves that much and the government doesn't pay attention. Sometimes, without all the complaining, we sometimes manage to canalize this and it may help to improve some of the lives of the people, that it has some influence (not change their lives completely).

20) *What are your thoughts on HiperBarrio and Rising Voices, both negative and positive?*

Positive ones: the majority of them are. The mass (?) to identify real songs that are very (formal?) to violence or the social problems and the lack of visibility from the government. Those are things that they are good at identifying in different parts of the world.

And negative ones? I don't see any negative. (Alvaro tells him that this question relates to both Rising Voices and HiperBarrio. He has only been talking about Rising Voices). We have to improve. There are mistakes and good things in HiperBarrio. So the challenge is to solve those problems, and make them into positive thoughts (?). I don't see it as negativities, just experiences, failed and good experiences.

21) *Do you feel that you and the other participants would have been able to create and maintain this type of project without the assistance of the two organizations?*

No, because we depend...we have built a very, a strong support, microsupport. We have to learn a lot still. We lack discipline, more engagement in some things. We need advice in legal problems. We still lack more knowledge. So if Rising Voices and HiperBarrio disappeared I wouldn't be able to carry on. Maybe we'll be individual bloggers, but not as a community.

22) *For how long do you think that you will continue being involved in the project?*

As long as God allows me to. (laughing) I will always try to be here. Today from La Loma, tomorrow from any part of the world (kidding, he uses a voice of a radio announcer).

23) *Why do you wish to continue being involved/abandon the project?*

Because it is something I like, being in the community, working with audiovisual tools, the webtools, to keep on learning is important to me. And it's more a question of will.

24) *Did you write something on your blog about the happenings in Medellin in March this year, with the paramilitaries showing themselves again? And if so, what did you write?*

Yes, a very polemic one: that they shouldn't come back. I don't mention them directly, that they are guerrilla groups. It's more like a fictional story, with names and...I call them trolls, because in this country you have to be very careful with what you say, because so many people are aware of what you are saying. Someone or anyone in the organization can just menace me. So here in this area, you have to be very careful, that is why I made it as a story. It's a little bit fictive.

25) *How do you feel that the newspapers and television channels reported on the happenings?*

They were very yellowish. The political interest was very important in the information (?), so I didn't pay too much attention. They reacted very little, just a few of them, two or three. Just some of them.

7.1.6 Interview with Ines

1) *What do you get out of being involved with the project?*

Everything, because it has helped me as a person. When I write I feel more free. My environment is very important to me, to have a good impact. I think it is also good for other people. With the project I have new friends, and that is very beautiful for me, because I didn't have friends before the project.

2) *Do you in any way feel more connected with other groups after working with the project? If so, in what way?*

Because I read other people, and other people read (my blog). This project has motivated me to learn much more English, because in Rising Voices many people speak English, and I want to read their blogs as well. For me it is very important to read others' blogs, and that other read her blog, because it is good to share.

3) *Do you feel that the project has in any way strengthened the ties of your own community?*

Very much, because before I didn't even know my neighbours. All the time I was in my house or in my university. The project has evolved into the community; it has made her meet other people around. (Because they read your blog, I ask) Yes, because they read. When people read her blog for the first time, they get motivated to continue reading it, and the people who first read it maybe feel in connection, and that make them read the blog.

4) *How important are the comments written by visitors on your blog?*

Very, very important. Because when I find a comment I am happy, because I know that what I write is good for all persons.

5) *What kind of comments do you get from other people on your blog?*

Good comments, generally. It's a good poem; it's good that you wrote about the neighbourhood's problems.

6) *What do you know of the organisation Rising Voices?*

Rising Voices belongs to Global Voices and Global Voices belongs to the political science institute at Harvard University. Rising Voices gave a micro-scholarship for the narrowing of the digital rupture (divide?) in developing countries.

7) *What is your opinion on the objectives of Rising Voices?*

Great, nice, wonderful (laughing), because it lets people have a connection and social links with the community. It helps them have a (?)

8) *What do you feel that the project is lacking?*

I think that it would be good if they had much more equipment, videocameras, audiorecorders, to get to other projects their own equipment, and not having the need to lend equipment from one another.

9) *When you have problems, how do you feel that they are managed?*

Very good, because we always prefer to communicate. When they don't like something they immediately tell the others. When someone has any difficulties, they communicate and support one another, and help the ones with the problems.

10) *What do you feel that you get by contributing to this project, which you could not have managed on your own?*

The freedom to write. She didn't write so easily before.

11) *In what ways do you feel that the blogs are important to the outcomes of the project?*

Very important, because the blogs are tools they use in order to let people know about the project, and they see how people regard it.

12) *Do you feel that you are in any way engaging in a form of global conversation?*

Yes, because I like to read what other people do. I like to read in Rising Voices. Firstly, she likes to know what they are talking about. Secondly it is a way for me to better my English. We get stories and histories from people from countries all over the world, and that is ingenious!

13) *What type of knowledge have you gained by participating in HiperBarrio?*

The photographic techniques, Moviemaker for making videos and sequences, the platform for blogs itself, Flickr to upload pictures, microblogging in Twitter.

14) *In what ways, if any, are you able to apply these to other aspects of your life?*

For example, I use the blog to comment on what is wrong in the university, to write about what is going on in the university and what is happening in my class. Alvaro says that the blog is like a diary of a social work student because I write all of my classes in my diary. (Every day, I ask). It depends on what. It depends on how busy I am, if I am very busy I write once a week, if my work is not as hard I write more (2-3 times a week)

15) *Do you feel that the type of community where you live get enough attention from the government and traditional media, both national and international?*

No (laughing), because in La Loma there is the problem of identity. Many people don't feel like they belong to Medellin and don't feel like they belong to San Cristobal. Medellin is a city and San Cristobal is a municipality. They don't say that they are from Medellin and they don't say that they are from San Cristobal, they say that they are from La Loma. There is an understanding that La Loma belongs to Medellin, but La Loma belongs to San Cristobal, and San Cristobal belongs to Medellin, so they belong to both, but they don't feel like they belong

to any of them. So that is why the government doesn't support them that much, because they don't think that they belong to this part (to Medellin), that is why they forget them. Medellin doesn't support La Loma, because they believe La Loma belongs to San Cristobal, and San Cristobal doesn't support La Loma because they think it belongs to Medellin. It's a problem of identity, because they feel they don't belong to this place, they don't feel anything, so it doesn't get to them (doesn't pain them).

16) *What are your thoughts on HiperBarrio and Rising Voices, both negative and positive?*

For me Rising Voices is a marvellous network, because it creates a global communication. So for me it is very nice to be able to talk to someone from a place far away, for example in India. And Convergentes lets the ones who earlier did not have a voice be able to have a voice. When I write I can tell another person of what La Loma is, that is very important and very very wonderful. Everything is an earning and it's productive, in Rising Voices, Convergentes and Hiper Barrio.

17) *Do you feel that you would have been able to create and maintain this type of project without the assistance of the two organizations?*

I don't think so. Alvaro has been very very important. Convergentes is an idea of Alvaro. The two webs are the principal engine of this whole project, and Alvaro has been like a bridge. He is the one who has made everything happen.

18) *For how long do you think that you will continue being involved in the project?*

Forever (laughing). I want to teach other people what I have learned from this project.

19) *What motivates you to participate in Convergentes and what discourages you?*

What motivates me is being able to learn from everyone of my colleagues in the project, and also how to write better and create video and take pictures. (I ask if there is nothing she finds discouraging. She answers no). I feel that it's hard when my friends are not writing too much, when they have too much other work and are on the go.

20) *Did you write something on your blog about the threatening pamphlets in March this year?*

No, I didn't want to, because it is much more important for me to let people know about the good things that are going on here. Everybody wrote about the situation, I didn't have to do it again. There are many other things to write about, other than the bad stuff, also good things should be written about. For example, if I wake up early in the morning, 5 o'clock, and it is a wonderful morning, that is something I should write about. For me it is better to write about that marvellous thing, about the sunrise, than to write about something threatening.

21) *How do you feel that the newspapers and television channels reported on the pamphlets and the return of the violence?*

For me they exaggerate about the news, they generate panic, so it was like a competition. That is very bad, I think. They were very disrespectful (of the people, I ask) Yes. They wanted to generate an impression that we were bad. If someone says that you are bad you will be bad, because the word has power.

22) *How did you get involved with this project?*

I used to come to the library, and Miguel told me that the project was going to start. I decided to come because I like all the stuff (photos, videos). I like to write as well, and that is very important for me, because when I write I can say what my thoughts are.

7.1.7 Interview with Isabella

1) *What do you get out of being involved with the project?*

I win (=gain) money, experience, friends, I learn a lot about web 2.0. I learn how to teach to other members of HiperBarrio. I learn to work in a group, that is very, very important. (Why, I ask). Why? Because before HiperBarrio I hated to work in groups and now I love it. You learn how to understand the other person, to work with this person. That is beauty (laughing), and you make very good friends, all of them are very special persons. I'm very happy in this project.

2) *Do you in any way feel more connected with other groups after working with the project?*

If so, in what way?

Yes, I love to talk with other groups, with other bloggers with other twitters. Web 2.0 have many, many, many tools and I like to learn to meet people, all of them and groups like Voces Bolivianas, groups like Quinoclaje. We have a citizen journalism meeting with them, and they work with videos, with movies. In this meeting we know about many groups of Communa 13, newspapers. And in the web we know many people of other countries and we talk with other language. (I ask: English, or?) In English, or Spanish if they talk in Spanish.

3) *Do you feel that the project has in any way strengthened the ties of your own community?*

Yes. The project teach us to understand the community, to feel a part of community. To begin to like to work for them, write their histories, help people like Suso. We, the community are very important, and we help them and they help us. We work together.

4) *How important are the comments written by visitors to the blogs you have written? Do you feel it to be important that you know that other people are reading/visiting them?*

That is the web. That is very, very important. If you comment to other blogs, the bloggers return to your blog and there is a network of persons who comment. And all persons in this

web comment, read what other bloggers write in every countries many times (=all the time).
The web is making strong with the comments.

5) *What kind of comments do you get from other people on your blog?*

Every kind. Sometimes people come to my blog calling me not very good words and sometimes people know my blog and write very good things about that. For example I write many time ago about the university, and some people... I write about disturbs in the university, it is very polemic. I not agree with the disturbs, because the students don't let to learn the other students, because they not like to study, they like to fight and that is stupid, because the society stigmatizes them. And some people come to my blog saying "oh, that is stupid, the government is bad, you are agree with our government", and some people say "that is good", "the disturbs don't let learn to the children". But I like to debate. I always make an answer to the comment, and the people sometimes return to my blog to read the answer.

6) *What do you feel are the aims of HiperBarrio?*

I think that the principal aim is to rescue the historic memory of all community. The history is not only the past, it is the present. And it's very important, cause we not only talk about the past and we talk about Suso, that is present, we talk about Dueña Blanca, we talk about the cars that drive through the dump truck, and this thing make bad road, it destroys the road, and this special...And this make a problem to the community. The other problems for example is that we not have two sides to walk in the road, without feel insecure. (there is no place to walk, I ask) Exactly.

7) *What do you know of the organisation Rising Voices?*

Rising Voices begin with the works of David Sasaki, that is...he is a friend of the group, he is a support of the group. Rising Voice is an organization that works in every world. The name says everything; because the name says that we can...cause the world has many bloggers that wrote the history of their community. In example, in Iran exists many bloggers that write about the problems in Iran. The government in Iran is putting them in jail, torturing them.

8) What do you feel are the aims of Rising Voices?

To every person in the world write their history, and be read on to people in the world.

9) In what ways do you feel that the project is lacking?

I think that the project...every project has their problems, but we talk and try to find a solution to these problems. I think that sometimes we not work in group completely, but sometimes we talk about that and find a solution to every problems we...the communication is very important. And I think that to problems all the group always find a solution. (So there is no big problems, I ask). No, I think. (laughing). (Alvaro says: we are lucky, we don't have any big problems).

10) Who is responsible for these problems?

I think that the important thing is not find a guilty person; the important point is to find a problem of the group. I talk about the work in group in every kind of events. And if we have a problem, we can talk and not...we all are responsible.

11) How do you think that one could improve these areas of the project?

12) What do you feel that you get by contributing to this project, which you could not have managed on your own?

I think that the important thing is not find a guilty. I think that to work in the tools in the web, one of the most important contributions. One of the other contributions is work in group and with the community, cause I always have been a part of the community, I always be alone, and now I work with the community and work with other people together in a group. I didn't like it before and now she likes it.

13) In what ways do you feel that the specific type of media is important to the outcomes of the project?

I think that in this media of communication help us to share information to other people in the world. We work with video, pictures, with blogs, with podcasts. All of these tools help us to convey information and not only to convey information, but also to show many face of our reality.

14) *Do you feel that you are in any way engaging in a form of global conversation?*

Yes, in fact the last week I was a part of a conversation about blogs and citizen journalists in a...many people of the world talk about citizen journalism in twitter and blogs. And the difference with the usually, maybe with big media, media enterprises.

15) *If so, is this important to you?*

16) *What type of knowledge have you gained by participating in HiperBarrio?*

To work in groups, to manage the tools of web 2.0, to work in the community and talk with other person in the group and find information, and share information too.

17) *In what ways, if any, are you able to apply these to other aspects of your life?*

I am the teacher of HiperBarrio – Ituango. In this group I learn to be able to teach what I know. I learn to make tutorials; I never have made this before. I'm learning to comprehend, understand. I have learnt to dialogue, and the dialogue is important.(Alvaro says: She took a course in forensic entomology and created a blog for the class).

18) *Do you feel that the type of community where you live get enough attention from the government and traditional media, both national and international?*

No (laughing), because the government always comes to La Loma to share things related to violence. In this moment they are coming to La Loma and San Cristobal to talk about the library park (that is going to be built in San Cristobal, says Alvaro), but the problems, the big

problems of the community is not looked at by the government. Health, education, public spaces etc.

19) *Do you see there to be a need for new type of media, like internet, where members of impoverished communities are able to voice their thoughts?*

Yes, it's necessary cause the traditional media like to talk about violence in a sensationalistic way (yellow press). It is very important to let the people talk about the good things and the bad things, the two sides of the coin. I think that the new media let them to do it, and free. Free media. (So that's important, that it's free, I ask) Free, in the sense of the money, and in the sense of let to talk about everything.

20) *What are your thoughts on HiperBarrio and Rising Voices, both negative and positive?*

I especially have positive thoughts about this project. I think that they are my friends, and I learn to talk to them, to work with them, to spend many days with them, be happy with them. Negative things: I think that the project needs to solve all the problems that presents in the community, everything, but we are united; we can do it, always. And I think that we are united.

21) *Do you feel that you and the other participants would have been able to create and maintain this type of project without the assistance of the two organizations?*

Yes...yes. No, no, no (laughing), cause we began with...we won the micro grant from Rising Voices. It was a big stimulus for the group. We can write without cameras, without podcasts, but I think that show the things in pictures and have the money to do some things are very important, and this helps a lot. No, no, not only the money (laughing). The Rising Voices is a very big support for the project; it's like a letter of presentation to the world. It opens doors.

22) *For how long do you think that you will continue being involved in the project?*

If we continue with enthusiasm and unity, we can continue in this project many years.

23) *Why do you wish to continue being involved/abandon the project?*

For many things. For one part, they are my friends, for other part, the project helps to the community, for other part, I can express myself. Also I can show the problems of the community and help to resolve. And I learn, and teach what I learn. And this group lets (allows) me do all this.

24) *Did you write something on your blog about the happenings in Medellin in March this year, with the paramilitaries showing themselves again? And if so, what did you write?*

In fact, I made another blog only to talk about that. But I not use my name, I use other name. It's dangerous. And also I talk about that in my blog. But in my blog I am more careful, because he said it's very dangerous. (Alvaro asks if she wrote in the collective blog as well) No, no, not in the collective blog. It's important to talk about both the good and the bad things, not to only talk about the bad things. I think that La Loma is not synonymous with the violence; I think that the whole country can't be synonymous with the violence. Even if we have the conflict, we have things that are good as well. Ines said (in the common blog) that we should keep quiet about the resurgence of the violence in La Loma, and I mad another blog post where I asked if La Loma should be synonymous with violence.

25) *How do you feel that the newspapers and television channels reported on the happenings?*

Sad. (laughing). Cause they always talk about the bad things, and very seldom they talk about the good thins. In example, they come, as I said to you, they come to La Loma for the violence and not for positive things. I think that this is bad for the country entirely, because we always think bad things about our country, and there exists very good things. And these television channels and reporters talk about that. And sometimes they ignore the big problems. In example, the paramilitaries did exist, and they ignored that. They don't like to talk about that, and people suffered and they never talked about that. They only talk about problems with the park. The law helping the victims, it didn't pass.

7.1.8 Interview with Javier

1) *What do you get out of being involved with the project?*

I got interested in it, but during a process of four months new possibilities have emerged, especially in regards to the local community. The other thing that I have achieved is that it is not only a digital community; we have also started bonding and developing friendships amongst us. We have learnt to use publishing tools online.

2) *Do you in any way feel more connected with other groups after working with the project?*

If so, in what way?

In this moment, no, I'm just beginning. (Do you live in La Loma, I ask) I live in San Javier, therefore not in La Loma.

3) *Do you feel that the project has in any way strengthened the ties of your own community?*

I have gotten very close to the youth in this community. To be able to listen to them, to share with them. It has enabled me to be more aware. And the project is totally committed to the community. We talk about the community and we give visibility to the people who live here and the personalities in the community.

4) *How important are the comments written by visitors on your blog?*

It is the most important for creating content for the blog because it gives feedback to what you write. They say congratulations, others are critical, especially some kids. A week ago (really a month) I wrote something about punk, because these kids are very close to... They don't seem to be able to change the image that other people have of them.

5) *What kind of comments do you get from other people on your blog?*

6) What do you know of the organisation *Rising Voices*?

It's a foundation, that's everywhere in the world. It allows people from the communities to publish about their own realities.

7) What is your opinion on the objectives of *Rising Voices*?

I think it is very important, because it is more important (to say what happened) than the mass media. That gives a voice to the people.

8) What do you feel that the project is lacking?

We have talked about it, to organize ourselves better, to be able to...to make it an institution, to make it more a real organization. (More professionalized, I ask). More professionalized. Something very structural, like an organizational structure. Álvaro tells me: Remember that the blogs are about hobbies, it's like a hobby.

9) When you have problems, how do you feel that they are managed?

First of all: it has happened...misunderstanding between people, the best way to get out of it is to talk. They are very diverse: they have their own point of view. The main thing is to dialog and dialog, in able to get a good... That's why we have to be better organized.

10) What do you feel that you get by contributing to this project, which you could not have managed on your own?

To publish, in a blog. I wanted to do that for a long time ago. Maybe I could have done it by myself. But if I had done it by myself it would have been difficult, because it is a community, I'm more visible than I would have been (individually). There is a lot of open discussion...shared knowledge...yeah yeah shared knowledge.

11) In what ways do you feel that the blogs are important to the outcomes of the project?

It is very important, because we are creating content. As you know there is a collective blog and personal blogs. I think that is why it's interesting. To talk about the territory.

12) *Do you feel that you are in any way engaging in a form of global conversation?*

Of course, definitively, because any person can realize what we are doing here. If this project didn't exist we wouldn't know anything about La Loma. The mass media will always talk about the Comuna 13, the violence. But this project has made it more visible, people in La Loma more visible.

13) *What type of knowledge have you gained by participating in HiperBarrio?*

Creation of blogs, maintenance of blogs, publish videos and photos. I am not very good at writing or have been good at writing but I am learning to write.

14) *In what ways, if any, are you able to apply these to other aspects of your life?*

Until now, no (in four months). I'm able to really go out with this knowledge. But I think there is a possibility for the communities to create content, but always directed to the community. But before, when I'm not in Medellin when I go. Wherever I go will begin very similar to this project (?). Álvaro tells me: He's not from Antioquia. He has a little bit of a different accent. He has just been in Campus Party. The invitation that I got to Campus Party. If I didn't know how to use the internet...access to be one of the collaborators in Campus Party. Álvaro tells me: So he, in a way, had a job. He wasn't just participating. He was helping with the video streaming, it was 15 people and he got the job because of his knowledge of internet and digital communities, but also he's a video maker.

15) *Do you feel that the type of community where you live get enough attention from the government and traditional media, both national and international?*

Definitively not. La Loma is always (has always been) visible for something that is wrong, the violence, but now it is being known for other things, for example the "estudia", Tele Antioquia, Caracol (which is a radiostation), in El Espectador, Semana (?). They are talking

about the project that we are doing here, and also the national magazine Week (It's like Newsweek in Colombia, says Alvaro). But attention? Very little attention.

16) *What are your thoughts on HiperBarrio and Rising Voices, both negative and positive?*

I haven't found anything negative, all of them are positive. Giving the community the chance in order to auto publish, that is very positive, because it allows people to tell about their community, and also democratize mass-media, it's a way of democratizing media.

17) *Do you feel that you would have been able to create and maintain this type of project without the assistance of the two organizations?*

It would have been difficult. But maybe individual blogs, but it would not have had the same impact and reach, (as) when it deals with collective projects.

18) *For how long do you think that you will continue being involved in the project?*

I don't know. Wherever I go, I will be in HiperBarrio, where I go I will continue publish and expand the project.

19) *What motivates you to participate in Convergences and what discourages you?*

What motivates is to be able to find a digital community, and a fraternity of friends, where you can share and learn, and the possibility to express, without any type of censorship (?), and (someone can say) "this is not well-written" or "this is good-written". There is not much now that is discouraging me until now. For it is moving others' sensibility. For example armed conflict, it has no interest for me, and to be able to be more attentive to it and talk about the conflict, the victims.

20) *Did you write something on your blog about the threatening pamphlets in March this year?*

I didn't write, but I made comments in other peoples' blogs.

21) *How do you feel that the newspapers and television channels reported on the pamphlets and the return of the violence?*

They are never interested, but in researching, they really know what is going on, but they cannot write (?), sometimes because they are afraid, because something can happen to them. In Colombia, this type of news is very short, and the fashion, banalities, those are the big things .. They are very short, but around them they create a big show. The main news in Colombia, the big headlines is “this many people died” or ...It gives good rating to them, but they don't explain people why that happens.

22) *How did you get involved with this project?*

Four months ago, in the library in San Javier, there was a seminar, a get-together, alternative communication and community leaders. Three-day seminar and I met Ines there. I listened to the presentation Alvaro made about the project and it called my attention very much. What I wanted was to be able to publish; this is a project that I am looking for, where I want to participate. I told her (Ines) about this, I only wanted to visit. When I came here that Saturday, immediately I was part of the project. I just came to look, but there has been a process. What I came to do was to support, in order to create video, and not content. But weeks went, I began to write, to create content, first in video, even in the collective blog. My specific interest is urban cultures (urban tribes, like each people have their own cultures). So this project is about youth culture, metal, and my blog is called bitacora mutante. I only use it to talk about urban cultures. When I want to talk about something else I go to the collective blog. It is specifically for this project, the urban tribes/urban cultures.

7.1.9 Interview with Jose

1) *What do you get out of being involved with the project?*

The possibility to publish, the possibility to write. Because I study literature, it is very closely related to what I write. (Do you think there are a lot of people reading your blog, I ask). Only those who know me.

2) *Do you in any way feel more connected with other groups after working with the project? If so, in what way?*

3) *Do you feel that the project has in any way strengthened the ties of your own community?*

4) *How important are the comments written by visitors to the blogs you have written? Do you feel it to be important that you know that other people are reading/visiting them?*

5) *What kind of comments do you get from other people on your blog?*

6) *What do you feel are the aims of HiperBarrio?*

7) *What do you know of the organisation Rising Voices?*

8) *What do you feel are the aims of Rising Voices?*

To give us a voice, a possibility to use new technology, especially blogs. I see that I have benefitted from it. I think it is a good objective. Rising Voices also has advocacy, but I don't know too much about it, other than I know that it exists.

9) *In what ways do you feel that the project is lacking?*

No, I feel that it is functioning, because we are participating, so I don't have the feeling that it's failing because the project is ours in a way.

10) *Who is responsible for these problems?*

11) *How do you think that one could improve these areas of the project?*

12) *What do you feel that you get by contributing to this project, which you could not have managed on your own?*

I wouldn't have been able to get those tools and the knowledge that I've gotten, if the project hadn't come to La Loma.

13) *In what ways do you feel that the specific type of media is important to the outcomes of the project?*

It is the text that has been most important in what we've been doing, and that the videos are not as important. But I think that the main, the good thing about the project is the text-part, that is functioning well.

14) *Do you feel that you are in any way engaging in a form of global conversation?*

No, not much, but that is because of the way that I handle my blog, how my approach to blogging is. It is because I'm not too interested in politics or the things that are usually talked

about in blogs. What is interesting is literature and philosophy, and it is very little of that, so I don't care too much about it.

15) *If so, is this important to you?*

16) *What type of knowledge have you gained by participating in HiperBarrio?*

It has helped me in my approach to internet, so the tools that I have learned have been very important. I have gotten a more healthy relationship with the internet. That is the big thing that I have gotten, that I can contribute, that I am not engaging in the banalities of the internet, for example chatting or...that I am using the internet in a more productive way. I'm contributing in a way that I think is interesting.

17) *In what ways, if any, are you able to apply these to other aspects of your life?*

A lot. It helps me in my career, in what I am studying, because here I am writing and thinking.

18) *Do you feel that the type of community where you live get enough attention from the government and traditional media, both national and international?*

No, before it was very stigmatized, because it was violent and dangerous, but now it is we who are doing the job of making it visible, to show that we exist, that we are on the map. La Loma wasn't on the map of the city, literally. But now we are making it visible.

19) *Do you see there to be a need for new type of media, like internet, where members of impoverished communities are able to voice their thoughts?*

I think that the important thing is the capacitating, so without the workshops, without a group leading the group in how to use the internet in a more creative way, internet doesn't have any sense, because then you just get in the internet whatever you like. While here we were getting something that was more productive, more expressive, and more creative. What Hiper Barrio

has done is given us a new way to the internet and in a way point out to things that we never knew how to use.

20) *What are your thoughts on HiperBarrio and Rising Voices, both negative and positive?*

The positive: the possibility to communicate ourselves. The negative is that many of us do not have access to the internet; we are few that have, therefore we don't have enough access.

Even here in the library, we don't have enough access. Some of us don't have enough access to the internet, that's the negative part.

21) *Do you feel that you and the other participants would have been able to create and maintain this type of project without the assistance of the two organizations?*

No, I don't think so. There were two projects, and what has been good is the following us all the time, that is important.

22) *For how long do you think that you will continue being involved in the project?*

We are now waiting to creating new projects to capacitate others in other places, so I think that we are obliged to continue a lot, but I don't know a specific length of time. The plan is to continue with those (projects? People?).

23) *Why do you wish to continue being involved/abandon the project?*

24) *Did you write something on your blog about the happenings in Medellin in March this year, with the paramilitaries showing themselves again? And if so, what did you write?*

In my personal blog: no, but in the blogs of my friends and in the collective blog, certainly it was written about it. They wrote about the fear and the violence. The main thing was to scare people, so they wrote about how scared they felt, but also about the idea that they had to resist against this new violence that was trying to come back.

25) *How do you feel that the newspapers and television channels reported on the happenings?*

7.1.10 Interview with María

1) *What do you get out of being involved with the project?*

Friendship, I feel more self-secure, I have opened myself more to other people, to young people, to youth, the neighbours, and also to be able to express what I know and that people know me. (I ask if she lives in La Loma) Yes. A camera (laughing) in Campus Party last year. I participated in a contest, with Google Maps, so we were taking photographs with other contestants. We were the best. (I ask: with Isabella?) Exactly. We participated and won. To go to Bogota. And people know who I am and they know where I live. Those are the things I remember now.

2) *Do you in any way feel more connected with other groups after working with the project? If so, in what way?*

So I see other peoples photos in Flickr and then I get to know other countries. (I ask: And you read other blogs?) Yes. She is saying she is also connected to other groups (Voces Boliviana)

3) *Do you feel that the project has in any way strengthened the ties of your own community?*

Yes. We do activities. She tells the neighbours that this thing is going to happen etc. And you are forced to talk to people. And then you interact with them and you begin to make friends, to friends that you never have talked to.

4) *How important are the comments written by visitors on your blog?*

It's like the part that is essential. They write, if they say they didn't like it, why not. We learn from them their opinions, how they think.

5) *What kind of comments do you get from other people on your blog?*

For example, when I don't write often, when it takes too long to write again, sometimes you come back to begin to write. I like very much what you have written. Sometimes I try to,

since I try to...I say things about nature, like things that pleases me about nature, some people say “yeah, we have to (be in) nature more and to appreciate nature”.

6) *What do you know of the organisation Rising Voices?*

I know very little, I think that they are like a support, like a big digital community, it's like the base for Convergences.

7) *What is your opinion on the objectives of Rising Voices?*

I don't really know the objectives.

8) *What do you feel that the project is lacking?*

To be more united. For example if you can not come to the meeting, at least give a word about it, show more interest in what we do. To events, things that we organize.

9) *When you have problems, how do you feel that they are managed?*

Talking, and listen to the different opinions; this is bad, this is good, this is not good, we should have done this or that or we lack this or that. If we manage to get the objectives or not.

10) *What do you feel that you get by contributing to this project, which you could not have managed on your own?*

To go to Bogota. I could never have met the kids, to publish what I have written. I really like to work with the community, but without this group I could not have done that. Also that they know me.

11) *In what ways do you feel that the blogs are important to the outcomes of the project?*

They are important because we can tell our own stories from La Loma. For all people to be able to know us, to be able to publish, to give our opinion, so that we know each other.

12) *Do you feel that you are in any way engaging in a form of global conversation?*

Not much, because for example I don't have a computer, I have little chance to interact. I would love to connect at night-time (during the evening), but I can't because I don't have a computer. Because the library is closed, and I don't have a computer at home. There is no means. I would have loved to.

13) *What type of knowledge have you gained by participating in HiperBarrio?*

To manage the blog-platforms, how to upload photos, how to publish videos. Other tools, for example how to take a photo and be able to position it in the territory (in google Maps)

14) *In what ways, if any, are you able to apply these to other aspects of your life?*

I tell my family and friends about it, and I explain to them, so that they can get into the new area of technology. So, the little I know I try to share with them. And they also write.

15) *Do you feel that the type of community where you live get enough attention from the government and traditional media, both national and international?*

No, almost not. They don't know us, they don't want to know who we are, that is why. They don't support. And we already have an interesting community. Who is who, what are the different groups that exist, even digital groups.

16) *What are your thoughts on HiperBarrio and Rising Voices, both negative and positive?*

I think that it is a great opportunity for young people, so that they make themselves known at the global level. It is a space that allows us to get to know people from far away. Since I can not go there, I can at least get to know the people, and what they write.

17) *Do you feel that you would have been able to create and maintain this type of project without the assistance of the two organizations?*

Yes....No! (laughing). Because we needed some support, that is what I think. We didn't have the resources, we wouldn't have gotten all that we have managed to get.

18) *For how long do you think that you will continue being involved in the project?*

I was thinking today about what the time limit is, when it will finish. I want that it never ends and that other people will come and that we can tell other people, so that this grows. I will always be here.

19) *What motivates you to participate in Convergentes and what discourages you?*

You listen to friends and the members in the group; there is a lot to do a lot to learn. I would love to share with that person, to be able to do things with technology that we could never have done alone. What sometimes puts me down is that it is not the union that you would expect. Some of them don't come to the meetings, and we ask "where are the others?"

20) *Did you write something on your blog about the threatening pamphlets in March this year?*

No, because...I thought that I would do it, but several had written, so the others had said what I wanted to say. So I didn't want to repeat what they had said.

21) *How do you feel that the newspapers and television channels reported on the pamphlets and the return of the violence?*

They didn't preoccupy, they just published something, and they didn't continue to cover the news about it. "Don't worry, everything is alright, nothing happens". They didn't do anything. And about the pamphlets, they didn't do anything proper. The homicide rate went up, they saw that, but they didn't ask themselves "why is this happening" They just limited themselves. Maybe somebody just killed someone.

22) *How did you get involved with this project?*

I came here and I saw there were kids in the computers talking about blogs and then I decided to ask them about it and they explained to me. And it would be nice to be in it. And I asked Miguel, how can I be in it. And he explained to me what I had to do to be in the group. That is how I began to come to the meetings.

7.1.11 Interview with Mariela

1) *What do you get out of being involved with the project?*

Knowledge. Different things. I have gotten to know the people here in La Loma, the culture, it has helped in my studies. Because in the information systems. It helps me in my university work. (I ask if she doesn't live in La Loma) She lives in La Loma, but she has always studied outside of La Loma.

2) *Do you in any way feel more connected with other groups after working with the project?*

If so, in what way?

We learned that there were not only the ones here, we learnt that there were others around the world, cultures, needs (?), and to see that we have many things in common with other persons in the world.

3) *Do you feel that the project has in any way strengthened the ties of your own community?*

Yes, because I am more concerned for the community, and to see that there are many ways that we can help the community. It helps, for example what we did with Suso, to find other things to document. We are working in a participative budget, in order to help the community, both the digital community and also the social (real world)

4) *How important are the comments written by visitors on your blog?*

They are very important, because they teach me the difficulties of writing, the things that I have to change and if there are errors (?), to search for (them) in the blogs. It is like the basic thing for us as bloggers; comments.

5) *What kind of comments do you get from other people on your blog?*

All kinds of comments, congratulations, others that inspire me to write more, people who just enter to correct my spelling, my way of writing. And it gives me inspiration to write more and work more with my grammar.

6) *What do you know of the organisation Rising Voices?*

They helped us and Alvaro in the digital community; they have been a support for us. Also they show us internationally.

7) *What is your opinion on the objectives of Rising Voices?*

Despite the fact that they have objectives, we have been working a little bit outside of those objectives. (I ask why). They have their objectives, and we have other objectives. That is way it is a little bit estranged for me, a little bit far away.

8) *What do you feel that the project is lacking?*

More knowledge, information, so we try to learn more, in order to improve and show our community. But you gain knowledge as you go.

9) *When you have problems, how do you feel that they are managed?*

With dialogue. That is the basic understanding in the group. If we have problems we talk about them, while talking each ones opinion into account.

10) *What do you feel that you get by contributing to this project, which you could not have managed on your own?*

To know the world through a blog, despite the fact that we are here. Books also help, but blogs are stronger in knowledge. You see problems outside, and also get knowledge by sharing with others. (I ask: and that is why they are more important than books, or no?). They are equal (laughing).

11) *In what ways do you feel that the blogs are important to the outcomes of the project?*

Very important, because we are working for the community, and in this community, like all communities, you can see the results, and see how they do it, or we can help their problems too.

12) *Do you feel that you are in any way engaging in a form of global conversation?*

Yes, because, despite the fact that we are far away from other people, through comments in our blogs we can get to know other people in the world. It's a good communication; it helps to know each other. It shows that we are related, that we are not alone.

13) *What type of knowledge have you gained by participating in HiperBarrio?*

To handle the blogs, how to write. How to do a presentation, how to improve spelling. And also to help through a text, to show this to the world.

14) *In what ways, if any, are you able to apply these to other aspects of your life?*

In many ways. I can communicate better with people, to help other people. Also it has helped me to know my own culture better and my story. And it is basic for the feeling of the life of a person.

15) *Do you feel that the type of community where you live get enough attention from the government and traditional media, both national and international?*

In the beginning: no. Now we have had a long-time process, and they have begun to bring more money in, like the library they are going to build in San Cristobal. It helps education in the community.

16) *What are your thoughts on HiperBarrio and Rising Voices, both negative and positive?*

Positive: We are like a family, we support each other. Because they are like our parents and they have taught us many things. I don't see anything negative, only positive. What she meant was: up to this moment. Hasta ahora means up to this moment, Álvaro explains to me.

17) *Do you feel that you would have been able to create and maintain this type of project without the assistance of the two organizations?*

No, we would not have been able to create it. We would have been without a base. They have given us knowledge and the means to get more publicity, and to the future bloggers too, they have created a basis.

18) *For how long do you think that you will continue being involved in the project?*

It doesn't have a time limit. The idea is to continue. It is a process, and as a process it has a lot to do. The idea is not to finish.

19) *What motivates you to participate in Convergentes and what discourages you?*

The community, the work with the community, the kids of the violence. Showing our talents, that is what inspires me. Nothing is demotivating.

20) *Did you write something on your blog about the threatening pamphlets in March this year?*

Yes, most of the blogs wanted to make known the pamphlets. To let know that they continue despite of the pamphlets, and to let them know that they take distance from the violence with passivity.

21) *How do you feel that the newspapers and television channels reported on the pamphlets and the return of the violence?*

It was just gossip that they didn't research. They didn't take into account the community. It seemed to me that it was bad information (they were ill-informed). (I ask if she means that she thinks the information was incorrect). She says it was their truth, not the community's truth.

22) *How did you get involved with this project?*

I had worked here as an alphabetizer. I am always involved in everything that the library does. I was doing some graphic design. He (talking about Álvaro) was talking about the project, about the community, the culture. And that's why I got in, because it was his profession to do

7.1.12 Interview with Pedro

1) *What do you get out of being involved with the project?*

Learned the importance of telling the story of my neighbourhood on the internet. I have so many friends that I met in the library (You have gotten new friends, I ask) Yes. I could contribute with capacity as a graphic designer to give a visual quota to the project. I like a lot to write, and I have my own blog. It makes me feel that I am a participant in the transformation of the barrio towards the world. And I have gotten responsibility, a more responsible attitude. I also got acquainted with the internet, since I don't have access at home.

2) *Do you in any way feel more connected with other groups after working with the project?*

If so, in what way?

Yes, with other experiences around the world, like Voces Bolivianas and the communities of bloggers as the Miguel explain in Spain (?) And with the local news, when they come here to make reports about the project or make interviews. (I ask if it happens often) . Recently, since we won the Golden Nica, but before that there were articles in different blogs on the internet, like Blog Colombia etc. So there are some other bloggers that have commented on us.

3) *Do you feel that the project has in any way strengthened the ties of your own community?*

I believe that the library has gotten more visitors now because they have internet, and often they come through the blogs. They want to come here for access to the internet, and they read books as well. People come here to see what is happening, and to read books. It has also been an answer to the fact that we have been on the streets doing interviews, taking photographs, so it has attracted people to the library.

4) *How important are the comments written by visitors to the blogs you have written? Do you feel it to be important that you know that other people are reading/visiting them?*

Is something nice, because it feels like you are not writing in vain and it inspires you to continue the writing.

5) What kind of comments do you get from other people on your blog?

Admiration, constructive critic, and sometimes someone disagrees with my publication, because I have a position that is strange for them. The current war that we are living in. Because I talk about personal things and spiritual things, but it's nice. (So they disagree with your views, I ask) Sometimes, because I am so critic and I don't conform with all the (?) that happen in my country. And I have a deeper view into them.

6) What do you feel are the aims of HiperBarrio?

Extend the experience around Antioquia, continue making videos and writing in the blogs, and make a bigger relationship with the people of the hood. Create a society that can publish the history on the internet, in order to. And make it more formal, so that we can include more (says Alvaro: that's one of the aims of the group now, to make it a formal organization)

7) What do you know of the organisation Rising Voices?

It's a...I don't call it a project, it's an organization that was born in University of Harvard and it's around the world with projects like this, with people of peripheral communities, for rescue the historical memory and publish them now for the current study of those places. And I know that David Sasaki, he is the director.

8) What do you feel are the aims of Rising Voices?

It's very good, very laudable, and very necessary for the social inclusion on the internet. It gives a social character to the web.

9) In what ways do you feel that the project is lacking?

One of the problems is that not all can be connected to the internet, so that makes it that not everybody is publishing often. We want to have a connection to internet in permanent way (and that each of them has internet, says Alvaro). This is another for the group in the moment. (We are planning to create a Wi-Fi for them to connect, with their own antennas, they're building antennas, so that they can connect to Wi-Fis, says Alvaro).

10) *Who is responsible for these problems?*

11) *How do you think that one could improve these areas of the project?*

12) *What do you feel that you get by contributing to this project, which you could not have managed on your own?*

To develop a vision of the world on the internet and expand my vision about the world, because we live in a hood, that is so in relation with the other hoods of Medellin. The possibility to make my writings would be known to the world. Without this I would not have been able to do it.

13) *In what ways do you feel that the specific type of media is important to the outcomes of the project?*

It's all, because it is the tool that all of us work in. And internet broadcasts our achievements and our current situation and the media are all for the project. We are part of the media.

14) *Do you feel that you are in any way engaging in a form of global conversation?*

Somehow, because my schedule in the university, and sometimes I am absent, I am not able to participate with the publications. But my small contribution makes me feel that I am connected in the global conversation. It's big for me that in the collective blog and in some of the personal blogs is my design. I drew the logo for the Convergences group and I designed the new logo of HiperBarrio. I wanted to see that in the internet. For a designer that is something exciting.

15) *If so, is this important to you?*

16) *What type of knowledge have you gained by participating in HiperBarrio?*

To write in a better way, to make videos in a common play board like Windows Movie Maker, it's something essential and basic but I was learning to make videos in that program. To find information and places to learn English. I think I learned to read the information with a new vision, more investigative, more serious, and that is something important for my personal...citizen. It's like becoming a citizen journalist, as I think we are becoming.

17) *In what ways, if any, are you able to apply these to other aspects of your life?*

Into the University, teaching to my class-partners, introducing the blog-culture in the investigation groups of...in the dean's...(So they have like a...some...groups, seminal research-groups. And he's introducing blogs so they can use them also, says Alvaro). To publish the result of research. (Research that you are part of, I ask). It's a new project in the University, in my research-group, and I wanted to be part of... And also it's a way to offer our work to the world, to present ourselves in the market. Some designers don't have a webpage or blog, and that is a free way to advertise ourselves.

18) *Do you feel that the type of community where you live get enough attention from the government and traditional media, both national and international?*

In a smaller way, because our hood was the centre of a war four years ago. We are near to the Comuna 13, and the image(?) that they have is negative, but with the influence of our group, the name of La Loma was mentioned again in the television, in a positive way. And also we are next to San Cristobal, with the development of...and by joining this form of legal county, that has been positive. These events are (not?) covered. Therefore we need more attention.

19) *Do you see there to be a need for new type of media, like internet, where members of impoverished communities are able to voice their thoughts?*

Yes, we need to learn to make videos in a more professional way with the resources that we have. It's like a concerted place to publish, like a digital magazine. For include all the people of our hood.

20) *What are your thoughts on HiperBarrio and Rising Voices, both negative and positive?*

Negative: I don't know what is bad. Positive: all the experience gives to all the members, and the influence that the project has in the community. The relationships were formed since we started the project, with the members and with the people of the neighbourhood, because they are interested and they ask us why we were taking photos. Sometimes the people were scared of what we were doing. And it's something new for the people, because not all the people has a good education, and they feel estranged with a new cultural upraise (?); taking photos in the streets, even recording videos. It's a constructive and innovative aspect in a so remote hood, like ours.

21) *Do you feel that you and the other participants would have been able to create and maintain this type of project without the assistance of the two organizations?*

I want to think yes, but I think we wouldn't have the money for financing the resources. Without the experience, I doubt. But if we continue to the future, working as a politic (?) group, we may be able to do it, yes. Because we could develop more knowledge and have more support from other communities around the world.

(I ask if he understood the question) No! I didn't understand. But it is my position towards the future.

22) *For how long do you think that you will continue being involved in the project?*

I have made songs about the project. I am a rapper, I use to rap. I create the lyrics and... I always say that the time can limit us. The time isn't a limit for the project. And I hope we continue with (?), and I want to be here in HiperBarrio until it gets to other places. (And then you want to quit, I ask) If it is necessary for my professional life, then I will go.

23) *Why do you wish to continue being involved/abandon the project?*

Because it is a way for being, for play a role in the development in society. Because all the young people are involved in drugs and I want to make a change into my generation. And I think that this is a helpful way to do it. It's an exciting experience that makes you comfortable

with the (??) that you have if you organize in a way like that, making a new neighbourhood, making a new country, and giving a new face to this country.

24) *Did you write something on your blog about the happenings in Medellin in March this year, with the paramilitaries showing themselves again? And if so, what did you write?*

I didn't write anything, because I didn't have the time. And he didn't want to take a position publicly, because it is very delicate. I only wrote an email to the members of the group to talk about this. Because the situation was... so he wrote that others should do it (write about it?). But I didn't write any publicly. I didn't publish anything about that.

25) *How do you feel that the newspapers and television channels reported on the happenings?*

Sometimes it is sensationalistic. Some of them, especially the written press are very yellowish, and they tend to portrait more than the victims of the violence, those who are perpetrators. They have a mission to publish what is happening, but they make a... They also talk about the good things in Medellin, but they talk a lot about the violence. And it has evolved a lot, fortunately, in the last years. I feel so proud, because Medellin is a good place to visit, and the media are informing people what happens in Medellin. And this is a good aspect of the media. We have to recognize that it's always going to be like that, it's happening in many countries; a duality between good and bad. The media will also pick on it and show it, this duality.

7.1.13 Interview with Renata

1) *What do you get out of being involved with the project?*

2) *Do you in any way feel more connected with other groups after working with the project?
If so, in what way?*

Not in this moment, because I am a little far (lejar) of the group. I am very good friends with the kids in the project. But I know about the Bolivian project, Voces Bolivianas.

3) *Do you feel that the project has in any way strengthened the ties of your own community?*
Very much, a lot, because in the beginning culture has been important, but in La Loma there has been (conflict?) because of different cultures/traditions. We get a connection with other parts of the community.

4) *How important are the comments written by visitors on your blog?*

For me it is very important. Now I don't publish. The last time I published there was a lot of drafts, and I don't have the time, space, but I like to read the comments. And when the comments are good I comment in order to generate panic or terror. (I ask about the blog for the theatre) That blog was built by Andres, but in my blog I talk about the theatre. I have some posts about theatre.

5) *What kind of comments do you get from other people on your blog?*

According to the post, for example, many times when I publish I get many interesting comments, because people agree with. I like a lot when Isabella comments, because she says when I have spelt something wrong or there is something to criticise, constructive criticism, she is very strict.

6) What do you know of the organisation *Rising Voices*?

David Sasaki was the founder of HiperBarrio. They told me through the door of my house; lets go to the library. I came to the library, but I liked it and this time they told me it was digital communities, and they wanted me to be one of the first ones to publish (?). I ask: do you come here every day? I used to when I lived here, but not so much anymore. When I go to where I used to live, I come here. I live in San Javier.

7) What is your opinion on the objectives of *Rising Voices*?

The hidden ones, or the open to the public? It allows the community to express itself and it is very cool (vacan). Because we can tell another person in another country what is happening here. It's like a routine we have, that to others seems strange, and the same thing happens the other way.

8) What do you feel that the project is lacking?

A type of quality in the sense of...not intellectually, we all have some intelligence, but it needs some more responsibility, and more time. (I ask: so it is the participants who are lacking something?). Let's leave it like that.

9) When you have problems, how do you feel that they are managed?

What type of problems? Many times we say that we are going to do something, including myself, and the group says it's going to be....but they are not very engaged. I just lost my red line (train of thought). There is a person like Ines, and she tells you what to do. If for some reason you didn't do it, there is someone replacing you.

10) What do you feel that you get by contributing to this project, which you could not have managed on your own?

I think that's enough (she's kidding). To meet others, to get more integrated with young people in this community. Some of them were friends (from before), but there were new friendships. Learn about the webtools, travel to Bogota (Campus Party).

11) *In what ways do you feel that the blogs are important to the outcomes of the project?*

I see it as a tool, a media. It is through blogs that we can...do everything.

12) *Do you feel that you are in any way engaging in a form of global conversation?*

At one time, yes. She had connections with other persons (not sure which persons)

13) *What type of knowledge have you gained by participating in HiperBarrio?*

Many, (muchos). Intellectually, but also human relations, and also emotionally. In the group, the human relations are very good. I, myself, have learned the new technologies.

14) *In what ways, if any, are you able to apply these to other aspects of your life?*

It's very cool, because I'm in the eco-group (environmental group). It unites many groups, I have gotten the opportunity to create the blog for the environmental group. Each group has its own blog, and they begin to comment on each other. And then we are letting ourselves known to the city, so it is very cool (muy bacante)

15) *Do you feel that the type of community where you live get enough attention from the government and traditional media, both national and international?*

I didn't like them because they always wrote about the violence and communa 13. The way we are working, we are writing about what is really happening here. No, they don't get sufficient attention from the government and traditional media, and it doesn't matter to me. In San Cristobal they have something called participative budget, which they have implemented. The citizens can tell the government what is needed in this neighbourhood. In that sense, the government is doing something.

16) *What are your thoughts on HiperBarrio and Rising Voices, both negative and positive?*

It gives us the first contact. We don't want to lose the contact, we want the group to continue, get new people to Convergentes. Because we are starting to get jobs. I hope Convergentes

continues. That it continues all over the world, it would be nice to see Convergentes in many countries.

17) *Do you feel that you would have been able to create and maintain this type of project without the assistance of the two organizations?*

Yes, because we have the major pusher, which is Miguel. It was because of him that the project came into being. He called us and was so lucky to get into contact with people like me (kidding) I ask if she knew him from before. Many times, she says. We used to steal the chairs and put them in the street.

18) *For how long do you think that you will continue being involved in the project?*

I don't think I will exist anymore in the group, but I would love to continue until I went to the environmental group, until I went to the camping (?). I am writing about what I am studying, about the music that I like and the community that I live in.

19) *What motivates you to participate in Convergentes and what discourages you?*

To be able to tell, the capacity to be able say what I want to, without anybody judging me for what I am thinking (saying?). That is what motivates (?) The fact that they want to make it more institutionalized, that doesn't appeal to me. It would be very cold. It wouldn't be the same.

20) *Did you write something on your blog about the threatening pamphlets in March this year?*

I didn't like it, and I didn't want to pay any attention to it. There were many comments, and nobody knew where it came from. It could have been from people who didn't have anything to do, who just were bored.

21) *How do you feel that the newspapers and television channels reported on the pamphlets and the return of the violence?*

I don't share the news-outlets. I don't see television, I don't like it. Caracol and RCA are the newsoutlets of the government, they just publish what the government wants them to. I don't like that.

22) *How did you get involved with this project?*

I heard it through the window.

7.1.14 Interview with Teresa

1) *What do you get out of being involved with the project?*

Primarily: knowledge and secondly the social work. Because of the work that came out from Suso.

2) *Do you in any way feel more connected with other groups after working with the project?*

If so, in what way?

I was out a little while, I didn't have the opportunity to get involved with the Campus Party. (I ask how long she was out of the project). Six months, while I was studying.

3) *Do you feel that the project has in any way strengthened the ties of your own community?*

Yes, because with the project it is easy to get in contact with people around. With the Suso-project they understood the needs of the people.

4) *How important are the comments written by visitors on your blog?*

Very, because some comments can push you and some others are positive comments, saying if something is good or if something needs to be improved.

5) *What kind of comments do you get from other people on your blog?*

The opinions of people, if it is good because I have done something good or if I need to do something more with this or that part, that's more or less the way it is.

6) *What do you know of the organisation Rising Voices?*

Very little, but it is the connection between us and other parts of the world.

7) What is your opinion on the objectives of Rising Voices?

As I told you i don't know that much, and I don't know the objectives exactly, but it has been a good support for HiperBarrio. But I don't have a deeper knowledge of what it is.

8) What do you feel that the project is lacking?

A little more compromise, and there is a lack of willingness to serve the people. Much more compromise to serve the people. Sometimes we take more time than what we have planned, so therefore there is a lack of compromise with themselves (?)

9) When you have problems, how do you feel that they are managed?

We are very organized, because when we have problems we all get together to talk about what is wrong in the group. We never tell things under the table, or one-to-one, they just come together and talk about what they need with the group.

10) What do you feel that you get by contributing to this project, which you could not have managed on your own?

The knowledge of blogs, because before they weren't that interested due to the fact that they didn't know about the blog. But now they know of it, and feel much more motivated about it.

11) In what ways do you feel that the blogs are important to the outcomes of the project?

A lot, because with Suso's project we got together with people from other areas and we felt the contact. With the blog we feel that we get much more known, and that motivates us.

12) Do you feel that you are in any way engaging in a form of global conversation?

Yes, because there is a constant contact with people. I know of other peoples' comments and they know of my comments, and so...

13) *What type of knowledge have you gained by participating in HiperBarrio?*

To learn about the internet, to manage the network, and the contact with the people is very important.

14) *In what ways, if any, are you able to apply these to other aspects of your life?*

The learning of being in contact with people, learning how to dialogue is very important. What we've learned from the project, and also that want (?) make them interact with other things in her life. (hva slags ting, spør jeg) (laughing). (hun snakker veldig lenge, uten stans). Firstly, the values are very important to us, the values we learn in various situations, and the tolerance. And also the willingness we apply in order to make a blog. It also serves in order to be applied in other situations.

15) *Do you feel that the type of community where you live get enough attention from the government and traditional media, both national and international?*

No, well for some parts yes. Yes, because in the communication media (traditional media?), when something happens it communicates to them. They come and see the project and look what we have done and they communicate it. But by part of the government, they never support us. The government never supports the young people. This is a bad side of the government that they never support when we need help. We have made the project by ourselves, and not by part of the government.

16) *What are your thoughts on HiperBarrio and Rising Voices, both negative and positive?*

Rising Voices is a community(?). Convergences needs to give more support to the community and do things in order to make people know them. They do not expect us to solve all their problems, but they expect us to help them with basic things.

17) *Do you feel that you would have been able to create and maintain this type of project without the assistance of the two organizations?*

No, because Rising Voices has helped us with resources like cameras, computers. If we need to do an interview, they support us with material. If we need support for the blog, they send to us (write?) how to solve the problem.

18) *For how long do you think that you will continue being involved in the project?*

I would like to continue for a long time, but I don't expect my studies to interrupt with the process of Convergentes. Because sometimes we have to study during the weekends, and I don't expect it to interrupt the process.

19) *What motivates you to participate in Convergentes and what discourages you?*

I feel encouraged, because I want to know about things that happen and to write and the possibility to help the community. I feel discouraged when people are dedicated only to writing. I want people to be involved not only in the blog, but also in the social work.

20) *Did you write something on your blog about the threatening pamphlets in March this year?*

No, I didn't have the opportunity to do it. (I ask: but if she had the opportunity, would she do it?). Yes, I would have researched deeply into the situation and written about it.

21) *How do you feel that the newspapers and television channels reported on the pamphlets and the return of the violence?*

I didn't have the opportunity to know much about it, because of my studies, but I would have liked to have the opportunity to know what happened.

22) *How did you get involved with this project?*

Miguel told me about it. The project was related with blogs, and they were very curious about what it was for. I was a user of the public library, so I was told about the project and I was one of the pioneers of the project.

7.1.15 Interview with Miguel (the librarian)

1) How did you get involved with this project?

When I was finishing my studies in history, I had to learn how to repair my own computer, because my grandfather taught me that I have to do things by myself, to repair what is broke and don't pay someone to come and fix the stove. So when the computer got broken I had to save the information on the hard-drive. So first I saved it, and then I remembered what my grandfather taught me, so I started to learn how to repair by myself. I started repairing computers, and then I started getting enjoyment out of it, I got enjoyment out of learning about the computer. First I learnt the basics; excel, word etc. and later I started to learn about the blogs.

2) What do you get out of being involved with the project?

To learn, that is the basic thing. To start to communicate with the people, the community, to learn about each other, those are the gains. To learn about the community. The important thing is to make social webs and the young people who are involved learn to work in the community with each other, they learn about the webs and they start to grow

3) Do you feel that the ties in the community have been strengthened in any way because of the project?

Yes. An important thing is that we start to recover the social webs that were lost during the violence. The project doesn't involve all the people in community immediately. It starts with the people who are close to the program, and they have fathers, brothers, friends, so the information starts to grow out. Maybe seventy people have passed through the program, and if everyone of them have ten people who are close to them.

4) What do you feel are the aims of HiperBarrio?

Hiper Barrio is an active community that started to make journalists. Later, the blogs and webcasts and some other things came, but the initial thing was to make journalists, to recover

the memory, to regain all the memory that was lost because of the violence. The problem is not always violence; the problem is that we forget all the histories and memories. The truth is that the distance between the young people and the old people is not so big, maybe one. The problem is when every old man dies, all his stories dies with him. The beginning of the project was to tell stories, and that was later the base, the centre, but that centre started to grow and touch other things, and later we realized that it was not only about histories or recovering memories, it was about making citizens. These people started thinking about themselves, and thinking about where they were growing (up?) (what is around them). The new thing in the project is to make Hiper Barrio an institution, where it can start to grow and create “creators”, to make teachers, so they can teach others. In the beginning it was the initiative of a lot of different people, and they started teaching each other, and when this started to grow, every community started to put their own ideas in the project. If I know something, for example geography, you can say that there are two ways of seeing it. There are two columns, one that is what I know, and the other is what I need to know. Everybody know a lot of different things themselves, but the idea is to see what you know the most, what you like most and what you want to learn the most. That way, you won't be teaching what you want to teach, you will be teaching what you want the other people to learn.

5) What do you feel are the aims of Rising Voices?

The idea is to generate experiences of citizen journalism in the periphery, but not in the suburbs that have internet and all the media, but to do it in the suburbs that don't have it. Initially it was five groups, and now it is twenty, more or less, all over the globe. The community grows every six months, you see five more groups. The special thing is that everybody has a relation with their environment, with what is around them. The first group was “Local stories, global audience”. The idea is that everybody start to tell the stories of their community of their neighbourhood, and the idea was also that the communities started to make relations with other communities in other parts of the world, and learning that there are difficulties because of the language and the culture. The idea was to tell the histories of the community, with their own (words?)

6) How are the projects' aims being fulfilled?

The project is being built in phases; depending on how often Álvaro is in Colombia. First we learn to use blogs, and later we learn to use them. With the follow-up of Alvaro and the other facilitators, and also by experimenting with them, our own kids. In that way each one is getting mature in the process. It can be divided in: the first one: the constitution of the group and the maturity as a group. We are in a constant process, with advantages and disadvantages. It has had right things and wrong things. The different ways of using the tools. The videoblogs have been introduced. They've created a landmark with the participation of them as a group in the community. So a lot of them, as they started to blog, they found things that they couldn't be indifferent to, in their own community. And the last year has been an experience, more like absorbing a lot, that they always want to learn new things from everyone, who come to the group and teach us something, and to learn from the different events or gatherings that we have been invited to, and to tell everybody of what we are doing. And everybody seems to like it a lot, what we are doing. With this new landmark, to cover what we are, what is coming and what do we want from the future: to constitute ourselves as a group, and growing individually and collectively as a group. We have the river (?) too, the world is opening up a lot for us. We never thought that we would come to this new landmark, this new phase. In a way, we are acquiring for ourselves the benefit of all. With these pillars, we learn more as a community, we are all responsible for everybody; we cannot be indifferent to the things around us in the community. We have to organize better, mature more and teach others, expand the experience, to see to what extent we can go, how long we can reach.

7) In what ways do you feel that Rising Voices have a part in this project?

It pushed us, it gave us the first push. The first one was when Álvaro came, and a group of young engineers who taught us some tools. That was the first push that was the most important one. Having the time and the holidays of a professor who came from the outside, who taught us what we knew about, but we didn't know the potential that it had. The second one, it allowed us, with this microgrant, to get access to equipment, that we didn't have any idea how to use: videocameras, cameras. It allowed us to extend what we were learning. It showed us that the communication with ourselves and with the world. We began to feel a part of a family of five projects around the world. It gave us also a name globally, a global presence.

8) *In what ways do you feel that the project is lacking?*

Many things (laughing). I will put another word in question: towards what (we are lacking what towards what?) That determines what we want, towards where we are moving. Today we are lacking a constitution as a group, as an organization, it would allow us to be able to contract to the authorities, but also with private organizations. We have to extend the base to what we were doing in the beginning, with workshops, teaching people how to use the tools. I think that that cannot change; it should never change, to be able to teach others. Basically to extend the experience to other places. We are lacking today to think ourselves both inside (towards inside) and begin to build more conscience of the model, the use-model of the tools. The ones that we have used. We have to make more of a system of what we have done, in order to think about the future, in order to be able to propose something. To be able to continue to propose something towards the community.

9) *What kind of problems do you have in the project?*

Yes, like everybody we have (problems). Age is a factor (the members' age). To generate customs or habits is not easy. And sometimes time, the time that they dispose. It's not always easy for them to get the time to work and/or study. Those realities that each one has, they limit what they can do, because the collaborative method, where we learn as a community. We also have difficulties with the communities, activities, that not everybody has computers, that the library is not open all the time. The language problem, by not being able to understand English on the internet. But I will say that it's not anything out of the ordinary, out of the process of learning, because we are learning as we go.

10) *How do you think that one could improve these areas of the project?*

It's part of the organization. It gets more and more complex. In the beginning we learnt from the work-shop, we used the tools. And now, the challenge is not only to do what I say (or just said), but to think more about the future, about what is coming. To learn from mistakes, and to think that as long as we are more visible and more people read us, and that we are extending to other places, that requires that we organize ourselves better, that we think about ourselves better. The great advantage of all these challenges is that despite the fact that it is more complex, we are a family. That's the benefit/the gain.

11) *Could you have achieved the same with another type of media?*

I don't know, because that is a question that we will have to make in the future, when we begin to interact with other processes, and the road can tell us what happened. At the moment we are at the top of the mountain and we are trying to hold it here. When we go down a little, I will say, we can think about if we can go into new areas or other areas. Today the question is: how are we going to do with the new experiences; Ituango, El Carmen Vivioral etc. How are we going to do that. The particularity of each place will tell us if we have to bring other elements, that we didn't have before. It's the richness of each place that will tell us. It is quite instinctive in a way but with a lot of arts and passion with what we are doing.

12) *How do you think that a project like this would work in another type of community?*

Basically with will, with desire, so that the community out of the necessity and the need. There is a relationship between what the community needs and what we can offer. Because in the end, this process can reinforce all of what communities in Latin-America have to say. When we establish that relationship, when we find a person that really cares and a community that will receive and is there to participate, that will determine the success or failure of each project. Yes, we can! Technically, we have to find connectivity, access to internet, computers, a community that is more or less digitally able. That each community gives a sense to what they are doing. The success actually only happens when they find that it makes sense to them. We only teach how to use. If they find a meaning in it, they will appropriate the experience, and make it their own, and from there on everything runs on its own.

13) *Rising Voices has a number of other projects in other parts of the world. What do you know of these?*

They have different experiences in the rest of the world; 21, I think. Every six months it keeps expanding by five communities, and they are in a way communicating, publishing, all of them. Some of them are more active than others, but what I understand is that the important thing about the experience is that independently of how they are working, some of them will be more active than others. So what David made us understand is that the important thing is, with Madagascar for example, that they were working very hard, and in a way they went down (quit). And all of a sudden there comes a military coup and they activate again the activity,

they go back again to the high activity. The important thing is to give them tools, so that they learn the logics of communication and how to publish online, to generate citizen journalism. And that will be activated only when the community feels that they need it, or feel the importance of it, the need for it.

14) *What do you think of this thesis/evaluation? Do you find there to be a need for evaluating the project?*

I think that it's important, in the sense that it generates knowledge and external knowledge, of an experience that for us is very every-day life for us. It will be very nice to see it from someone else's eyes, with other eyes. Especially when you finish it, that we can read it, so that we see a little more critically how someone else sees us, how you observe us. You learn a lot when you see from others' eyes. We sometimes make the mistake of seeing ourselves in a mirror. And that mirror doesn't allow us to see other visions. And it is very important that they are critical, so that we learn from the mistakes...and the good things too, not only the mistakes (both laughing). I emphasize the mistakes, because I see the good things. I am more open to mistakes, because I know that the mistakes are there. The work talks for itself. The other thing that is very important is to listen. It doesn't matter that it's a problem or a mistake that we are making.

7.2 Revised Interview-guide

7.2.1 Questions for the Participants

1) What do you get out of being involved with the project?

- ¿Qué has ganado tú con participar en HiperBarrio - Convergentes?

2) Do you in any way feel more connected with other groups after working with the project?

If so, in what way?

- ¿De alguna manera te sientes ahora más conectado con otras comunidades digitales?
En caso afirmativo, de qué manera?

3) Do you feel that the project has in any way strengthened the ties of your own community?

- ¿Crees que el proyecto ha reforzado tus lazos con la comunidad que vive a tu alrededor de alguna manera?

4) How important are the comments written by visitors on your blog?

- ¿Qué tan importante son los comentarios escritos por los visitantes en tu blog?

5) What kind of comments do you get from other people on your blog?

- ¿Qué tipo de comentarios recibes?

6) What do you know of the organisation Rising Voices?

- ¿Qué sabes de la organización RisingVoices?

7) What is your opinion on the objectives of Rising Voices?

- ¿Qué opinas sobre los objetivos de Rising Voices?

8) What do you feel that the project is lacking?

- ¿Qué crees que la falta a HipberBarrio - Convergentes?

9) When you have problems, how do you feel that they are managed?

- ¿Cuando hay problemas cómo crees que se manejan?

10) What do you feel that you get by contributing to this project, which you could not have managed on your own?

- ¿Al estar en Convergentes que has logrado, que no hubieras podido hacer por ti mismo?

11) In what ways do you feel that the blogs are important to the outcomes of the project?

- ¿De qué manera crees que los blogs son importantes para los resultados del proyecto?

12) Do you feel that you are in any way engaging in a form of global conversation?

- ¿Sientes que participas en alguna forma de la conversación (mundial)?

13) What type of knowledge have you gained by participating in HiperBarrio?

- ¿Qué tipo de conocimientos que has adquirido al participar en HiperBarrio?

14) In what ways, if any, are you able to apply these to other aspects of your life?

- ¿De qué manera estás has podido aplicar estos conocimientos a otros aspectos de tu vida?

15) Do you feel that the type of community where you live get enough attention from the government and traditional media, both national and international?

- ¿Crees que La Loma recibe suficiente atención por parte del gobierno y de los medios de comunicación tradicionales?

16) What are your thoughts on HiperBarrio and Rising Voices, both negative and positive?

- ¿Cuáles son tus pensamientos sobre Convergentes y Rising Voices, tanto negativos como positivos?

17) Do you feel that you would have been able to create and maintain this type of project without the assistance of the two organizations?

- ¿Crees que ustedes hubieron sido capaces de crear y mantener este tipo de proyectos sin la ayuda de las dos organizaciones?

18) For how long do you think that you will continue being involved in the project?

- ¿Por cuánto tiempo crees que vas a continuar en HiperBarrio - Convergentes?

19) What motivates you to participate in Convergentes and what discourages you?

- ¿Que cosas te motivan a participar en Convergentes y que cosas te desanima?

20) Did you write something on your blog about the threatening pamphlets in March this year?

- ¿Escribiste algo en tu blog acerca de los panfletos amenazante en marzo de este año?

21) How do you feel that the newspapers and television channels reported on the pamphlets and the return of the violence?

- ¿Que opinas sobre la manera como los periódicos y canales de televisión informaron sobre los panfletos y el regreso de la violencia?

22) How did you get involved with this project?

- ¿Cómo llegaste a involucrarte en este proyecto?

7.2.2 Questions for the Organizers

1) How did you get involved with this project?

- ¿Cómo llegaste a involucrarte en este proyecto?

2) What do you get out of being involved with the project?

- ¿Qué es lo que salir de estar involucrado con el proyecto?

3) Do you feel that the ties in the community have been strengthened in any way because of the project?

- ¿Cree usted que los lazos en la comunidad se han fortalecido en forma alguna por el proyecto?

4) What do you feel are the aims of HiperBarrio?

- ¿Qué siente son los objetivos de HiperBarrio?

5) What do you feel are the aims of Rising Voices?

- ¿Qué sientes son los objetivos de Rising Voices?

6) How are the projects' aims being fulfilled?

- ¿Cómo son los proyectos los objetivos se cumplan?

7) In what ways do you feel that Rising Voices have a part in this project?

- ¿De qué manera te sientes Rising Voices que han participado en este proyecto?

8) In what ways do you feel that the project is lacking?

- ¿De qué manera usted cree que el proyecto está ausente?

9) What kind of problems do you have in the project?

- ¿Qué tipo de problemas tiene en el proyecto?

10) Could you have achieved the same with another type of media?

- ¿Podría haber logrado lo mismo con otro tipo de medios de comunicación?

11) How do you think that a project like this would work in another type of community?

- ¿Cómo crees que un proyecto como este podría trabajar en otro tipo de comunidad?

12) Rising Voices has a number of other projects in other parts of the world. What do you know of these?

- Rising Voices tiene una serie de otros proyectos en otras partes del mundo. ¿Qué sabes de esto?

13) What do you think of this thesis/evaluation? Do you find there to be a need for evaluating the project?

- ¿Qué opina de esta tesis / evaluación? ¿Le parece que existe una necesidad de evaluar el proyecto?

7.1 About the Respondents

Andres

Age: 19

Occupation: Studies theatre at the University of Antioquia

Length of involvement: Almost from the start. Has not been very active recently, because of his workload in the university

Amanda

Age: 21

Occupation: Studies law at the University of Medellin

Length of involvement: From the start; 2 years

Renata

Age: 18

Occupation: Studies industrial design

Length of involvement: From the start; 2 years

Jose

Age:

Occupation: Studies philosophy and literature at the Pontificio Bolivariana university

Length of involvement: From the start; 2 years

Isabella

Age: 19

Occupation: Studies biology at the University of Antioquia

Length of involvement: One and a half years

Blanca

Age: 18

Occupation: Studies international relations

Length of involvement: From the start; 2 years

María

Age: 20

Occupation: Studies industrial engineering at the Metropolitan Technological Institute (ITM)

Length of involvement: 1 year

Teresa

Age:

Occupation: Studies dental hygiene at the Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje (SENA)

Length of involvement: From the start; 2 years

Felipe

Age: 24

Occupation: Studies law

Length of involvement: 4 months

Javier

Age: 32

Occupation: Has been taking broadcasting studies earlier

Length of involvement: 4 months

Ines

Age: 19

Occupation: Studies social work at the University of Antioquia

Length of involvement: From the start; 2 years

Pedro

Age: 20

Occupation: Studies graphic design, works as a freelancer

Length of involvement: From the start; 2 years

Guillermo

Age: 18

Occupation: Works for the mayor of Medellin in Empresa de Desarrollo Urbano (EDU) as a community organizer.

Length of involvement: From the start; 2 years

Mariela

Age: 20

Occupation: Studies informational systems at the Metropolitan Technological Institute (ITM)

Length of involvement: From the start; 2 years

7.3 Rising Voices Grant Application

RISING VOICES GRANT APPLICATION

Application Deadline: June 15, 2007 Submit to:

David Sasaki, Director of

Outreach outreach@globalvoicesonline.org

<http://globalvoicesonline.org>

Please type in the spaces provided below.

PROJECT TITLE: Video/Barrio

YOUR NAME: Álvaro Ramírez and a team of voluntary associates

TITLE: Associate Professor

YOUR ORGANIZATION: Dept of Information Science and Media Studies. U. of Bergen, Norway

Blog: <http://otexto.net>

ADDRESS: Infomedia - Fosswinckelsgt 6 - Zip Code 5007, Bergen

PHONE/SKYPE/GTALK: (47) 9369 5772/ Otexto/

E-MAIL: alvaro.ramirez@infomedia.uib.no, alvaro.ramirez@gmail.com

Why are you seeking Rising Voices funding? How will your project benefit the community you are targeting? (100 words)

We apply because we lack the necessary funding to do the work in a responsible way. We began planning this in April and a team of young enthusiasts (in Medellin) have volunteered to participate in the training sessions and the follow up of the work for 5 months. “La Loma de San Javier” is very poor neighbourhood but their cultural achievements are outstanding thanks to the leadership and dedication of Guillermo Alvarez. Having access to blogs this community will be able to better share their cultural capital with others. By empowering a small group with the skills and equipment needed we hope they will raise awareness and social participation inside the barrio.

What kinds of news, stories, information and other content will your project provide? Describe your vision for the content. (250 words)

Within the videoclip format we will propose the workshop participants to develop a series of reporting genres:

1. Portraits of people. Interview techniques will be taught oriented to show what people do for living or as contributors to the community (brickmakers, singers, electricians, actors)

- 2. Short clips on how aware** people are around issues of the environment and how they apply them to their daily life.
- 3. Five from the street.** Videobloggers choose a topic of importance or actuality; find and frame an appropriate short question; and go out to find five people who are willing to answer.
- 4. Engaged rapping.** The citizen journalists announce they will be taping performances by kids who create and perform rap melodies of their own creation, where the social and political content will weight more than their singing skills.
- 5. “Troveros”.** A contest is organize were “trovadores” can challenge and compete with each other, in the best old folk tradition, on who is the best troubadour.
- 6. News.** This is a hard one. But we will try to encourage them to pursue them.
- 7. Culture.** A series dedicated to tape and show clips of the unique “sainetes” shown in the barrio.
- 8. Once the group of journalists** have portrayed several people in the barrio they will meet to screen and select those who are “best on camera”. The “chosen” get access a camera during a whole week to record a personal diary. This may result in a very interesting series of self reflections. Editing these projects may be a major task and can be assisted by our staff, or by hired volunteer editors from Medellin Universities TV Network.

Who will generate the content? Who is the target audience? How, and how often, will it be distributed? What language(s) will it be available in? (300 words)

Content will be generated by a trained group of 15 inhabitants in La Loma. They will follow a 10 day course with different on-hands workshops designed to teach them the basic skills around brainstorming ideas, information gathering and story telling necessary to create videoclips about their community and some of their issues. Our hope is that with time and training some of them may be able to show others how to use the equipment and the basic practices of video blogging.

The main target audience are the rest of the people of La Loma. Our aim is that the community may be able to represent itself with its own stories, portraits and ideas. The barrio has an Internet café with 4 stations and we plan to have the course either in the installations of the public school or a recently created tiny municipal library annex. We hope that the old and young generations in the barrio will develop an interest in finding reflections of them in the

Internet: a collection of images and memories of the cultural, social and political life of the barrio.

The fact that their neighbours manage to produce and post their clips in their own vlog and in new digital media outlets like equinoXio may have a profound impact in the way they perceive themselves as individuals but also as social group.

The secondary audience are all other Internet individuals or similar groups who happen to be interested in the reporting and stories being gathered by the citizen journalists of La Loma.

What kinds of participation and interaction do you expect from the readers/listeners/viewers of your content? How will you encourage participation? (75 words)

Both their videoblogs and equinoXio have a comment section where people may interact with the published material. We plan to award the most active commentators (only from La Loma) with karma points for each of their comments and give a prize to the 3 top commentators by December 2007 when the project will be assessed and reviewed in order to continue it and possibly expand it to neighbouring barrios.

What is your knowledge of your target community? Why are you the best individual/organization to lead this project? Do you have prior experience in citizen media outreach? (100 words)

Our knowledge resides mainly in Guillermo Álvarez (45) a key person in our team who lives in the barrio and who contributes voluntarily to the cultural life by creating and maintaining a stable musical group and a popular theatre ensemble under the name of “*Alma de Antioquia*”. There are some more cultural agents like Guillermo who have expressed enthusiasm for the blogging activity. We are very positive about running this as a successful project in this battled poor Medellin barrio. It is going to be our first digital “local” experience with the underprivileged and poor. Our one year “glocal” and successful experience with citizen journalism derives from equinoXio.

Describe what technologies and tools your project will use to produce the content What kinds of technical skills and expertise do you bring to the project? What are your technical needs? (100 words)

The videos are targete to be published in equinoXio. But simoultaneously they will create video/barrio's blog in Wordpress. We are looking for an open source software editing tool.

Jump Cut is being under scrutiny. In the meantime we rely in the Internet Café since their terminals carry Windows Media editing software. Two people in the team have long experience with blogging. Three other are data engineers and the leader is both filmmaker and teacher of video and multimedia. We need cameras, microphones and a paid internet connection. We hope to get from Global Voices the hosting for their vlog and a probable website dedicated exclusively to promote the activities of *Alma de Antioquia*.

How will you measure and evaluate your project's impact – on your main participants? Other contributors? on the larger community? How many participants do you expect to be involved in your project? How will you seek and sustain their involvement? (200 words)

We will measure the impact by the number of videoclips and reports produced during the five month period by the new citizen journalists. We will also pay close attention to the comments received and the reaction of the audiences inside and outside the barrio to the challenge (we expect the to be noticed by the Colombian blogosphere and hopefully in Main Stream Media). We plan to conduct some meetings with both authors and commentators in December to get a more qualitative assessment of their response. If the project kicks off we have considered the possibility of initiating a Media Research project about this experience.

The Department of Information Science and Media studies is at present writing a couple of applications for funds aimed at sponsoring the work of equinoXio and making it a sustainable low cost small media enterprise. The idea is that in the near future equinoXio begins to pay all of its contributors in a similar way as *Oh My News* does. This will be a tremendous incentive for citizen journalists from La Loma.

What challenges do you expect to face, and how do you plan to overcome them? (200 words)

The main challenge so far is dealing with security. La Loma (like some other poor barrios in Medellin) were under the influence of guerrilla groups in the past and in the hands of paramilitary groups until recently. Paramilitaries have surrendered their weapons to the authorities but still continue to have some political presence and hidden influence. This has an impact on the freedom of expression in the barrio as it does in all areas of public life in Colombia, where journalists train themselves to walk on the tightrope of heavy and violent competing interests and agendas. We know the terrain and (after close consultation) are now confident that the videomakers will be able handle any situation that it might arise with sensibility. As soon as they gain enough respect in the community their work will not threatened or tampered.

How do you plan to sustain your project's content after the Rising Voices funding has ended? Detail specific plans. How do you plan to raise revenue to continue your efforts in the future? (300 words).

We have not had the time to work much on this area. We are working towards the goal of enabling EquinoXio to become the main buyer of their features and news production and the main source of income. We are discussing internally as Open Democracy has put it: *“building a 'giving' community online, remaining transparent and avoiding donor exhaustion”*. Another alternative we may implement would be Google AdSense.

What resources and support can Rising Voices provide to your project to ensure its success? (200 words)

Hosting server and maintenance. Contact with other groups similar to ours in order to share experiences, problem solving and good alternative ways of making these projects sustainable. We think Rising Voices could become a great network of similar blogging experiences of groups trying to expand participation and freedom of expression in underprivileged regions around the world.

Detail a specific budget of up to \$5,000 for two years of operating costs. Applicants are encouraged to submit budgets for less than the maximum \$5,000 as smaller grants allow us to fund more projects. Hosting fees and curriculum resources will be provided by Rising Voices and therefore need not be included as budget expenses. Potential costs might include hardware, internet access, workshop costs, translation, travel, and coordinator expenses.

Description of Expenses	Units/Months	Unit Amount	Amount
Camcorder SAMSUNG SC-D353	3	640	1920
Wireless Microphone Sonaki	2	40	80
Samsung Digimax S 800 SE Digital Camera KIT	2	150	300
Renting access (Small café internet with 4 desktops)	1200/5 m		1200
Coordinators expenses	2 persons	80	160
Travel costs for the 4 assistants	4/ 5 months	55	220
Insurance of the equipment			300
Total Amount			\$4180

Rising Voices Grant Application

Retain a copy of this document for your records. Please send completed application to:David
Sasakioutreach@globalvoicesonline.org

E-mail: outreach@globalvoicesonline.org

Web: <http://globalvoicesonline.org>

No faxes, please.

7.4 HiperBarrio Presentation

The hard and awful facts

- A high percent of the population does not participate in the conversation
- Lack of access to Internet by vast groups of Latin Americans
- Peripheral communities with rich cultural roots and history
- A group of talented but unknown authors, artists, composers and performers
- Lacking the means to express themselves
- And a way to make their voices public, visible, relevant and influential
- The digital divide is a serious threat to Democracy

The Challenge:

- Diversify the blogging mass
- Give new impulse to digital magazine equinoXio
- A small laboratory in a poor neighborhood in Medellin, Colombia
- Found a Public Library and a popular cultural group in need of an outlet for their shows and productions.
- Started a videoblogging workshop for 15 people

What is hiperbarrio today 4 minutos

Our aims, goals and dreams

Our philosophy

Who are the participants

When did all started?

In Medellin with two experiences:

VideoBarrio in La Loma

Blogging workshops in Santo Domingo

Very soon a third experience:

ConVerGentes in La Loma

VideoBarrio and ConVerGentes: from small laboratories towards a project to enable some Public Libraries in Medellín become the sites of digital empowerment.

Problems of access

Lack of community feeling

Lack of time and dexterities

How do we work

Which tools we use:

Externally our collective blogs Hiperbarrio.org, ConVerGentes-La Loma and The hidden beauty of Ituango

Internally a list for discussion in Google Groups

The facilitators participate in another list that enables us to communicate with other projects

Just two weeks ago expanded and developed a range of new applications in Google apps

Document sharing

Wiki tools

Personal emails and chatting

Skype encounters

Saturday meetings

In our plans: Live Streaming tools in order to conduct training workshops