



“Until dignity becomes customary” archiving the #28A strike in Colombia

Marta Lucía Giraldo¹ · Sandra Arenas¹ · Nicolás Yepes¹ · Andrés Sáenz¹ · Duan Ramirez¹

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to document the creation of the Archivo del Paro #28A, a digital archive created in Colombia as a result of the social mobilizations that took place in 2021. To this end, we situate the cycle of protests that has been referred to as “social outburst” in a context of economic, political, and social crisis deepened by the effects of unequal management of the COVID-19 pandemic, but also in a context of political opening following the peace agreements between the State and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia—People’s Army (FARC-EP) in 2016. In this context, we argue that the social outburst of 2021 constituted a historical milestone in terms of democratic political participation and, consequently, we respond to the ethical and political duty of archiving it. We then show that the project for creating the Archivo del Paro #28A is inspired by other initiatives that have taken place in the international arena. Finally, we describe the process of creating the archive through the campaign “Hacer eterno lo efímero” [Making the ephemeral last forever], which framed the processes of gathering, classification, valuation, and dissemination of the collected documents as a strategy to achieve a broad diversity of voices.

Keywords Colombia · Social movements · Social archives · Archival activism · Memory · Digital preservation

✉ Marta Lucía Giraldo
marta.giraldo@udea.edu.co

Sandra Arenas
sandra.arenas@udea.edu.co

Nicolás Yepes
ndaniel.yepes@udea.edu.co

Andrés Sáenz
reinaldo.saenz@udea.edu.co

Duan Ramirez
duan.ramirez@udea.edu.co

¹ Universidad de Antioquia, Medellín, Colombia

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to provide an account of the emergence of Archivo del Paro #28A, a social archive created in Colombia after the social mobilizations that took place in 2021. The authors of this paper are among the promoters of this project. We are convinced that the role of archives exceeds that of accounting for the past; they also need to promote social justice in the present, while maintaining a future-oriented perspective. Therefore, we understand the Archivo del Paro #28A as a social archive, created to support the continuing struggles for social change, human rights, and memory (Ruiz and María 2020).

The 2021 National Strike in Colombia was an unprecedented phenomenon, not only because the mobilization was especially intense, but also in terms of the possibility of recording it, as well as the myriad of methods to do so. The use of mobile devices to record and immediately distribute videos and photos online caused an exponential increase in information being exchanged across different media and from different places both in Colombia and abroad. The importance of this event and the overproduction of information about it sparked our interest in preserving its traces and the need to find how to do it.

Given the challenge that creating an archive represents, we put together an interdisciplinary team made up of people with background in archival science, political science, memory studies, history, and library science. We took as our point of departure several questions: How to compile the wealth of digital objects documenting the traces and imprints that the #28A Strike left in the public space? How to guarantee that the records of the #28A Strike will be preserved given the fleeting and manipulable nature of social networks? What strategies may be implemented to ensure that the archive will be used as a common good?

To calibrate the importance of this archive, it is first necessary to understand the #28A Social Outburst in the social and political context of social movements that have taken place in recent Colombian history. To that end, in the first part of this paper, we will situate the cycle of protests in the context of an economic, political, and social crisis further complicated by the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, and whose immediate precedent is a period of rising social mobilization in the country and the climate generated by the signing of the Peace Agreement between the Colombian State and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People’s Army (FARC-EP) in 2016.

In the second part of this paper, we show how the initiative to archive the #28A Strike in Colombia is related to other projects that have taken place internationally, and which served as an inspiration as the originators of social archives (Ruiz & María, 2020), and fly the flag of archival activism (Vukliš and Gilliland 2016; Flinn and Alexander 2015). Among the initiatives we had as referents were the 15 M-Movimiento de los Indignados Archive—Spain (2011); the Interference Archive—United States (2011); the Umbrella Movement Visual Archive—Hong Kong (2014); the #cuentalo project—Spain (2018); the Registro Contracultural Archive—Chile (2019); the Ricky Renuncia Project—Puerto Rico (2019); and the Memorias del Territorio Project – Argentina (2021).

In the third part, we describe the process of creating what Christen and Anderson (2019) call a slow archive. We first sent an invitation to participate and collaborate through the campaign “Hacer eterno lo efímero” [Making the ephemeral last forever], launched in 2021, with the purpose of documenting the discourses and repertoires of collective action that took place during the social outburst. Once we received the first contributions, the methodology to constitute the Archival Fonds was based on what authors such as Gerald Ham (1981) and Terry Cook (1993) have called the “Post-Custodial Era.” From this perspective and paying special attention to the contexts in which different digital objects are created, ordered, used, we implemented several records management processes. The main characteristics of the proposed approach are understanding digital objects as archival documents, and contextualizing both documents and archival processes, in an effort to make the archive more visible, highlighting its political, historical, and aesthetic and heritage.

Background

On April 28, 2021, a cycle of protests formally referred to as “Paro Nacional,” literally National Strike, began in Colombia. The outburst has been considered the largest cycle of protest ever in terms of the number of people mobilized, the social sectors committed to it, the number of municipalities in which it took place, the intensity of the protests and its duration in time: two-and-a-half months of National Strike, and additional social mobilization for nearly seven months.

The signing of the Peace Agreements between FARC-EP and the State in 2016 marked a milestone in protest dynamics in Colombia, resulting in a new structure of political opportunities, which allowed for greater democratic, non-institutional participation. These participatory mechanisms had been historically stigmatized by governments that associated all forms of civil protest with guerrilla influence (Amaya 2021). As a result, between 2016 and 2020, different forms of social mobilization took place, associated to demands from indigenous peoples and student movements, a rejection of police violence, and dissatisfaction with economic policies during the administration of President Iván Duque (2018–2022). The tax reform proposal presented by the National Government in 2021, which affected broad sectors of society, combined with poor management of the pandemic which resulted in an increase in unemployment and poverty (DANE 2021), fueled social discontent.

Government response to protests was particularly violent, and resulted in serious human rights violations, including murders, arbitrary detentions, eye injuries, shootings, and sexual violence.¹ Protesters resorted on their part to symbolic

¹ The “Instituto de estudios para el Desarrollo y la Paz (INDEPAZ)” reported 80 homicide victims between April 28 and July 23. They denounce the alleged perpetrators in their report (<https://indepaz.org.co/victimas-de-violencia-homicida-en-el-marco-del-paro-nacional/>). The NGO “Temblores” reported at least 4687 cases of violence by the armed forces between April 28 and June 26 2021(<https://www.temblores.org/comunicados>).

elements that constituted new ways of popular defense. Social forms of expression were crucial to re-signify sites of struggle, providing new symbols and legitimacy to social protests, even if it meant violent confrontation (García and Garcés 2021): “Primeras líneas” or frontlines (a tactical and identity-forming resource that has been implemented in recent mobilizations in Chile, Hong Kong, Ukraine, and France), resistance points (extended blockades of busy traffic junctions, mainly through the use of barricades, “ollas comunitarias”, a type of soup kitchen in the streets, and continuing cultural activities), and encampments in public places. Some non-governmental organizations and independent media, on their part, documented, disseminated, and made public the serious violations that took place during the Strike, given the lack of guarantees regarding the right to protest, and human rights in general.

The National Strike announced for April 28, 2021, or #28A, as it became known across social media, was remarkable not only in terms of the historical landmarks we have already pointed out (size, reach, territory covered, intensity of protests, duration). For the first time in Colombian history, it mobilized urban youth as pivotal social agents (García and Arias 2021) coinciding with the insertion of the feminist movement in national public protests (Ibarra and Recalde 2023).

As stated in the chapter *Reencuentros en movimiento* of the book *Derechos humanos y paz. Dimensiones para el fortalecimiento de la democracia* (CLACSO 2023), the urban popular youth (young inhabitants of peripheral neighborhoods of the cities, without employment or access to education, in conditions of poverty, marginalization and exclusion) were the leading social actor in the national strike and outbreak social in Colombia in 2021. However, as stated in that same chapter and in the one titled *Mujeres y feministas en el estallido social de Colombia, 2021* (CLACSO 2023), the role of women in said cycle was also of the first order. For the first time in the history of this country, the feminist movement remained in the public space for a long time and became a social force during a cycle of contentious collective action.

The prominence of these two emerging actors in Colombian politics (popular youth and feminist women) was also reflected in the production of archival documents, and in the creation of the archive itself. In fact, most of the photographic, sound and audiovisual records collected in the archive were produced by popular young people and women. Likewise, most of our collaborators have been young people and women.

The appearance of these two key social agents—popular youth and women—, which had never been given any prominence up to that moment in protests, introduced two new key elements to this cycle, which we will explore next, as they are particularly relevant for our project and constitute the two main categories which we will use to categorize and describe archival records.

On the one hand, the framing processes for protests were subject to new forms of discourse and communication that were in themselves novel, focusing on graphics, sound, and audiovisual elements; likewise, an intensive use of social media to “self-announce” events across many social sectors, mainly among the youth, came to the forefront. These novel characteristics resulted in the #28A Strike being object of profuse discursive production, which was also, paradoxically, short-lived, as it was

mostly recorded only through digital social media or smartphones. Consequently, it has become both necessary and possible to “make the ephemeral last forever,” which we use as a rhetorical turn of phrase to refer to the archiving of these diverse forms of discourse.

A second field, where new elements were detected was that of protest repertoires. According to Charles Tilly, who coined the concept, protest repertoires are a set of learned, shared and acted out routines that take shape through the struggles of social movements (Tilly 2002). Later, he defined them more precisely as “the limited, familiar, historically created arrays of claim-making performances that under most circumstances greatly circumscribe the means by which people engage in contentious politics” (Tilly 2006, p. vii). Sidney Tarrow further expanded and developed this in his classic *Power in movement* (2011), where he states that “The repertoire of contention offers movements three broad types of collective action – disruption, violence, and contained behavior” (p. 100). These three types of repertoires incorporate challenge, uncertainty, and solidarity, and difference themselves only in the degree in which they do (Tarrow 2011).

During the 28A# Strike there was a marked emphasis on symbolic elements and on the creative order disruptors repertoires, which introduced new, disconcerting elements into the fray, which challenge order and authority, and are highly anti-establishment and iconoclastic (Céspedes and Acevedo 2021). Eye-catching artistic expressions gained prominence, such as performances, *batucadas* (musical ensembles using mostly drums), *chirimías* (musical ensembles playing traditional and folk music), nude art, choreographies, dances, street theater, guerrilla theater, living statues, university symphony orchestras, large scale-puppetry, marionette art, and painting, die-ins.

Using a contextual approach, the main categories chosen for the classification and description of the digital objects were “framing discourses of the National Strike” and “protest repertoires of the National Strike”. Another element used to contextualize the digital objects were the most representative landmarks in the development of the protest, for which we identified three phases in its dynamics and development. The first are the mobilizations that preceded the Strike, which respond to social demands of various kinds and would reach their peak in the mobilizations of November and December 2019. A second stage corresponds to the beginning of the National Strike until its de-escalation in July 2021, with the visit of the Commission sent by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights to make a report on the human rights situation during the protest. The third and last phase, from August to December 2021, was characterized by protests called by youth, women, and indigenous people and by the dissolution of many of the frontlines that were still present in capital cities such as Cali and Medellín.²

² To define these stages, we resorted to different academic and journalistic sources, especially the reports by Indepaz and ORAC, the observatory on social media led by Universidad del Rosario and Fundación Ideas para la Paz (Garzón et al. 2021). Additionally, our periodization was contrasted to the one proposed recently by Miguel Rojas and Laura Quintana (2022, p. 349).

In this context, documenting the National Strike, the framing processes, and the repertoires of protest and resistance against State violence became an urgent strategy to ensure memory building as a possible condition for future analyses looking to understand the causes and effects of these mobilizations. In particular, the documentary memory of the protest repertoires used can serve for the generational replacement processes of social movement activists. This gives the archive a committed and political character. We believe that remembrance of social and political activism taking place in the streets can be a critical resource to enhance future social struggles. This conviction has led us to direct, immediate archival action, not a posteriori.

Below we present the project's conceptual framework in relation to post-custodial archiving, archival activism, social archives and citizen initiatives that inspired the creation of the Archivo del Paro #28A.

Archives in movement

In a 1970 lecture presented by American historian Howard Zinn before the Society of American Archivists (SAA), he called upon archivists to “take the trouble to compile a whole new world of documentary material, about the lives, desires, needs, of ordinary people” (1977, p 25) (Zinn 1977). In this way—he added—, “the condition, the grievances, the will of the underclasses [would] become a force in the nation.” (p 25). With these words, Zinn was inviting archivists to leave behind the purported neutrality that had marked their task, and to support the people, their rights, and their representation in the public sphere.

Over 50 years after Zinn's lecture, his call to action still rings true. The deficits in our democracies, the systematic violation of human rights, the worldwide climate crisis, among other issues that plague humanity, force us to challenge the banners of impartiality, neutrality, and objectivity. What does archival activism mean, then? To answer this question, Vladan Vukliš and Anne Gilliland suggest that in contexts, where social injustice often threatens the life and dignity of the people, archivists are called to commit to “active social engagement in the processes of records creation, capture, description, and dissemination. The complex of practices that mark such engagement is what is increasingly referred to today as ‘archival activism’” (2016, p 2).

For us, then, archival activism begins with a recognition of the social power of archives and, consequently, of archivists (Flinn and Alexander 2015). According to Randall Jimerson, that “does not require archivists to assume a partisan position, but it does require them to acknowledge that their profession is inherently and unavoidably engaged in political power struggles to define the nature of society” (2009, p 258) (Jimerson 2009). From this perspective, archival activism aspires to amplify the voice of the people and of historically marginalized communities, to expand archival work in order to achieve the democratization of documentary heritage, and to promote social justice as part of professional practice.

Verne Harris has urged archivists to redress inequalities perpetuated by archives, and has made a call to “hospitality,” so as to embrace the “other” in the archive, which includes any community or individual who do not see themselves represented in the dominant historical narrative (Harris 2002):

They respect every ‘other’, invite every ‘other’ into the archive. So that whether they are making records available, or describing records, or appraising recordkeeping systems, they listen intently for the voices of those who are marginalized or excluded by prevailing relations of power (2002, pp. 85–86).

Recently, a prolific trend within archival studies and practices has emerged, which is socially committed and, among others, calls for a (re)contextualization of sites of power and agency in relation to archival practice (Caswell 2021; Kelleher 2017; Powell et al. 2021; Sangwand 2014). It has also called attention to participatory and community archives as strategies to shift the focus to the power of the archive and undermine the structures of dominance that preclude the possibility of social justice (Cifor et al. 2018; Gilliland and McKemmish 2014; Thorpe 2015; Pell 2015). Other archive researchers and scholars have argued for the ontological, epistemological, and social impact of community archives; furthermore, they claim that these archives “have formed around ethnic, racial or religious identity, gender and sexual identity, economic class and geographic location” (Caswell et al. 2017, p 3).

We have found the book *The Social Movement Archive* (2020) particularly inspiring. This work systematizes, expands on and theorizes around the vast experience of its authors, both as archivists and activists of movements, and particularly their experience as volunteers at the Interference Archive, one of the largest and most important archives of social movements. In the introduction to the book, the authors propose a series of principles with which we share a lot of affinity, and which are worth mentioning, since we aspire that these principles can guide our work from the Archive #28A Strike:

“Archives can reconcile their priorities with the needs of the communities who use them and contribute to them. (...) Archives can be transparent about their role and their practices. (...) Archives can allow the materials they collect to shift their practices. (...) Archives can (and must) negotiate change. (...) Scarcity and precarity are issues that archives share with social movements. (...) Archivists and activists can learn together and from each other” (Hoyer & Almeida 2020).

As a result of a committed approach to archival science, we decided to create the Archive #28A in Colombia. We draw inspiration from social archives. The Associació de Professionals de l'Arxivística i la Gestió de Documents de Catalunya, based on their own experience, proposes the following definition:

We understand the social fonds to be the entire body of records created by a community of users through a participatory dynamic on social platforms around a shared interest or event. This new type of documentary fonds is

characterized as being produced by a collective creator (...)The three processing priorities that derive from the nature of this type of fonds are as follows: a) a participative model of archival processing is essential for its collaborative generation; b) it is necessary to adopt proactive measures to ensure free and democratic access in the mid- and long-term; and c) given its massive nature, it is vital to be equipped with tools that automate the analysis (evaluation, description) and use of the information (Ruiz and Maria 2020, p 278).

In the context of digital archives, a model of participatory archives requires archivists to go beyond simple processes of documenting and taking into custody; they should instead use their knowledge to promote the reliability and sustainability of long-term preservation of the documentation (Sucha-xaya 2022). According to Terry Cook, post-custodial theories demand changes in how we conceive archive and its uses. First, it demands that archivists consider how and why postmodernism, as the main cultural trend of this era, affects archives and that they “change their formulations of archival science accordingly” (2001, p 6) (Cook 2001). Second, postmodernism has sparked new understandings on “the creation and nature of records and their designation, survival, and preservation as archives” (2001, p 6). Archival science today is not the same as it was in the twentieth century, and the post-custodial approach, as Lowry (2020) argues, has become a reality in records management for creators, and has shown the need for archivists to actively intervene and take sides in the creation, description and use of archives. Records management must be concerned with establishing methodologies, processes, and activities necessary to assign “the proper context(s) and management information (metadata) to such records [so] that they will remain available to the right people and groups at the right times” (Findley, 2017, p 179).

Such an active social commitment on the part of practitioners becomes all the more pressing in a world in crisis, interconnected, where it is necessary to promote values such as peace, equality, and social justice. At this point, we need to clarify that this urgency of committing to social justice does not mean that archival practices need to be done against the clock. In the specific case of the creation of the Archivo del Paro #28A, we have resorted to establishing an alternative time frame to reflexively approach the conception, creation, management, curatorship, accessibility, and reflection on long-term digital preservation. This way of working has been inspired by Kimberly Christen and Jane Anderson’s concept of “slow archives”, that they coined to study the case of indigenous communities in the US. These archives “are produced, created, and curated through a commitment to and ethics of mutuality that recognizes, respects, and prioritizes Indigenous communities’ values, goals, relationships, needs, and protocol” (2019, pp. 90–91).

The Archivo del Paro #28A has been growing slowly, as participation and activism are social actions that can only emerge once trust has been established. We have been especially careful in making sure that the archive represents many voices, that it will be available for public use, and that it will be preserved as time goes by. The strategy to gain confidence has been the presentation of the project in

various public scenarios. The fact that some of us are part of social movements has contributed to building the foundations of trust.

We are also interested in reflecting on the Archive from fields such as memory and heritage studies. For a while now, archive science has conceived “recordkeeping and archiving as a form of witnessing and memory making” (McKemmish 2005 p. 3). The archives of social mobilizations have often become vehicles of collective memory (Perpinyà-Morera and Cid-Leal 2020). Furthermore, we embrace a notion of heritage that includes, in addition to traditional elements, the uses and performances that are established when people interact with these elements. In other words, we do not approach heritage from a traditional conception associated with preservation and “inherited” values. Just as María Olivari has done in the case of Chile, we see heritage as a form of contested memory, “capable of interrogating the present and the persistence of the past in order to make room for transformation” (2022, p. 4) (Olivari 2022). In that regard, we believe that the Archivo del Paro #28A, as a form of heritage, should host performative expressions resulting from protests, as well as their creative, emotional, and affective elements. For us, the creation and implementation of the Archive is a condition of possibility to create other narratives that go against the grain of official accounts of the past, and which hide structural aspects of different forms of violence.

While practices such as the documentation of violations and abuse against human rights, the creation of archives to hold perpetrators of injustices accountable, and the use of technology to support social movements have had a long tradition (Fife et al. 2023), it has been only in the last couple of decades, with the advent of social media and digital platforms, that archival activism has grown exponentially. The project to create the Archivo del Paro #28A drew inspiration from other community initiatives from all over the world. In the next few paragraphs, we will comment on some initiatives of archives in movement.

The 15 M Archive is a repository created in Spain as a result of the Indignados movement (which was inspired in turn by the essay *Indignez-vous!*, by Stéphane Hessel). This citizen movement emerged from popular indignation, which erupted after the manifestations that took place on May 15, 2011 (Taibo 2013). Among the archive’s material we find objects of a diverse nature such as audiovisual recordings, photographs, posters and picket signs, pamphlets, announcements, assembly minutes, drawings, letters, poems, maps, periodicals, with the material being presented in a vast array of media and formats (from post-it’s to large picket signs). The fund continues to grow, and the archive is open to new donations. The 15 M Archive is a joint, self-financed, and self-managed project, which has managed to move forward thanks to the disinterested support from volunteers, among whom we find archivists, documentalists, librarians, photographers, and designers, who “redefine on a daily basis the very meaning of the archive” (Archivo 15M 2011).

As part of a wave of worldwide mobilizations to express social dissatisfaction, the Umbrella Movement emerged in Hong Kong in 2014, and, as a result, The Umbrella Movement Visual Archives and Research Collective appeared soon after. This archive was funded by a joint initiative, with the purpose of preserving, documenting, and investigating what has been referred to as “disobedient objects,”

which include works of art and everyday objects created by protesters against police brutality and repression (Ho & Ting 2019). The Umbrella Archive embodies the political claims of those who participated in the protests and has itself become a form of civic engagement in a context of authoritarianism and political and cultural repression (Ho and Ting 2019; Tong 2022).

The #Cuéntalo project developed by the Associació de Professionals de l'Arxivística i la Gestió de Documents de Catalunya (AAC), is another benchmark of archival activism. On April 26, 2018, in Spain, a court imposed a derisory sentence on a group of five men, known as the “Manada,” convicted of raping a young woman. Shortly thereafter, journalist Cristina Fallarás posted a tweet with the hashtag #Cuéntalo, sharing the story of a woman who had been sexually abused. The AAC, in the framework of a project to monitor and record “socially relevant” hashtags, decided to “explore a model of social media archiving for the gathering, contextualization and diffusion of such data, since we understood that this hashtag was created as a digital community archive and used as a tool of reparation and civic empowerment in the fight against male violence” (Ruiz and Maria 2020, pp. 271–272).

Registro Contracultural is an audiovisual archive created in the context of the social outburst in Chile in 2019, managed by an interdisciplinary team and publicly available through a self-managed website. Its purpose is to “spread and make available artistic practices that go beyond institutional art in Chile, taking as its starting point non-heteronormative sexualities and a critical, feminist, and intersectional perspective” (Registro Contracultural 2019). Its material includes reference works for artists, historians, producers, media, art critics, and the public. As a project, it has been conceived as “an open archive, composed of polyphonic, non-hegemonic accounts, which have been often erased from official art history” (Registro Contracultural 2019).

Another major referent has been *The Ricky Renuncia Project*, an initiative that was created to preserve digital materials related to the social mobilization that led to the resignation of Puerto Rico Governor Ricardo Rosselló in 2019 (Blanco Rivera et al. 2020). The activist archivists that implemented this initiative were trying to “document not only the ephemera made of paper and ink, but also digital ephemera (videos, photographs, tweets) that were being created at a historic moment by Puerto Ricans both in the island and in the diaspora” (Blanco Rivera et al. 2020, p 16).

During the Covid-19 pandemic, in 2021, the “Memorias del Territorio” initiative was launched. It was a project led by the Argentinean organization Memoria Abierta “to create a collective record of imprints and traces left in the public space by struggles against institutional violence” (Memoria Abierta 2021). The women in charge of this archive have extended an open invitation to bring photographs of murals, altars, demonstrations, commemorative plaques, memorials, street signs, stencils, graffiti, stickers, and other public space interventions. The initiative was launched on May 10, which in Argentina commemorates the fight against institutional violence.

Another relevant case is that of the Interference Archive, a project created in 2011 that brings together archives about mobilizations in order to promote mobilizations: “The archive is also an active incubator of social movements. Not only do we

document the past; we also provide a place for contemporary activists to continue to organize themselves drawing inspiration from the battles of former generations” (Roberts and Barry 2019, pp. 54–55).

The projects described above represent only a small fraction of similar initiatives that emerge every day all over the world. Some contextual elements shared by these initiatives are described by Fife et al. (2023): “digital archival activism as part of broader digital activism practices; the relationship between digital activism and other forms of activism; and the relationship between archives and records and social movements (p. 4). They all show us that the Archivo del Paro #28A in Colombia is not a special or unique case; it is rather part of an activist network committed to documenting and preserving the memory of social mobilizations.

Project archivo del Paro #28A

We decided to launch the Archivo del Paro #28A in 2021 with the public campaign “Hacer eterno lo efímero” [Making the ephemeral last forever]. The purpose was to document the collective action repertoires that took place in the context of the social outburst in Colombia. We issued a public call for collectives, social organizations, communities, and citizens to send us all manner of digital objects: written texts, social media messages, videos, audios, photographs of protest marches, altars, murals, commemorative plaques, memorials, complaints, picket signs, graffiti, and other forms of public space intervention.

When the initiative was launched, we were aware that social media had played a key role in social mobilizations, not just in Colombia, but all over the world. Invitations to rally and other forms of content become viral in a matter of minutes, and information travels at incredible speeds. As we mentioned before, the Paro Nacional came alive precisely due to the information exchange across social networks and media, instead of through traditional media. However, it is necessary to recognize that the material published on social networks and internet platforms is ephemeral, as it remains on the web but is blurred in a tangle of posts that limits its recovery and processing. Hence, the objective is to recover these records in the Archivo del Paro #28A and make them available for consultation.

We approached the creation of an archive from two perspectives: archival activism (Vukliš and Gilliland 2016; Flinn and Alexander 2015) and records management in a Post-Custodial paradigm (Cook 1993), which requires analyzing how digital objects are created, used, and ordered. In this case, how they are generated as part of social movements; and how they are disseminated through smartphones, social media, and other Internet-based platforms.

This ongoing initiative requires that for every record (text, audio, video or photograph) the corresponding data be provided, including date, place, and a description of the context in which the record was produced. Contributions are to be submitted through the “Hacer eterno lo efímero” [Making the ephemeral last forever] form (Fig. 1).

To collect the data, we devised a virtual data collection tool including a set of minimal descriptive metadata and an informed consent by authors. These metadata



Fig. 1 Graphic piece from the campaign “Hacer eterno lo efímero” [Making the ephemeral last forever], 2021

were organized in two sections: (1) sender identification; (2) digital object identification. For each field, we defined the type of metadata (content or structure) as well as the kind of field (alphabetic, alphanumerical, or multiple choice), a label, a description, and guidelines to determine how every field should be filled out.

This online data collection tool was disseminated as part of the “Hacer eterno lo efímero” [Making the ephemeral last forever] campaign through different media belonging to Universidad de Antioquia. We also resorted to different academic settings and national events, so that people could voluntarily load their documents or, in some cases, send copies of the material. Digital objects have been contributed by artistic collectives, social organizations, and people who mobilized during the protests, in Colombia and in other parts of the world, including La Nueva Banda de la Terraza (@lanuevabandadelaterraza), photographer Andrés López (@desanestesico), the project Archivo Oral 28A. They offer a representative sample of the projections on walls, streets and buildings of texts and images, which were used, on the one hand, to denounce sexual and gender violence, acts of racism and discrimination, and police

Fig. 2 Light projection photography, @lanuevabandadelaterraza. Date: May 21, 2021



abuse, and on the other hand, to demand access to education, employment and appropriate living conditions and dignity for all.

In our first call, we received around 700 digital objects associated with the social mobilizations. We later defined some criteria for selection and curatorship, in order to define which records and digital objects could finally be a part of the Archivo del Paro #28A, and those that could not be accepted. These criteria resulted from an analysis to determine the purpose and meaning of the archive. In other words, we tried to build a collective record of the traces and imprints that the #28A Strike left in the public space (Fig. 2). Exclusion criteria included, among other things, digital objects that could result in the identification of individuals engaging in violent behavior, absence of information to reconstruct the context of creation, duplicated records or copies, records with irrelevant content, and failure to obtain a license for use.

When it was time to classify digital objects, we took into consideration the fact that documents may have multiple forms of authorship, or, in Anne Gilliland's words, their provenance could be multiple, as in "the multi-provenance bureaucratic record and the record created by the crowd" (2014, p. 17). Associating the creation of these objects with one single provenance was simply not possible. As mentioned by Jessica Lapp, "The many hands and forces that shape a protest record leave a fragmented trail of creator intentions, motivations, and values that are impossible to contain a singular context of creation" (2021, p. 286) (Lapp 2021). As a result, we opted for the principle of contextuality (Delgado 2006), assuming that these

Fig. 3 Photograph by Juliana Paniagua. Title: The strike continues. Date: May 23, 2021



records were created in the context of social mobilizations and, in that sense, they are intimately linked to key moments in the development of the Strike. For the purposes of record classification, we divided these key moments into three stages. The first background stage corresponds to the mobilizations that took place before the *Paro Nacional* #28A, from November 21, 2019, to April 25, 2021. The second stage corresponds to the initial moments and consolidation of the Strike, occurring between April 28 and July 28, 2021. The third stage refers to the de-escalation and decline in mobilizations, marked by scattered protests and specific protesting social sectors, as well as the de-activation of most of the frontlines, between August 7 and December 28, 2021 (Fig. 3).

Furthermore, two record-related categories were created to describe the digital objects—in the form of content metadata—in the record series and subseries, based on the identification of the events that served as milestones during the Strike. These descriptive categories were “framing discourses” and “protest repertoires”, the two large realms in which the National Strike took place. When we identified framing discourses as a relevant descriptive category, we defined some subcategories such as collective identities, political ideologies, diagnosis frameworks (definition of collective problems), prognosis frameworks (definition of problem-solving proposals) and attribution frameworks (definition of allies, adversaries, and audiences). Since, we found great variety in protest repertoires, we decided to define them as our second descriptive category. We classified the different repertoire modalities as *conventional* (when the form of protest is familiar to most agents involved, so its development and results are usually predictable), *creative order disruptors* (protests that resort to innovative forms as opposed to conventional forms, or those that in fact resort to completely original methods, so that their development and results are less predictable, thus introducing a degree of uncertainty), and *violent* (protests with an initial approach that may be familiar or unfamiliar to some of the agents involved, but with a highly uncertain development and outcomes). Since, violent repertoires involve physical confrontation among adversaries, they could result in escalation or other forms of collective action that can no longer be considered protests, but rather insurrections, civil war, or revolution (Tarow 2011).

Finally, concerning digital preservation and access, the Carlos Gaviria Díaz University Library at Universidad de Antioquia has offered its institutional

repository, which served as the basis for the technical setup for the Paro 28#A Archive's structure. As part of the repository, there are some fonds (called "Communities"), in which record series (called "sub-communities") may be created, responding to the guiding concepts that have inspired the project. The repository also offers the possibility to load the classification diagram as well as the metadata resulting from the records after the data collection process, which in turn have been complemented with other metadata from the repository. This repository is supported by the University's technology infrastructure, which guarantees data safety; it also responds to the University's open-access institutional policy, which results in greater visibility and accessibility through web searches. It uses direct links that give greater accessibility to the Archive, not just for academics, but also for activists and citizens in general, stimulating its political, historical, aesthetic, and heritage-centered nature.

Concerning the users of the Archive, we expect that they will consist mostly of researchers and social activists, as one of its main goals includes contributing to the development of the process of qualification of repertoires and framing discourses concerning future struggles for social transformation and human rights. The Archive also intends to contribute to research on Colombian history and collective memory work. The goal of promoting access to and appropriation of the archive, not only by researchers, but also by activists, requires us to think of creative ways to make dissemination and access a more collaborative process, so that both academics with a critical perspective and social movements can participate.

Conclusions

When our team got together in July 2021 with the idea of documenting the National Strike, we began to conceive a strategy to create a digital archive. From that moment on, we have resorted to archival imagination to give form to and make sense of archiving the Paro #28A. It has not been an easy road: there has been progress but also setbacks, and yet we have been able to reconstruct in this paper some of our steps forward and our accomplishments.

During the #28A Strike, one of the most popular slogans among protesters, and one which was disseminated through several media was "hasta que la dignidad se haga costumbre": until dignity becomes customary. This slogan has also been heard in mobilizations taking place in other countries. In Chile, where it apparently originated, it became popular through protest songs as a resistance mechanism to Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship (1973–1990) (Manns & Grupo Karaxú, 1974). It has also been chanted by indigenous women in Mexico, as part of their struggles to defend human rights. This demand that citizens make is still as relevant today as it was then, and that is why it is our goal to make the Archivo del Paro #28A part of our common heritage: a vehicle for collective memory concerning the struggle to uphold our rights, to remind us that in an unjust society, as it is certainly the case of Colombia, many lives fall victim to indignity.

All our efforts have led us to believe that archives are not archives by their own nature; they are rather the result of actions, decisions, mobilizations, choices, made

by different individuals and organizations, contributing many different forms of knowledge and some shared and diverging interests. All these elements define an archival policy. Archives such as the Paro #28A are the result of human cooperation and interaction. Archives are more than monuments to the past, they are active participants in present-day struggles for social justice and human rights.

Since, the Archivo del Paro #28A is under construction, there are still many challenges ahead; among them, we need to encourage people to actively collaborate in its creation; massive participation is the only way to guarantee that the archive is representative of the diversity of their voices and comes near to the ideal of being a shared heritage.

It is our firm conviction that in addition to our dedication to situated knowledge, those who have come together to archive the Paro #28A are motivated by a sense of historical duty as critical, committed scholars. As part of research, action, and participation communities, we strive to build a more just, peaceful society as part of our everyday academic and personal work. We envision a society that is inclusive of traditionally oppressed, marginalized, and silenced social classes; those whose only voice left is that of protest in streets, public squares, and across social media. The Archive needs to be a sounding board for those voices: the whispering wind that heralds a better future.

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Declaration

Conflict of interest The authors have no relevant financial or non-financial interests to disclose.

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Marta Lucía Giraldo has a PhD in Comparative, Political and Social History from the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and a master's degree in Colombian Literature and a history degree from the Universidad de Antioquia. She is a full professor at the University of Antioquia, where she teaches courses on the relationship between archives and society and research in archival science. Her research interests include personal and community archives, the relationship between archives and memory, and

the study of archives from a rights-based approach. She is a member of Archiveros sin Fronteras. Recent publications: (2024) "Archives are Machines: A Review of Artistic Discourses on Art and Archives in Iberoamerica, 2011-2022" (2022). "Evidence of Jorge: Documentary traces of a forced disappearance in Colombia". *Archivaria* 94 (November); (2022) *Archivos vivos. Documentar los derechos humanos y la memoria colectiva en Colombia*. Medellín: Editorial Universidad de Antioquia.

Sandra Arenas has a PhD in Social Memory from the Universidade Federal do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. She is a Librarian and Master in Political Science, University of Antioquia. She is a full professor at the University of Antioquia. Member of the Research Group Information, Knowledge and Society in the line of memory and society; member of the Academic Committee of the Unit Hacemos Memoria of the University of Antioquia. Her research interests are political memory, the construction of memory as a form of resistance to war, places of memory, the relationship between memory and space, and personal archives. Recent publications: (2022). Posibilidad, riesgo e incertidumbre: análisis de tendencias en las ciencias de la información. *Revista Interamericana de Bibliotecología*, 45(3), 2022. <https://doi.org/10.17533/udea.rib.v45n3e347313> ; Las bibliotecas como instituciones de la memoria frente a un presente inédito. *Revista Fontes Documentais*. v. 5, p. 11–24, may/ago., 2022, <https://periodicos.ifs.edu.br/periodicos/fontesdocumentais/article/view/1424>.

Nicolás Yepes PhD student in philosophy, master's degree in political science and political scientist at the University of Antioquia. He is also an associated researcher at the Political Studies Institute of the University of Antioquia, where he coordinates an Observatory of Social Movements. His research interests include social movements, archival and library activism, political history, and political philosophy. Recent publication: (2023) *Reencuentros en movimiento Un acercamiento académico-político a los procesos organizativos y las redes de activistas juveniles populares y estudiantiles durante y después del estallido social de 2021 en el Valle de Aburrá, Colombia*. En *Derechos humanos y paz: dimensiones para el fortalecimiento de la democracia*. Buenos Aires: CLACSO, pp. 15-86.

Andrés Sáenz He is a Master in Records Management, Transparency and Access to Information from the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (Spain). Professional in Information Sciences, Archivist and Librarian. Professor-researcher at the Inter-American School of Librarianship of the University of Antioquia. Member of the Research Group Information, Knowledge and Society in the lines memory and society and interdisciplinary studies of information management and knowledge. His research interests are archival science and records management, records appraisal and digital preservation. Recent publication (2021). *Experiencias de gestión de los procesos de preservación digital a partir del modelo OAI en repositorios institucionales*. *Anales de Documentación*, 24(1). <https://doi.org/10.6018/analestdoc.428141>.

Duan Ramirez He has an undergraduate degree in political science and is a library science student at the University of Antioquia.