

# Hashtag mobilization: the new organizing practice?

The logic of connective action in the use of social media in Colombia's Paro Nacional movement, 2019-2020.



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## Introduction

“Primavera Latinoamericana,” the “Latin American Spring”: this term has been used to describe the wave of protests that has spread across Latin America since 2019. The governments of Chile, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, and Colombia have been met with great opposition to their post-neoliberal policies in the form of mass demonstrations. This ascent of the masses in several countries among the continent has been given the nickname as a direct reference to the Arab Spring, a series of protests and revolutions in the Middle East in 2011. These uprisings marked a new era in the study of digital technologies in social movements: the demonstrations were broadcasted live on social media through young people in the region who publicly displayed the developments. It was the first time that the world was updated of such protests through their computers or phone screens, causing new questions to arise on the role of the developing technologies and the fast diffusion of information on social media in the organizational structure of social movements (Berberoglu, 2019; Tufekci, 2017). Since then, this role remains a topic of interest as digital technologies and their abilities keep evolving.

This investigation will continue the research on the function of social media by examining this in a case study of a constituent of what can be considered the Arab spring's informal successor, the Latin American Spring. The Paro Nacional in Colombia, the “National Strike”, was called on November 21st of 2019, resulting in a period of protests that lasted until at least January of 2020. While external factors such as the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic have forced periods of inactivity in the physical protests, new waves of protests emerged in Colombia in 2021 under the same name: the “Paro Nacional of 2021”. Like the Arab spring, this constituent of the Latin American Spring was accompanied by extensive social media activity, not only in the period leading up to the first day of the Paro Nacional on November 21st of 2019 but also in the continuation of the protests, even when physical activities were not attainable. This is supported by the homonymous continuation of the movement, almost two years later. Its active presence on social media asks for an analysis of the functions of social media within the organization and the continuation of the Paro Nacional. Therefore, this research will be conducted based on the following research question: *What was the role of social media in the emergence, articulation, and continuation of the Colombian Paro Nacional movement and its sustained protests in 2019-2020?*

In order to obtain an answer to this question, this research analyzes the role of social media, structures of social movements, and the Paro Nacional on several levels. A study of relevant literature was complemented with news articles from various local, national, and international news channels. In addition, a quantitative investigation was conducted through a statistical analysis of social media content and a survey among protest participants. To complete this quantitative data, four in-depth personal interviews were held with protestors to qualitatively confirm some of the findings. An analysis of these findings within the movement, its physical protests, and its presence on social media

help determine its organizational structure in the context of the academic debate on classical organization theory, partial organization theory, and the models of collective and connective action as proposed by Bennett and Segerberg (2012). This leads to the conclusions and an answer to the central research question.

This research will first present a framework of the relevant academic debates. An analysis of (new) social movement theory and organizing processes in social movements will set the basis for the logic of collective and connective action theory. This theoretical model, as proposed by Bennett and Segerberg, will function as the foundation for the determination of the role of social media in the Paro Nacional. Furthermore, the technology of social media and its developing role in civil society will be explored to complete the relevant debates for this research.

The second section will analyze the historical context of protest in Colombia, which has been characterized by the ongoing armed conflict that has terrorized the country for decades. In addition, the context and causes for the Paro Nacional of November 2019 will be explored, presenting a timeline for the period of analysis in this research. This timeline will function as the one side of a comparison between offline and online protest, which will be analyzed in the following section.

The third section discusses the use of social media and identifies three functions in the Paro Nacional: as a mobilizing agent, as a factor in the construction of collective identity, and as a channel of information. The section further theorizes these findings by examining them through classical organization theory and the model of collective and connective action. The conclusions from this analysis will then compose the final conclusion and the answer to the central research question.

# I. Social movements and social media: digital media's influence on action framing in organizing processes

## 1.1 New social movements and organizing processes

The term “new social movements” arose in the 1970s in order to define a new character of social action and collective activity that was monitored in society. The classical Marxist approach to collective action was no longer fitting for defining the then-current social movements (Buechler, 1995).<sup>1</sup> With the industrialization of societies around the globe, working classes emerged as central and relatively definable components of the public. In these classed-based societies, social movements often centered around the demand for concrete, materialistic improvements for a class, such as better working conditions or higher compensation. In these “old” social movements, formal organizations such as labor unions played a significant role in the emergence of collective action. It was the membership of such an organization that was an important base for union and the call to action, led by this organization.

In the second half of the 20th century, the character of social movements appeared to change. Post-industrial and neoliberal societies exposed the public to new societal relations. This caused a new sense of oppression, directly related to people's stance in society and towards the government instead of their class. This new perception of society and one's position herein revealed demands for democratic and socio-economic rights. With the Civil Rights Movement in the United States as possibly the most prominent example, the focus on postmaterialist values had vastly displaced the central position of conflicts over material resources in social movements in the Global North (Buechler).

In Latin America, new social movements arose during a period of authoritarian regimes. Socio-economic or democratic interests came from a space in which democracy was not yet well established. The new social movements in Latin America are therefore characterized by an opposition to the (authoritarian) state and demand for both concrete, material resources as well as a call for democratic rights. Slater (1985) defined three issues in Latin American society where the new social movements focused on: opposition to the state, a lack of basic services and the erosion of legitimacy in the state. These issues are different from the themes that the simultaneous new social movements in the United States and Europe centralized around: therefore, in Latin America, “classical” new social movement theories are to be combined with political-economical and sociological context, in order to analyze these social movements (Wickham-Crowley & Eckstein, 2015).

The research on (new) social movement theories is extensive and widely challenged. A

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<sup>1</sup> In Marxism, proletarian revolution that was rooted in the theme of production was put at the forefront of collective action: any other type of action that was based on collective identities other than class relationships,

central aspect in scholarship on the evolution of “old” to “new” social movements is the organizing process and the call for collective action. As previously noted, membership of a formal organization such as a labor union was an important base for the union of people with similar positions in society who most likely had the same demands for social, economic or political change. In new social movements and new social movement theory, the concept of “collective identity” obtained a new context. It was no longer the societal class or membership of a formal organization that assembled people, but a new, collective identity, based on similar thoughts on certain socio-economic values. The lack of a central organization that organized and led a movement, caused a ripple in the field of classical organization theory, as we will see further on.

In order to examine organization processes and organization theory in “old” and new social movements, it is first necessary to consider the broader context in which a social movement emerges. Szymanski (1978) defined five essential conditions for a social movement to arise as synthesized by Berberoglu (2019):

“

1. *Felt oppression*: The economic oppression and political repression of large segments of society are increasingly felt to be unnecessary and intolerable (as the possibilities of living differently become more apparent).
2. *Decline of the dominant class’s ideological hegemony*: The ideological hegemony of the dominant class spontaneously breaks down, as the masses become increasingly bitter and disillusioned with their present existence. The dominant class itself becomes cynical about its ability and right to rule. It increasingly resorts to manipulation and repression to preserve its rule. Internally, it becomes increasingly divided and demoralized, and hence incapable of adequately dealing with the social movements.
3. *The failure of non-revolutionary solutions to a social crisis*: The various alternative solutions being offered as solutions to the oppression of the masses (such as nationalism, fascism, liberal reformism, and social democracy) lose credibility among the oppressed as these solutions reveal themselves to be incapable of actually relieving the oppression of the people.
4. *Decline of the dominant class’s ability to solve social, economic, and political crises and counter the growth of social movements*: The ability of the dominant class to handle both a social crisis and a rising social movement is a product of its internal cohesion, the intensity of its belief in the legitimacy of its rule, and its willingness to use force when necessary. When a ruling class cannot unify around and implement a rational program to handle the crisis or the social movement, it is likely to be driven from power.
5. *Efficient organization and adoption of scientific strategy and theory by social movements*: In order to succeed, social movements create organizations that can mobilize the masses into a common united front, provide them with a realistic analysis of the causes of their oppression, a proposal about the historical alternatives, and a program to realize an alternative- that is, an organizational form, a strategy, and a set of tactics to bring about social change and transformation.” (Berberoglu, pp. 5-6)

In these five essential conditions, the last element is decisive for the success or failure of a social movement (Szymanski, 1978 cited in Berberoglu). Strategic organization is an essential component of

any movement, and this is where organization theory and social movement studies cross. Piven and Cloward (1979) pioneered the recognition that collective action and protest do not erupt spontaneously and are actually organized. This led to research on organizational structures and organization theory as prominent elements in social movement studies. Ahrne and Brunsson (2011) and Bakker et al. (2017) note that a great amount of this research is concentrated on social movement organizations (SMO's): formal, institutional organizations, such as labor unions. According to traditional organization theory, a formal organization constitutes of five elements as defined by Ahrne and Brunsson (2011):

1. *Membership*: the membership of an organization defines who is in and excluded from the organization; therefore, it represents some form of identity.
2. *Hierarchy*: in every formal organization, there is a structure of hierarchy in which some central decisions about the movement are to be made.
3. *Rules*: usually in written form, these statements are to be complied with if taking any part in a formal organization.
4. *Monitoring*: in organizations, monitoring happens to confirm whether people comply with the set rules.
5. *Sanctions*: both positive and negative, sanctions are to be applied as a result of monitoring. For example, resources can be expanded as a positive sanction, or privileges can be withdrawn as a negative sanction.

If all these five elements can be identified in an organization, it is considered a formal, classic organization. Anything that does not contain all five elements would be deemed a non-organization, a network or institution. The boundaries between an organization and a network can sometimes be difficult to define: most prominently, as noted by Melucci (1980), the structure of connectedness in a network is the goal itself, rather than an instrument for achieving the goal. Introducing an organizational element in a network can institutionalize a network and bring it closer to the definition of an organization.

It was Staggenborg (1988, 1989), Clemens (1993), and Minkoff (1994, 1999) who first established the concept of the existence of different organizational forms in social movements. With theories on new social movements rising and the notion of "collective identity" competing with the notion of "membership", it became clear that a formal organization with all five elements was no longer the sole approach to the organizational structure of social movements. They analyzed the possibility of changing organizational forms and other approaches to organizational theory in the context of social movements. This laid the ground for the concept of "partial organizing" (Brunsson and Olsen, 1998): heterogeneous forms of organizing that are incomplete in the sense that they do not contain all formal organizational properties. The realization that organizing could be more than a



formal organization greatly broadened the definition of “organization” in the context of social movements: a formal organization was no longer the standard in the analysis of a social movement’s organizing process. It was here that the notion of “organization” became one of “organizing”, a process rather than an institution and continuous coaction of organizational elements (Bakker et al., 2017). The concept of partial organization allows for a more extensive and broader analysis of the organizing process of a social movement. In light of this research, it is interesting to analyze the connection between the presence and absence of various organizational elements and the possible relationship between social media and these elements.

## 1.2 Collective and connective action, and personal action framing

The analysis of social movements is inherently the study of collective action. The study of collective action is versatile and bounds the field of sociology and psychology. As seen in the previous section, the organization of collective action can happen through the existence of five organizational elements. This section focuses on collective action in relation to digitally networked ‘connective’ action and the hybrid forms and overlaps these action models may employ.

Collective action is a term for all forms of action in which more than one individual tries to achieve something. The study of collective action was long dominated by the study of formal organizations and organizational elements, which evolved along with the development of new social movements. With Olsons (1965) research, the study of the organization in collective action obtained an additional dimension. He established the “free-rider”-concept in the logic of collective action: he observed that people do not simply participate in something because of a shared goal. It is a rational choice that an individual makes. If the individual contribution is not as significant because of the group’s size, the individual is less inclined to contribute and will only profit from the goods and not put in the effort, therefore “free-ride” on other people’s endeavors. This threat to the functioning of collective action put the concept of organizations once again in the foreground: the formal organization in which institutionalized membership can in- and exclude someone based on their compliance to certain obligations, regulations, and identity aspects was seen as the solution to the free-riders. Put differently, a formal organization would ensure the active participation of an individual in the form of collective action.

Certainly, in these collective action issues, it was the traditional organization that generated and maintained the *collective action frame*: the “set[s] of beliefs and meanings that motivate people to act while giving legitimacy to social movement activities” (Gamson, 1992, cited in Caraway, 2018). A collective action frame is crucial for setting the collective identity for members of the traditional organization. For groups, a collective action frame provides perception and paradigm through which issues can be identified and to which actions can be attributed (Hunt, Benford & Snow, 1994). With the inclusion of all who comply with the set collective action frame as members of the formal

organization, the organization prevents the existence of free-riders and enlarges the group of active participants in collective action.

However, the study of collective action was evolved by the notion that the individual choice was not solely rational: scholars found there were several contextual matters such as identity, emotion, culture, political press, social networks, and opportunity structures that affect the act of choosing to participate in collective action (Melucci, 1996; McAdam et al. 2001; Della Porta and Diani 2006 in Bennett and Segerberg, 2012). These contextual issues are all components of the individual framework of this collective action, which will later be discussed as the “personal action frame”.

One of the first to study digital networking mechanisms as networking instruments alongside traditional, non-digital actors, such as organizations, was Latour (2005). It was found that digital mechanisms (in the form of web links, protest calendars, and social media) can connect organizational elements, coordinate events, and play an important role in the development of a network through sharing. As a result, online meeting places are created, offline activities are coordinated, and the network enables a sense of transparency, security, and interpersonal trust. Along with the practical use of digital mechanisms, it appears that individuals are less likely to free-ride in large groups if communication costs are low (as is in digitally networked action) (Lupia & Sin, 2003). In other words, individuals are more inclined to actively participate in collective action if there is a little financial barrier, as might be the case with memberships of formal organizations.

Further advancement of collective action and the function of digital media was the notion of connective action, as proposed by Bennett and Segerberg (2012). The authors proposed a comparison between the logic of collective action and the logic of connective action, defining the boundaries between the different types of action formations and the points on which they overlapped. The logic of connective action takes the “recognition of digital media as organizing agents” (p. 752) as its core. Thus, digital media can play a significant role in the organization of a movement, at times even replacing elements of a traditional formal organization. The act of sharing is at the linchpin of connective action: through the accessible and fast diffusion of information through digital media, individuals are connected to others with similar ideas. Through the construction of networks that are based on shared personally expressive content, participation in this act of sharing turns self-motivating, as was found by Benkler (2006). This act of sharing can simulate collective action without a centralized collective action frame or the need for a formal organization. It is an act of co-production and co-distribution, driven by a self-motivated stimulant. Bennett and Segerberg propose that this digitally networked action (DNA) is, therefore, more than a communication system: it is an organizational structure that “can transcend the elemental units of organizations and individuals” (p. 753). This digitally networked action that is at the base of the logic of connective action can change action dynamics in large-scale networks by adapting the role of one or multiple of the previously

discussed traditional organizational elements. An analysis of the organizing process and the digital expression of a movement or network can point to the identification as a connective action network.

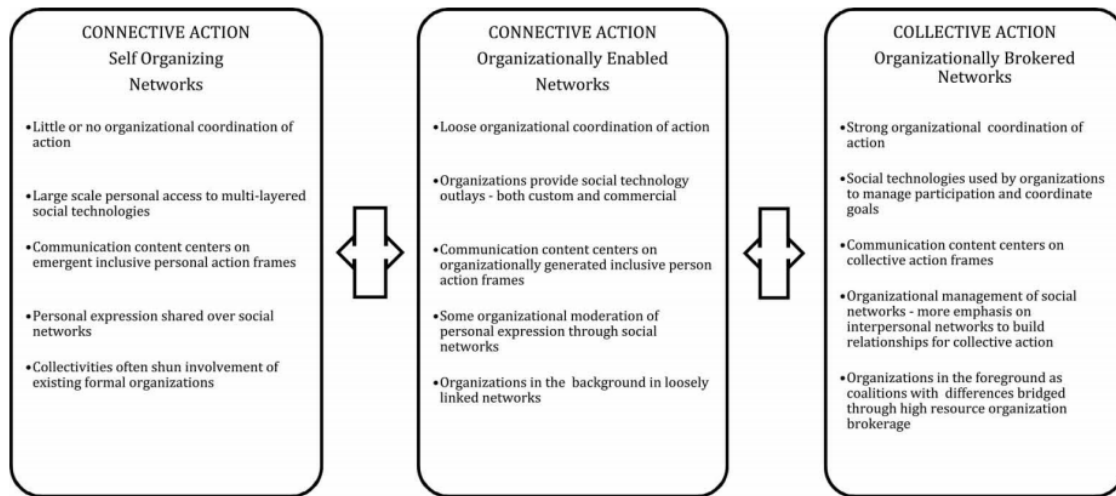
An important element in the function of digital media in the logic of connective action is the construction of a personal action frame. A personal action frame is the individual framework of beliefs and meanings that motivate someone to act while giving legitimacy to their actions, based on their rational choices but also personal, contextual matters such as identity, emotion, culture, political press, and social networks (defined after Gamson, 1992, as cited in Caraway, 2018; Melucci, 1996; McAdam et al., 2001; Della Porta and Diani, 2006 in Bennett and Segerberg, 2012). Instead of complying with a central collective identity as is with a collective action framework that is established by a formal organization, a personal action frame allows someone to act out of their own “action frame” through their own paradigm of beliefs, identity, and other contextual issues. Digital media facilitate the construction of a personal action frame through the easy accessibility and the fast diffusion of information: the act of sharing. Therefore, digital media enables a network or movement to have a collective goal or demand without the need to comply with a collective action frame: every participant can act through their personal action frame, of which that specific goal or demand is a component. This concept thus allows for a fast construction or growth of digital action networks: the barrier is lower for individuals to join since they can do so through their personal action framework without having to comply with a collective identity.

Bennett and Segerberg clearly specify collective and connective action as distinct logics of action, both in the concept of identity and choice processes. Not one is more successful than the other, and as a matter of fact, they can co-occur in the same environment. In order to help understand the different dynamics in networks supported by collective and connective action, they propose recognition of three large-scale action networks on a spectrum, as visible in Figure 1.1. On one end, there is an Organizationally Brokered Network that is supported by collective action through traditional formal organizations. These organizations generate and maintain the collective action framework, regulate the supporting participants and facilitate cooperation. Digital technologies may be in use but are always perpetuated and maintained by the functioning formal organization, which controls communication structures and contains a high level of organizational resources.

On the other end, there are Self Organizing Networks, connective action networks, that are almost completely free of involvement of formal organizations. The technologies function as the important organizational agents, and a collective action frame is replaced by personal action frames that move units across networks. These networks are thus technology-organized: there might be a limited role for formal organizations, but their function is likely to be marginalized.

Finally, in between the two previous models, there is a hybrid model of action, identified by Bennett and Segerberg as Organizationally Enabled Networks. In these networks, both a digital network and a formal organization are present to some extent. An archetype of this hybrid network is where the formal organization can use its resources to enable a network to grow around personal

Figure 1.1 Models of connective and collective action networks.



Source: *Elements of connective and collective action networks* by Bennett and Segerberg, 2012, p. 756.

action frames: instead of pressuring their own agenda, they find an existing or growing network and loosely support it as an institution. This hybrid type can also be an informal organizational network that adapts some organizational elements without strongly projecting its own action frame on the network. “Networks in this hybrid model engage individuals in causes that might not be of such interest if stronger demands for membership or subscribing to collective demands accompanied the organizational offerings” (Bennett and Segerberg, p. 757). In other words, the barrier is lower for someone to participate in this collective action if it is modeled after this hybrid design.

The authors recognize that not every social movement fits into this model, and co-existence, layering, and even movement across the models are possibilities. It is a spectrum: meaning, the action model of a social movement, can position itself anywhere from one extreme to the other. They note that it can be difficult to pinpoint where on this spectrum a social movement is placed, due to the fact that a social movement based on any form of connective action is hard to analyze since they do not behave like formal organizations, on which the scholarship is extensive. Instead, digital action networks are de-centered, distributed, unbounded, and very dynamic (Bennett 2003, 2005). In order to research a social movement and its placement on the three-scale model of connective action, one needs to analyze all digital and non-digital organizational aspects and the concept of “sharing”, which is essential to the extent of connectivity.

### 1.3 Social media in civil society

In order to analyze the use of digital technologies in the context of the Colombian protests in 2019-2020, it is necessary to further explore these technologies and determine which media play a central role in this discussion. In the previous sections, the terms for these media varied (digital media, technology platforms, digital networks, digital technology) according to the terminology used by the various scholars. Over the years of digital development, different types of media have dominated the public's use and, therefore the academic discussion: from online forums that could only be accessed through computers with a solid internet connection to the fast contact with various personal networks on social media through the smartphones of today. The present-day accessibility to these large networks on social media offer the individual new opportunities to connect with others with similar or distinctive ideas, creating a new space for discussion on relevant topics of civil society, as will be discussed further on. Therefore, and because of their widespread use, this study will focus on large social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter.

As noted before, the understanding that social media is no longer solely a technique of communication but actually has a function in the organizational structure of a social movement is at the core of the logic of connective action. What exactly is this organizational structure of a social medium? How does an idea move along the infrastructure of such media, and how does it reach a subsequent party? Social media, as discussed in this study, is in the majority based on the concept of a network: in a digital context, a network is simply defined as a digital connection between multiple actors. On social media, this connection can appear in many shapes and forms: it can be in the structure of "friending" a person on Facebook, a shared "like" of a Tweet or Facebook post, or a shared membership of a Facebook group. Because of the various ways of connecting with another individual, one's network can grow exponentially, and information can travel from person to person within a few simple clicks. Through this creation of networks based on similar ideas, social media can facilitate the development of a community through the creation of virtual public spheres (Tufekci, 2017). It functions as a new dimension for the "intermediate public space" where issues can be politicized through dialogue outside of the authorities, as was already characterized for New Social Movement theory by Melucci in 1980. The possibilities to join this intermediate public space have grown tremendously since its theorization in 1980: social media is now accessible to (almost) anyone. It allows users to connect with other individuals or existing networks while providing the opportunity to implement and diffuse information outside of the known media channels. Any citizen can become a message creator since the flow of information is no longer dominated by the mainstream mass media (Carty & Reynoso Barron, 2019).

This understanding goes hand in hand with the public trend of decreasing connection with institutions. Similar to what is seen in membership of formal organizations, people are evolving to be less attracted to institutions such as conventional politics or the press (Bennett & Segerberg, 2011).

The further individualization of neoliberal societies combined with the growing conception of the fact that these institutions are controlled by the elite causes this lack of connection or even a rise in distrust against them. A recent example of this is the prevalent concept of “fake news,” in which the growing distrust in the mainstream media causes protests against accused politicized news outlets or some examples of physical attacks on their news reporters.

These two factors, the accessibility of social media and the growing gulf between citizens and institutions, are fertile grounds for the cultivation of social media as the intermediate public space. In this public space, there is room for people to discuss and politicize issues that are implemented by them or presented through a network connection. Collective identity is shaped here through common opinions, which can effortlessly be found through the use of symbolic conventions in social media posts, such as common hashtags (Milan, 2015b). Finding others with similar opinions and perceptions can facilitate a sense and development of community despite physical distance or different backgrounds (Tufekci). This creation of a collective identity on a topic does not in the least detract from the essence of a personal action frame: as noted before, one can identify with a certain collective identity while still acting through their personal action frame, of which said identity is only one component. Therefore, a collective identity on a specific topic can surely be shared by a lot of people, who each have their own personal action frame and don't necessarily agree on *all* topics. To a certain extent, one can create their own personal action frame on social media by actively partaking in networks that concentrate on ideas that they support.

The structure of networks on social media is very functional for mobilization. Because of its accessibility, activists can implement ideas and the call to action by a simple post. They are most likely connected through their network with at least some people who support the cause: through the concept of “sharing”, this information is then exposed to these people's network, etcetera. Within a short amount of time, a call to action can reach a large number of people who support the idea. Research has shown that an invitation through a preexisting connection is a strong indicator of someone's willingness to participate in activism. In other words, one is more inclined to partake in a call to action when this call is presented to them through someone who is already in their network (Gould, 1993). A call to action, which can be as abstract as a call for more visibility of an issue on a social media page, or as concrete as the date for a physical protest, can mobilize a network within the timeframe of a few “shares”. Through this infrastructure of communication, social media can thus become the organizing agent in activism and social movements.

An important element in the existence of social media networks that are based on similar opinions on a topic is that of algorithms. Every social medium is run by a specific algorithm, a digital language behind a website that monitors an individual's activity on their website and manipulates their future interactions with the collected data. Most social media platforms are commercial: they base their revenue model on the sales of advertisements that are shown to the consumers on their medium. Essentially, their aim is to maintain the consumer's attention for as long as possible in order

to maximize their profit from these advertisements (Beverungen et al., 2015). Therefore, they program the algorithm to present consumers content that, based on previously collected data on that individual, the consumer will most likely enjoy. If a person spends more time interacting with the social medium, the algorithm further specifies and profiles the individual.

Another function of the algorithms is connecting individuals who have been profiled to have similar interests. If two individuals share certain beliefs based on their participation in a common network (for example, in the form of a common membership of a Facebook group), it is possible or even likely they share more than one opinion. The social medium can therefore connect these people by more prominently showing them the other's content, making the individuals visible to the other, and making it possible for these people to expand their personal network with each other. By manipulating the presentation of content and the initiation of interaction, algorithms manipulate people to be confronted with mostly opinions they agree with and like-minded individuals. This creates a "safe" environment on an individual's social media feed, but it additionally causes a deviation between groups that carry different opinions. If not confronted with "the other", one might start to believe it is the majority of the population who share their opinion, and groups might drift further apart, with the polarization of groups as a consequence (Greene, 2019).

The role of new digital technologies in social movements has been a central discussion on the academic agenda since the Zapatista uprising in 1994, which is widely considered the first social movement to use digital media as an important tool in its strategy. This indigenous Mexican rebellion group used the then relatively new world wide web to call for "Encuentro's", meetings of activists from all over the world, whom they had first contacted online. In the years after, the role of the internet and social media in various forms was studied in, for example, the Seattle demonstrations against the World Trade Organization in 1999, which was one of the first manifestations that was greatly mobilized through e-mail networks (Tufekci). In the years after, digital media and social media especially further developed and remained a topic of interest for scholars. It was the Arab spring that started in 2011 that started a new era in research on social media in movement organizations. The protests of the Arab Spring were broadcasted live on social media, and it was the first time a social movement was that active on social media and was open for the world to watch (Tufekci).

Studies on these new movements where social media play a key role have erupted discussion on the topic of "clicktivism", a collective name for digital activist efforts (Butler, 2011). The debate on the power of social media as a factor in activism has also brought forth unfavorable terms as "slacktivism", the use of internet technologies to support a social or political cause with minimal effort.<sup>2</sup> The existing diversity of terms for digital activism, both with positive and negative imagery, display the variety of roles social media can have in activism. As noted by Carty and Reynoso Barron,

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<sup>2</sup> *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus*. Retrieved from <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/slacktivism> (June 15th 2021)

social media has expanded the toolkit of activists for “increasing awareness about an issue, getting recognition, influencing public sentiment, achieving legitimacy, and recruiting new supporters” (p. 390). Social media, therefore, takes up a role as a channel for informing and communicating, as well as a mobilizing agent and an organizer: it reduces the need for resources in activism or the need for activists to physically come together to act (Earl & Kimport, 2009). The influence of social media can cause great transformative changes to organizing and participating in protest (Carty & Reynoso; Earl & Kimport). This demonstrates a need for further reevaluation of social movement and organizing theories, as is done by Bennett and Segerberg through their proposition of the logic of connective action. Taking all previously discussed functions of social media in mind, this research will analyze the role of social media in the Paro Nacional in Colombia, assessing the model of collective and connective action.



## II. Colombia's criminalization of protest: fighting back in the *Paro Nacional*

### 2.1. The armed conflict and its criminalization of protest

Since 1948, Colombia has been affected by civil war between the government and various far-left and far-right guerrilla groups. While there is debate on the exact beginning of the armed conflict, the assassination of populist leader Jorge Eliecer Gaitán in 1948 is noted to have started protests, riots, and clashes between liberal and conservative parties (Comisión Histórica del Conflicto y sus Víctimas, 2015). This caused groups like liberal guerrillas and regional elites to mobilize themselves and use violence as their *modus operandi* (Díaz, 2020). As the conflict continued, more parties became involved. Fighting over territory, the clashes between the opponents were of a very violent nature, and both government and non-governmental parties were not hesitant to use extreme force. The culture of violence this created has affected politics and, therefore, social movements throughout the decades.

Since the beginning of the armed conflict, Colombia has been governed by right-wing governments. While some governments were more successful at repressing the opponents' violence in the armed conflict than others, the common demeanor between the governments was the limited space for protest movements. Because new violent groups sprouted all throughout the armed conflict, many organizations that wanted to protest the ruling power were dismissed as another violent party in the conflict instead of a new voice from civil society. Social movements were, therefore, generally repressed and not taken seriously: the civil war was used to prevent democracy and avoid meeting the demands of the movements. In addition, these social movements were faced with violent measures of control or limitation of human rights (Jiménez Jiménez, 2009). The act of protesting was criminalized, and violence was used as a measure for silencing criticism and opposition (Grupo Memoria Histórica, 2013). This does not mean that there was the absence of political and social discontent and contention; violence and social protests have always coexisted in the country, only it was made invisible in the political scenario.

The culture of violence and the use of excessive violence by the state has been a topic of discussion in Colombia for decades. The country's long history with armed conflict and the government's use of violence as a political instrument (López, Armalio & Duran 2015; Jaramillo, 2015 in Said-Hung & Luquetta, 2017) has caused great attention to the severe operations that are conducted by the National Police and the several special forces units such as the ESMAD ("Escuadrón Móvil Antidisturbios", Mobile Anti-Disturbances Squadron). In Colombia, the National Police is not under the mandate of its own institution, but it is commanded by the Ministry of Defense, and therefore receives military training. Their harsh conduct has led to discussions on police

brutality in the country, as will be discussed in the next section.

The formulation of a new Colombian constitution in 1991 provided new possibilities for social actors and organizations to influence politics. This constitution granted every Colombian citizen the right to protest and therefore made it possible to hear more than the singular, right-wing political voice. Various new political parties erupted, representing (social) groups and classes in Colombian society: this caused a slight decrease in the number of protests. While the right to protest was now officially granted, the stigma on social protest persisted, and protests were often met with a violent response from armed groups or elites that opposed the reforms (Díaz, 2020). At the end of the 1990s, the armed conflict escalated, which mobilized millions of citizens in protest against the FARC and other armed actors. This process of continuing protests endured until the early 2000s, focusing on the continued failure of the peace progress with the FARC, the escalation of violence, and an economic crisis. This was the societal context in which right-wing president Alvaro Uribe won the elections of 2002, marking the first chapter of protest in the new millenium as identified by Díaz (2020). Under the Uribe governments from 2002 to 2010, the space for political resistance was limited. The populist president attempted to create a peace agreement with paramilitary groups but did not openly tolerate influence from political opponents in this process, continuously dismissing them as being linked to or in support of armed groups (López de la Roche, 2014, in Díaz, 2020). During his first presidential term, the number of protests declined because of the authoritarian character of the regime. However, a large peak in the number of protests was found at the end of his second term: from a little under 600 in 2006, the number of annual protests rose to an extreme of 1000 in 2007 (Archila Neira et al., 2019). These protests were for a great part mobilized by victims of the armed conflict and opponents of government spendings and pension reforms (Archila Neira et al.).

With the appointment of Uribe's successor Juan Manuel Santos, Colombia entered the second chapter and a new political period with much more space for social protest. Santos was a center-right politician who initiated the peace negotiations with the FARC, actually recognizing the existence of an armed conflict in Colombia. He was much more open to protests and was one of the first right-wing politicians to do so, accepting more left-wing discourse from social actors in his policies. This resulted in an attempt at moderating violence perpetrated by state authorities. This new space for social protests is one of the factors that contribute to the increase in social mobilizations observed during Santos' presidential terms between 2010 and 2018.

Another interesting cause of this increase is the gained support for the practice of social movement in the country. Because most social mobilizations had a left-wing practice (considering they were always protesting against a right-wing government), the concept of protest and social movements was dismissed by right-wing politicians as something for the left. However, Santos's initiation of peace negotiations with the FARC caused right-wing politicians such as Uribe to start supporting movements and organizations that opposed either the peace negotiations or the Santos

government (Díaz, 2020).<sup>3</sup> For the right, this was one of the first open recognitions of a protest organization or movement as a political tool. Therefore, the concept of a protest movement was recognized in a part of society where it was previously rejected. In addition to this wider recognition of protest as a concept, the signing of the peace agreements with the FARC in 2016 marks an important moment in the history of legitimacy of social movements in Colombia. Now that violence decreased and the agreements were signed, the government could no longer easily dismiss a protest or a social mobilization as an act of violence linked to an armed group.

Along with the development and recognition of social movements in the political context, the movements themselves have changed/transformed. While protests against the armed conflict have been historically consistent, recent social movements have emerged around different issues. In an analysis of social mobilizations between 2002 and 2014, Cobos and Ramirez (2017) identified various social actors behind the actions. The traditional social organizers such as students, trade unions, indigenous people, and peasants were still at the forefront of protests but were closely followed by recently emerged new social groups that sought a form to participate. Most prominent in this range of new actors are associations for victims of the armed conflict, such as the “Asociación Nacional Desplazados de Colombia” (ANDESCOL), founded in 2001. Other examples of these new social groups are actors that are similar to those often identified in “new social movements” (NSMs), such as human rights activists, environmentalists, women’s rights activists, or the LGBTQ community. Colombia is a society that is made up of various socio-economic classes with little ability to move between said classes. These distinct social groups are represented through various Social Movement Organizations, which often choose to not per se strive for political representation (Cobos and Ramirez) but resort to various strategies of social protest.

## 2.2 Paro Nacional 2019: enough is enough

Protests and social mobilizations have thus undergone great development in terms of recognition and legitimacy in Colombia. While the previously discussed violent repercussions in the form of the National Police or the ESMAD still exist and are regularly used by the government in order to condemn protests, the concept of protest is now recognized and covered in media all across the political spectrum (Osorio Matorel, 2018 in Díaz, 2020). These media were used to construct a timeline of the relevant events in the protests of the Paro Nacional, as seen in the next section, that will be compared to activity on social media in order to find a possible relationship between these two aspects.

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<sup>3</sup> Following Uribe’s authoritarian regime, he opposed any negotiations with the FARC after failing to come to a deal himself. He considered them terrorists and not worthy partners for further negotiations. The fact that his appointed successor Santos didn’t follow this policy but restarted negotiations, led Uribe to oppose his government and peace negotiations.

On November 21st of 2019, hundreds of thousands of Colombians took to the street to participate in the *Paro Nacional*, the national strike. This day would mark the first of a series of protests that lasted until January of the following year. The strike was initially called by the National Strike Committee, a group of leaders of social and labor organizations that publicly announced that various policies as proposed by the government of President Duque were harmful and no longer acceptable. There was a need for a strike to demand change, under the slogan: “*Contra el #PaquetazodeDuque. Por la vida y la paz.*”

On their website, the committee concretized nine reasons behind the initiation of the strike as can be seen in Figure 2.1. Several of the motivations as presented in the infographic were elements of the *Paquetazo de Duque*, a rumored collection of mostly economic measures and policies. This included reforms of regulations concerning workers, pensions, multinationals, energy rates, and the minimum salary. The package of policies that would drastically impact the financial and social situation of many workers was a motivation for many people to unite in opposition to the already very unpopular government. In a survey conducted in October of 2019, 69% of the population disapproved of Duque and his policies, which were met with only a 26% approval rate.<sup>4</sup> These new economic policies were considered the final straw in order to take action.

Figure 2.1: The motivations for the *Paro Nacional* on November 21st. November 16th 2019.



Source: [www.paronacional.com](http://www.paronacional.com) (16-11-2019)

<sup>4</sup> Survey by Gallup Poll. (2019, October). *GALLUP*. Retrieved from El Espectador: <https://www.elespectador.com/politica/desaprobacion-del-presidente-ivan-duque-marquez-escala-al-69-gallup-poll-article-890074/> (June 15th 2021)

Apart from economic measures, there were previous events and circumstances that caused this inpopularity. The Duque government was accused of not committing to the 2016 Peace Agreements with the FARC, and specifically to point 4 of the agreement. This point consisted of an agreement with rural indigenous communities on the substitution of illegal crops by substantial produce. The failure of the government to follow through on this point can be seen in the demand “Cumplimiento de los acuerdos”. Not only did the Colombian population call for a greater commitment to the Peace Agreement, they simultaneously accused the government under Duque of working actively against the agreement. In the past months, various operations had been conducted against FARC dissidents, of which a recent case led to the killing of at least eight minors by security forces in a guerrilla camp. Later, the government tried to conceal this event and only spoke of the success of the operation: when the killings came to light in congress, the Minister of Defense Guillermo Botero resigned. This event was widely covered by the media and did not gain the government in popularity.

The list also contained motivations for protest of a more social character, such as for the (previously discussed) fulfillment of agreements with several social sectors and the ability to protest, without criminalization and stigmatization of social protest. This last motivation is interesting in light of the history of social movements in Colombia: a protest calling for the right to protest, and the decriminalization and destigmatization of social protest. While Duque was not previously faced with protests of this size during his presidency, many of his decisions and policies are rumored to be made with the pressing support of former president Uribe. If Duque’s stance towards social protests is any like that of his mentor, there is indeed still quite something to achieve in the recognition and legitimacy of social protests.

### 2.3 Timeline of protest: actors and organization

The timeline of the protests that started with the Paro Nacional on November 21st of 2019 is characterized by continued protests and roadblocks throughout the country. This section will provide a chronological overview of the relevant aspects of the protests and their structure. In the next section, this timeline will be compared to an analysis of social media during the period of protest, which will provide an insight into the correlation between the physical protests in the Paro Nacional and social media.

On October 4th of 2019, a National Emergency Meeting was held by the Social and Trade Union Movement (*Encuentro Nacional de Emergencia del Movimiento Social y Sindical*). Following this meeting, an announcement was published in which the gathering of organizations named various elements of mismanagement by the Duque government. Among other things, they appointed labor reforms, new economic or social policies, and the lack of fulfillment of the 2016 Peace Agreements as unacceptable for the Colombian population. They said the harmful policies of the Duque government

were the cause of the serious state of crisis the nation was in. In the last paragraph of the announcement, the meeting declared a national strike on November 21st of that year “in order to defeat the intentions of the government to continue destroying the country, peace, and the basic rights of the workers and the people.”<sup>5</sup>

This document was signed by many labor and social institutions (National Unitary National Command (CUT, CGT, CTC, CPC), COS, Agrarian Summit, Aconalferros, CRIC, UNEES, ACREES, and more than 100 social and union organizations) and published on the website [www.paronacional.com](http://www.paronacional.com). Simultaneously, the National Strike Committee (*Comité Nacional del Paro*) emerged, which was formed by the leaders of various of these organizations.

In the weeks leading up to the Paro Nacional, the National Strike Committee concretized the demands from their announcement on their website. In an infographic, nine reasons for protests were identified as discussed in the previous section:

1. Against labor reforms
2. Against pension reforms
3. Against financial holding companies
4. Against corruption
5. Against tributary reforms
6. Against increase of national energy rates
7. For a minimum salary
8. For fulfillment of the agreements with various social groups
9. For the defense of social protest

At the same time, the various organizations that underlie and support the Paro Nacional called to their respective members to take action and partake in the strike.<sup>6</sup>

As announced, on the **21st of November** the first Paro Nacional took place in Colombia. All throughout the country hundreds of thousands of Colombians took to the street to march against the Duque government. In Bogotá, the largest group of protesters was recorded, with an estimated 250,000 strikers physically protesting in the city<sup>7</sup>. Among these protesters were people of all social and economic classes, organizations, and unions.

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<sup>5</sup> See appendix

<sup>6</sup> An example of this is the statement that was posted on November 14 of 2019 by Comosoc, the Coalition of Social Movements and Organizations of Colombia. In a statement where they list the conclusions from a meeting of the National Strike Committee on the organization of the Paro Nacional. Along with this information on how the strike will take place, they end their message with the call: “*¡¡¡Contra el paquetazo de Duque... Paro nacional el 21 de noviembre!!! ¡¡¡VIVA LA UNIDAD DEL MOVIMIENTO SINDICAL Y POPULAR!!!*”, clearly motivating their readers to participate in the Paro Nacional on November 21st.

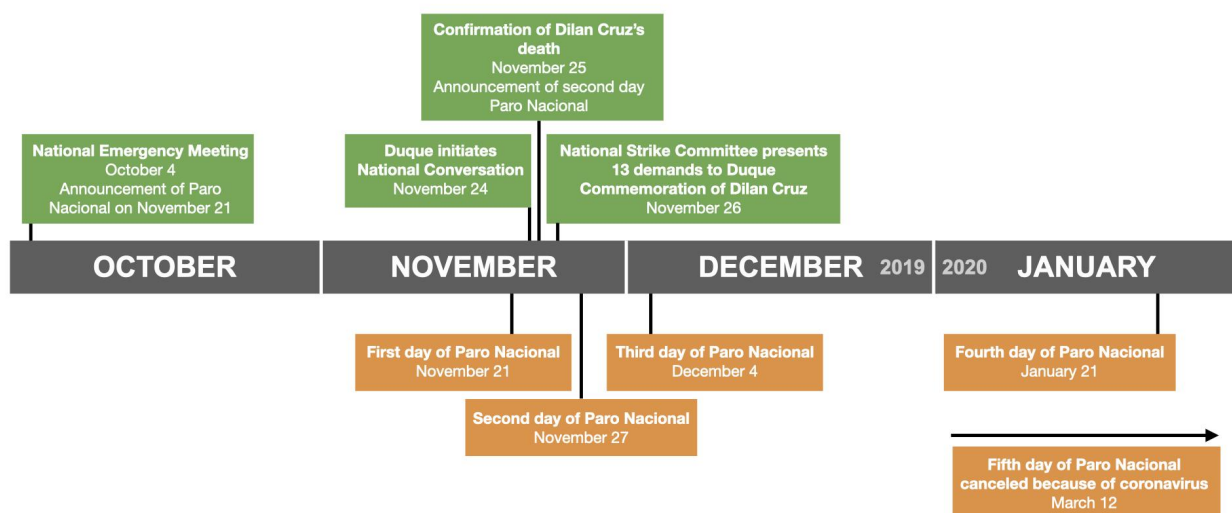
<sup>7</sup> Estimation retrieved from several news channels.

While the National Strike Committee had proposed a peaceful protest, the government took measures for the possibility of the protests turning violent. Duque had previously declared that the police troops were on standby and he had precautionarily closed all of Colombia’s borders. The marches started out peaceful but eventually turned violent when it came to a clash between protesters and police on the crowded Bolivar square, a central point where many mobilizations gathered. The National Police and the ESMAD eventually opened fire on protestors and used tear gas to keep the situation under control. At 8 PM, the National Strike Committee’s call for a “cacerolazo”<sup>8</sup> was answered by an hour-long noise throughout various cities in Colombia. The day officially ended with a curfew imposed by the authorities at 21:00.

At the end of the first day of the Paro Nacional, the National Strike Committee published a report of the day on their website. In this document, they thanked all participants and institutions that supported the strike and called the government out for trying to suppress the protests. They called it a historical day: “Ha sido la expresión de una nueva Colombia, de otra Colombia posible.” In the last paragraph, the Committee calls for an immediate meeting with President Duque in order to discuss the reasons behind the strike. They ask the citizens to keep pressuring the government for this meeting by continuing the protests and the development of new actions.

The days after the first Paro Nacional are characterized by continuous protests and following violence, with several confrontations between protestors and Colombia’s police forces. As the unrest continued, the government took action by proposing a “Conversación Nacional”. In a meeting with all upcoming mayors and governors in the country, hosted by president Duque on November 24th, he

Figure 2.2: A timeline of relevant events and official days of the Paro Nacional



Source: own elaboration constructed through analysis of various news articles

<sup>8</sup> A cacerolazo is a form of protest in which people collectively make a loud continuous noise by using pots and pans.

initiated these national conversations that would cover many themes related to the protests and would be accessible for all Colombians to partake in. As stated in a press statement by the CUT (“Central Unitaria de Trabajadores de Colombia”, Central Workers Union), the protestors were not satisfied with this response and declared that the government had not resolved any of the causes for the strike:

An important development in the protests was the confirmation of the death of Dilan Cruz on November 25th. Two days prior, this 18-year old student had become fatally wounded at the protests by the fire of the ESMAD. Cruz became a symbol of the excessive use of violence by the Colombian authorities and his death reinforced the sense of animosity towards the government, which had called for the deployment of this unit during the protests.

On November 26nd, the National Strike Committee called for a “Cacelorazo por la vida” during the day, and a “Velatón por la vida”<sup>9</sup> in the evening, both “por la memoria de Dilan Cruz, asesinado por el ESMAD”. Along with these actions, November 26nd is the day the first meeting between president Duque and the National Strike Committee took place. The Committee presented a list of 13 concrete demands, including the dismantling of the ESMAD and the purification of the National Police, the units responsible for the death of Dilan Cruz<sup>10</sup>. The meeting ended abruptly as the Committee left the discussion because the government refused to agree to their demands. In a press conference shortly after, the Committee declared that instead of speaking about their demands, the government had proposed for them to join the National Conversation. Therefore, they concluded that the negotiations had fallen through and the marches would continue, even stronger than before. This became the call for the Second Paro Nacional, on **November 27th**. Under the slogan “El Paro Nacional Sigue”, thousands of people again protested throughout the country, with the honoring of Dilan Cruz being an important element.

On December 3rd, the National Strike Committee called again “El Paro Sigue” for the following day, after another meeting with the government. The parties did not reach a consensus because of two specific demands that were “impossible” for the government to fulfill. First, the National Strike Committee asked for the complete absence of the ESMAD during the marches on December 4th. Second, the National Strike Committee wanted strike leaders to be given a place on television to discuss unemployment. The inability of the government to fulfill these demands led to the third Paro Nacional on **December 4th**.

The month of December was subsequently marked by smaller protests: musicians played a “*Concierto del Paro*”, protests happened outside of university buildings, and a month after the death of Dilan Cruz, a memorial service was held. After the holidays, the negotiations between the National Strike Committee and the government continued but failed to come to an agreement.

On **January 21st**, the fourth day of Paro Nacional was declared, causing various roadblocks and some confrontations between protestors and the authorities. The last attempt in this series of

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<sup>9</sup> A “velatón” is a specific type of protest to commemorate or pay tribute, by placing lighted candles.

<sup>10</sup> See appendix



protests was made for a fifth day of Paro Nacional on **March 25th**, but the strike was canceled after Colombia was hit with a new outbreak of the coronavirus.

Overviewing the beginning and development of the protests of the Paro Nacional of 2019-2020, the five essential conditions for a social movement to arise as defined by Szymanski can be found in the causes and motivations for the Paro Nacional. The labor reforms, new economic and social policies that were announced by the Duque government targeted various social or economic groups in society that felt oppressed by the long term policies of this government and the sudden implementation of these measures. This feeling of oppression (1) was combined with a great discontent with the failed execution of the 2016 Peace Agreements that were the solutions to the crisis of violence that was the armed conflict (3). Furthermore, the underlying dissatisfaction with the past few populist, right-wing governments, the dominant class's ideological hegemony (2), combined with these present-day factors led the National Strike Committee to accuse the Duque government of mismanagement leading to a serious state of crisis in the nation. The recent history of decriminalization of protest allowed for the Paro Nacional to grow and legitimize itself as a social movement against this state of crisis, a process that was not stoppable or "solvable" by the government, i.e. the dominant class (4). The last necessary condition for a social movement to arise is the "efficient organization and adoption of scientific strategy and theory by social movements" (Berberoglu, pp. 5-6), which is decisive for the success or failure of a social movement.

The next section of this study will analyze the organization and strategy of the Paro Nacional. The above presented timeline will be compared to an examination of social media use on the period between November 21st of 2019 and January 2020, to gain insight into the role of social media in the organization of the protests. While almost every day during this period saw a form of protest, the strike was planned by the National Strike Committee on November 21st, 27th, December 4th, and January 21st. The comparison will thus focus on social media activity around these days to understand the role of social media as a mobilizing agent in the Paro Nacional.

### III. Twitters connective action: use and effects of social media in the Paro Nacional

In order to investigate the role of social media in the Paro Nacional in 2019-2020, social media had to be analyzed on two levels of usage. First, the measurable relation between social media use online and the Paro Nacional offline had to be examined in order to assess the extent to which social media acted as a mobilizing agent in the movement. Second, it had to be determined what the role of social media usage was on a personal level, for people who participated in the protest. These personal experiences helped interpret the statistical relation and contribute to the understanding of personal action frames and collective identities in the movement. In addition, a qualitative component was used to complement the analysis of social media on a personal level. Four in-depth personal interviews were conducted with people who were active and vocal, online and offline, during the time of the Paro Nacional. With these interviews, findings that were done through the quantitative, larger-scale methods, could be validated.

#### 3.1 Social media as a mobilizing agent

To determine the extent to which social media acted as a mobilizing agent, it was necessary to create an overview of the online presence of the Paro Nacional and social media usage related to the Paro Nacional, in order to compare the digital evolution of the protests to the physical protest-related events that happened in Colombia. To this end, the archive from the Paro Nacional website [www.paronacional.com](http://www.paronacional.com), and a database of daily social media usage on Twitter during the months of the Paro Nacional were used.

Social media platform Twitter is a place where these hashtags were accepted and used to spread information and opinion on the Paro Nacional. Twitter is a platform that has a relatively “political” character in Colombia in comparison to other social media. Information can spread rapidly and it is therefore rather easy to connect with people with similar or different opinions, creating networks on specific (political) topics. In a study done on Twitter as a mobilization tool in the days leading up to the first day of the Paro Nacional in 2019, researchers conclude that Twitter has a high diffusion rate when it comes to spreading information. In the case of the #ParoNacional21Nov-movement, they conclude that with this fast spread of information, it has played an important role in the mobilization of the protests (Alcázar and Holguín, 2020). In addition, Twitter’s political character in Colombia was confirmed by all interviewees in this research.

The official website of the Paro Nacional was aired on [www.paronacional.com](http://www.paronacional.com) in October 2019, and as of June 2021, is no longer in existence. In November 2019, however, the website showcased a variety of news about the strike, information on the reasons behind the strike, practical

information about the protests and downloadable material for people to use in the protests.<sup>11</sup> Remarkable is the use of hashtags on the website: the National Strike Committee openly promoted hashtags such as #ParoNacional21Nov and #PaquetazoDeDuque. This suggests that the National Strike Committee attempted to gain visibility, recognition and ultimately support for the strike through social media. Hashtags function as a fast way to spread information, since all information on this specific topic can be encountered through one click hereon.

Taking these claims in mind, this research focused on the use of Twitter not only in the days leading up to November 21st, the first day of the Paro Nacional, but for a longer period of time. In the analysis of two important hashtags that were used to Tweet about the Paro Nacional, it was evaluated whether Twitter as a social medium played a significant role in the mobilization of the officially declared protest days.

Through a search of many “Tweets” from the time period of the Paro Nacional, around 70 popular hashtags were identified that related to Tweets about the protests. These hashtags were centered around various topics, ranging from anti-government discourse to practical information about the next day of official strike. In order to analyze Twitter usage during the full period of the Paro Nacional (from November 21st to January 25th), two hashtags of a more overarching nature were selected as topics of investigation. Since these hashtags were not linked to any date or specific event, they were expected to be used all throughout this period of time and to provide a good overview of Twitter usage. The selection of these hashtags was supported by the data from personal interviews with participants in the protests. These protestors were asked about which hashtag they considered to be most important or vivid during this time, to which they responded with #ElParoSigüe and #ParoNacional.

A Twitter search was done for Tweets that contained this hashtag that were posted on a specific day, for all days between November 21st and January 25th. Twitter showed the “Top” Tweets of this search, of which the first ten were selected.<sup>12</sup> Each Tweet on the platform has a publicly displayed number of Replies, Retweets, and Likes that were given by other Twitter users. The sum of these three numbers per Tweet is the total number of times another Twitter user has interacted with this Tweet. Therefore, this number provides an indication of the popularity of the Tweet, its content, and its shareability, since interacting with a Tweet automatically spreads the Tweet to one’s own following. In order to decide the popularity of the hashtags #ElParoSigüe and #ParoNacional during the time of the Paro Nacional, the average number of Replies, Retweets and Likes per Tweet was calculated for every day from the first ten “Top Tweets” with the respective

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<sup>11</sup> Information retrieved through an archived version of the website [www.paronacional.com](http://www.paronacional.com).

<sup>12</sup> Important to note is the algorithmic nature of Twitter as a social media platform. The selection of “Top” Tweets that Twitter presents through this search can differ between accounts, locations, or other factors that Twitter uses to create an algorithm. This means that the ten “Top” Tweets might have been influenced by previously visited pages on the Twitter website. This factor is in part compensated by the long period of investigation on which this research was conducted.

hashtag. These three numbers were then added per day, to calculate the Hashtag Popularity Factor, revealing the average amount of interactions per Tweet on that day. This Factor was calculated for every day from November 16th 2019 to January 25th 2020, the period of this wave of protests. The timeline of these Hashtag Popularity Factors over this period of time was then compared to the timeline of physical protests in Colombia (see Figure 2.2), focusing on the “official” days of strike as they were announced by the National Strike Committee in orange (November 21st, 27th, and December 4th of 2019, and January 25th of 2020). This comparison shows whether there is a correlation between Twitter usage and the declaration of official strike days of the Paro Nacional, as seen in Figure 3.1a and Figure 3.1b.<sup>13</sup>

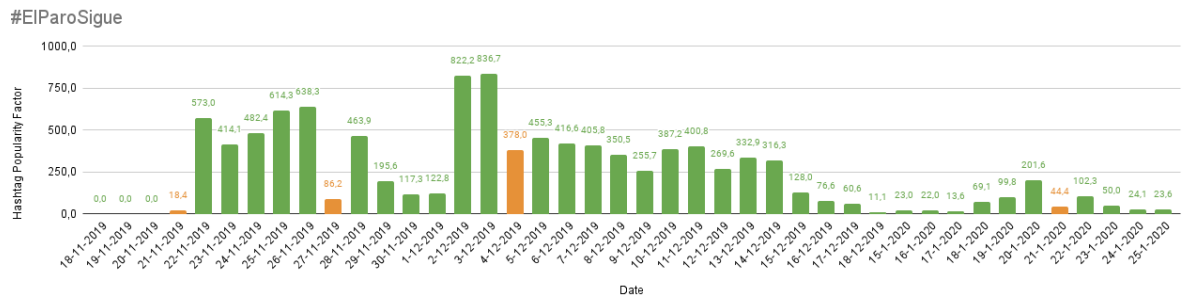
In the analysis, it was found that the hashtag #ElParoSigue, translated as #TheStrikeContinues, was in all tweets referred to as a proclamation for continuation of the strike. It was used as a call for perseverance to the protestors and to not give up protesting for the demands. An overview of the use of this hashtag during the period of the Paro Nacional therefore provided an insight into the relation with the offline events, when compared to the days the protest was officially announced by the National Strike Committee. Figure 3.1a shows an overview of the Hashtag Popularity Factor for the hashtag #ElParoSigue for each day between the a few days before the start of the strike on November 21st of 2019, and the end of the strike in January 2020, highlighting in orange the days of the strike that were officially announced by the National Strike Committee. It shows that the Hashtag Popularity Factor for #ElParoSigue rose in the days leading up to the officially planned protests. This growth in interactions with Tweets with the hashtag started on the day the officially planned protest was announced and grew up to the day of the actual protest. As was confirmed through the personal interviews with protestors, in the days leading up to the officially planned protest, the hashtag #ElParoSigue was used as an “announcement” and thus a mobilizing actor for the protests. In many of the Tweets analyzed, the hashtag was used in combination with another hashtag that set the date for the protest (such as #4DElParoSigue, or #4DParoNacional), which suggests a call for strike and protests on that specific day.

Remarkably enough, the Hashtag Popularity Factor for #ElParoSigue declined significantly on the day of the actual protest. This low number of interactions can be attributed to the relation between online and offline protests: if someone was Tweeting and thus supporting the diffusion of information on the protest in the days leading up to it, they were likely to be physically protesting on the day itself, and therefore spending less time interacting on Twitter. This in turn points to a clear connection between offline and online activity, as Twitter truly acts as an announcement and mobilizer for protests. After a day of protest, Tweets containing the hashtag were again heavily interacted with, which decreased as time continued.

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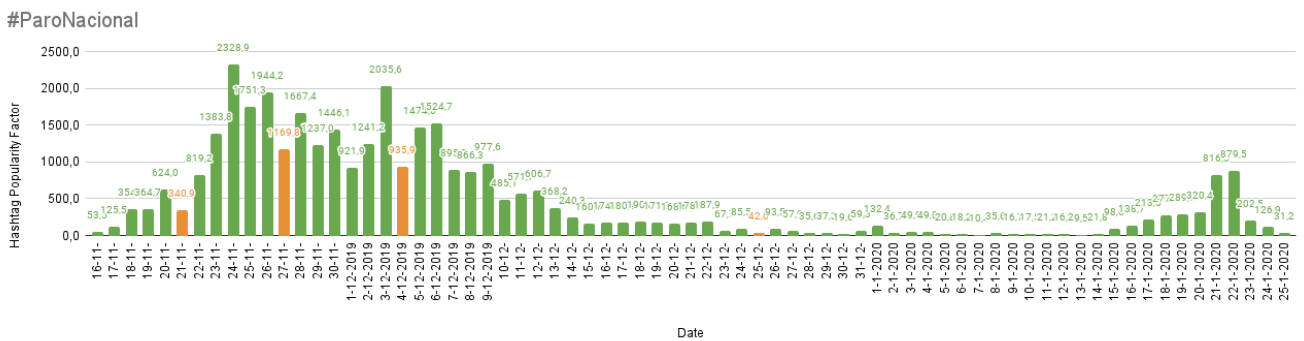
<sup>13</sup> For practical reasons, Figure 3.1a shows the period from November 16th to December 18th of 2019, and January 15th to January 25th. The Hashtag Popularity Factor for the period between December 19th 2019 and January 14th for #ElParoSigue does not surpass 50.

Figure 3.1a: A comparison between the use of #ElParoSigue on Twitter to the days of announced protest in the Paro Nacional (in orange).



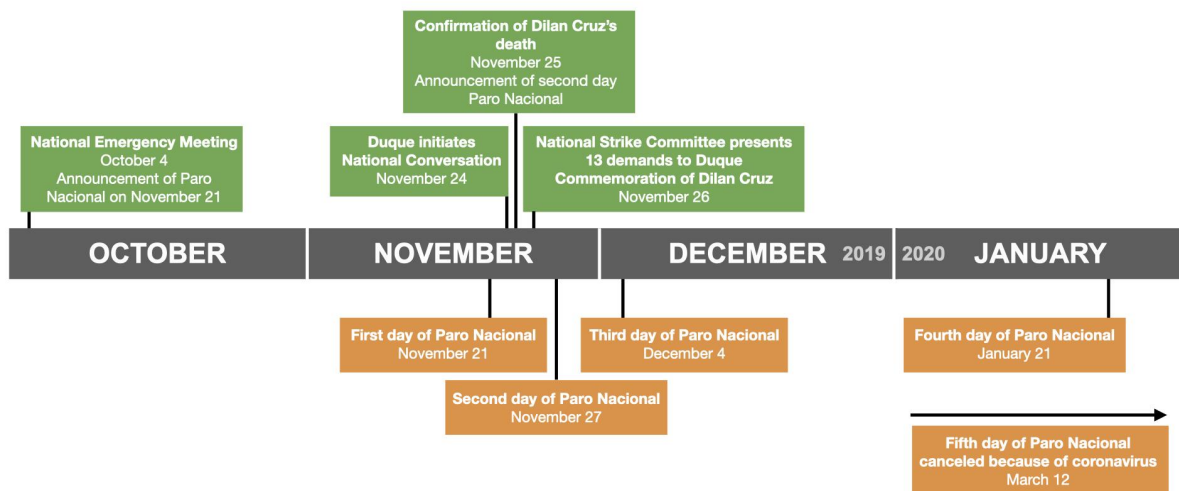
Source: own elaboration on the basis of field data

Figure 3.1b: A comparison between the use of #ParoNacional on Twitter to the days of announced protest in the Paro Nacional (in orange).



Source: own elaboration on the basis of field data

Figure 2.2: A timeline of relevant events and official days of the Paro Nacional



Source: own elaboration constructed through analysis of various news articles

As for the hashtag #ParoNacional, a similar timeline of the Hashtag Popularity Factor was found. The average number of interactions per Tweet and thus the HPF was found to be higher than #ElParoSigue, which is due to the descriptive nature of the hashtag #ParoNacional: it is not a proclamation for continuation of the strike per se, but could be used in any context on the topic of the Paro Nacional. Therefore it is a good indication of not only the people in favour of the strike, but the intensity of the overall discussion on Twitter on the strike. The high numbers of the HPF for the hashtag #ParoNacional show the diffusion of information and the therefore mobilizing ability of Twitter. Figure 3.1b shows that the number of interactions with the hashtag #ParoNacional also rose in the days leading up to the protest, supporting the notion of Twitter as a platform for “announcement” and mobilization.<sup>14</sup> The HPF then also declines on the day of the actual protest, and rises significantly in the days after. The explanation for the decline is equal to that of the hashtag #ElParoSigue. The significant rise in the days after the protest can be attributed to the fact that not only personal Tweets, but also news content that was published on the Paro Nacional was tagged with this descriptive hashtag.

The analysis of the Tweets #ElParoSigue and #ParoNacional in comparison to the physical protests in Colombia, shows a rise in Twitter use on the Paro Nacional in the days leading up to the officially announced strike, followed by a significant decline on the actual days of protest. This dynamic proves the relation between social media use and protest, in online and offline protest. Participants in the protests are likely to have heavily interacted with Twitter content on the days leading up to the Paro Nacional, to spread information and mobilize others to protest. These same participants were then physically participating in the Paro Nacional on these officially declared protest days, leading to less interaction on Twitter. This analysis and the supporting literature show the role of social media as a mobilizing agent in the Paro Nacional.

### 3.2 Social media in the shift from personal action frame to collective identity

In order to interpret the observed relation between social media and the Paro Nacional on a personal level, it had to be analyzed whether there was a relationship between people’s personal experience and motivation to protest and their social media use. A possible change in motivation in combination with a frequent social media use could have implications for social media’s influence on personal action frames (the individual framework of beliefs and meanings that motivate someone to act while giving legitimacy to their actions, based on their rational choices but also personal contextual matters such as identity, emotion, culture, political press and social networks (definition after Gamson, 1992, cited in Caraway, 2018; Melucci, 1996; McAdam et al. 2001; della Porta and Diani 2006 in Bennett and Segerberg, 2012)). It was found that while protestors started their participation in the protest with a

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<sup>14</sup> For practical reasons, Figure 3.1b shows the period from November 16th to December 18th of 2019, and January 15th to January 25th. The Hashtag Popularity Factor for #ParoNacional steadily declines from December 19th until December 24th, and continues to not surpass 50 until January 15th.

very personal and concrete action frame, this action frame shifted throughout the protests towards a larger, overarching collective identity that motivated them to take part in the protests. In combination with their very frequent social media use, it was found that social media can function as a generator for collective identity.

The interpretation of the relation between social media usage and the protests was done through a survey among participants in the protests of the *Paro Nacional*. In the search for hashtags relating to the *Paro Nacional*, numerous Twitter profiles were identified of people actively expressing their opinion on the *Paro Nacional* and/or advocating for a continuation of the protests. All profiles that allowed for someone to privately message them, received a message that explained the research project, contained a link to the survey, requested them to fill in the survey, or to further share the survey with others that were active in the *Paro Nacional*.<sup>15</sup> Out of 108 people that were approached with the survey, 28 surveys were (anonymously) completed. This survey contained questions on their participation and motivation in the *Paro Nacional*, their possible membership to any social movement organizations, their social media usage and their thoughts on the function of social media in the *Paro Nacional*.<sup>16</sup> While the survey was completely anonymous, it did provide the opportunity for the participant to leave their contact information if they were interested in a further discussion of the topic. This resulted in four personal, in depth, interviews that were used to confirm the results of both the quantitative data analysis and the survey.<sup>17</sup>

The first section of the survey focused on the motivations for protest and the participants' relationship with social organizations. Out of the participants in this survey, 46.6% was a member or active supporter of a social movement organization before the beginning of the *Paro Nacional* on November 21st, ranging from student organizations to human rights' organizations to organizations in support of the Colombian Peace Progress. Almost all of these participants were connected to the social media channels of their respective organization, which was for 10.7% of participants the first medium through which they heard about the announcement of the *Paro Nacional*. In general, social media was the dominating medium for participants' first encounter with the *Paro Nacional* (60.7%), the majority saw the news through their personal network's social media (50% of all participants). Other participants reported first hearing about the *Paro Nacional* through their family or friends, on the streets, or the news online or on television. These numbers suggest that social media can play an important role in the spreading of the announcement of the *Paro Nacional*. This diffusion can be successful either through digital ties to a social movement organization, but predominantly through pre-existing ties in people's personal networks, as is supported by Gould (1993).

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<sup>15</sup> See appendix for the message.

<sup>16</sup> See appendix for the complete survey.

<sup>17</sup> An important factor that had to be taken into account when conducting the research was the then-current social situation in Colombia. In May and June of 2021, when this research was conducted, a new wave of anti-government protests occurred in the country and caused large social unrest. In order to not ruffle any feathers, the intention of the research had to be clearly explained and in some cases needed some further clarification.

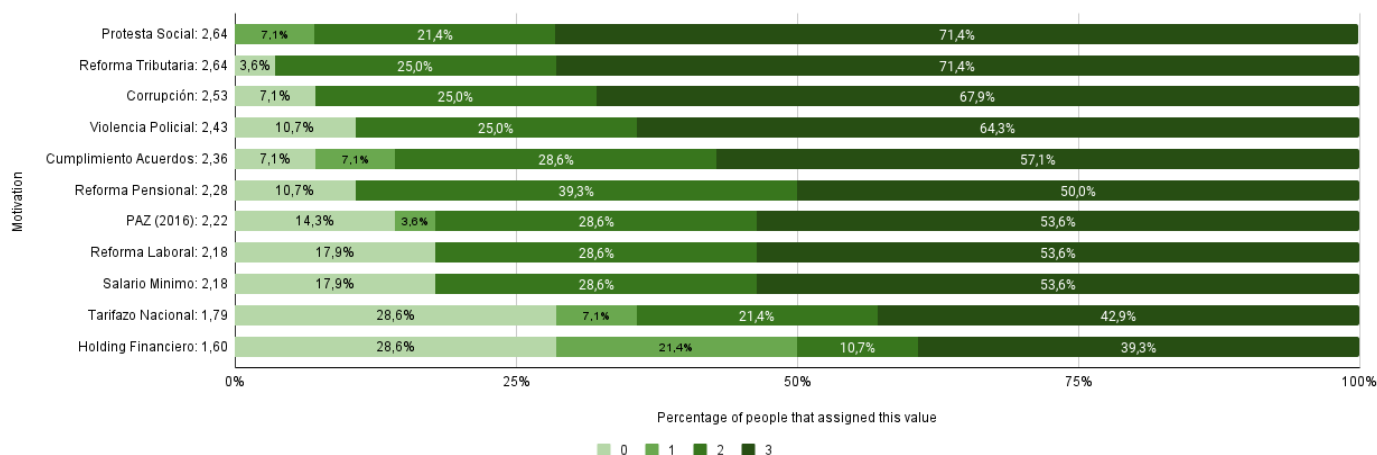
In order to examine people's action frame through which they decided to protest in the Paro Nacional, all participants were asked about their reasons to protest. Their options were the 9 reasons for the Paro Nacional that were initially put forward by the National Strike Committee on their website, as discussed in the previous section. In addition, the stance against police violence and the fulfillment of the 2016 Peace Agreements were added to the list of motivations, since media reported these two as important factors in the organization of the Paro. The participants assigned a value to each motivation on a scale from 0 (it was no reason at all for me) to 3 (it was a very important reason for me). Figure 3.2 shows the results of this survey. The vertical axis presents the 11 set motivations that the participants could assign a value to, ordered from highest to lowest average assigned value. This average value that was assigned to a motivation displays the importance of said motivation to the average participant. The horizontal axis shows the percentage of participants that assigned each value to the motivation, thus what individual values constitute this average value. These percentages essentially display the level of support for certain motivations among the participants of the survey. For example, all participants agreed that the right for social protest was at least to some degree a motivation for them to protest, as 0% assigned it a 0. 71.4% even assigned it a 3, coming to an average value of 2,64. Contrarily, opposition to increase of national energy rates and opposition to financial holding companies were not widely shared motivations for participation in the protest, according to the respondents: both motivations were assigned a 0 by 28.6% of participants.

This graph shows that the defense of social protest, the opposition of tributary reforms, corruption, police violence and the demand for fulfillment of agreements with various social groups were the most widely shared motivations for participation in the protest. Furthermore, the low percentages of participants that assigned the motivations a 0, disclose that for many people, most of these motivations were at least of some significance for their participation in the Paro Nacional. This supports the diversity of personal motivations that can coexist within a personal action frame. Furthermore, it shows the diversity of personal action frames that were at the base of participation in the Paro Nacional: the fact that all motivations were assigned a value by at least 71.4% of the participants legitimizes all of the named motivations for the protests.

Not only were the motivations widely shared among participants, they were of high importance as well. The average value of motivation, thus the importance of said motivation to the average participant, develops similarly to the number of supporting respondents, proving a stable relation between importance of a motivation and existence of this motivation in personal action frames: some motivations are intensively supported in many people's personal action frames. The high value that is attributed to widely shared motivations (such as the defense of social protest or the opposition of tributary reforms) suggest that there might have existed a collective action frame to some extent, since so many of the participants agreed on the high importance of these motivations.



Figure 3.2: The support of the set motivations for the Paro Nacional among respondents.



Source: own elaboration on the basis of field data

Figure 3.3: Newly stated motivations for participation in protests of the Paro Nacional, as referred to by the respondents

Extra personal motivations	Number of respondents that referred
For reform of the healthcare system	4
For more (educational) opportunities for the younger generation	3
Against the high salaries of congressmen	2
Against assassination of social leaders	2
Against the neglect of agrarian regions	2
For more social justice	2
For more work opportunities	2
Against the bombing of 8 minors in Guaviare	1
For legalization of marihuana	1
Against unfair free trade agreements	1

Source: own elaboration on the basis of field data

However: afterwards, it was asked whether there was another reason that was not presented that motivated them to participate in the protest in the Paro Nacional. With this open question, the overview of motivations to protest grew even further and became as complete as possible. A table of newly stated reasons for protest is shown in Figure 3.3. These reasons add even more to the list of possible motivations for the Paro Nacional, and therefore the combinations in which they can form various personal action frames through which someone can decide to participate in the protests. The diversity in personal action frames therefore grows even further and challenges the idea of the existence of a collective action frame to some extent: all personal action frames exist of a specific combination of motivations.

In order to gain insight into a possible change in perspective of motivations for the Paro Nacional before and after it happened, participants were then asked what they thought was the most important reason for the strike after it “ended”, thus after the period of the Paro Nacional between November 2019 and January 2020. In the comparison, the answers for motivations for the strike before and after the protests were evaluated per participant. Remarkable was the difference in specificity. The motivations before the strike were very diverse and of a very concrete character, e.g. “against the tax reform”, or “for the minimum salary”, as seen in Figure 3.4a. It was found that after the Paro Nacional, the majority of the participants in the survey had a more broadly stated, “larger” reason for the protest. 89.9% of participants had adjusted their previous, concrete motivation for the strike into some of a larger, overarching nature, which can be divided into three categories: opposing the Duque government, opposing inequality, and opposing police violence. Some participants admitted their reasons for participation after the strike to a combination of two or more of these three motivations, as is seen in Figure 3.4b. For example: a participant in the protest had pointed out the anti-tax reform, the right for social protest, and the reform of the healthcare system as their reasons to protest before the strike. After the strike, it was the “social inequality and the abuse of power by the government” (translated) that they thought were the main reasons for the Paro Nacional to occur. The comparison between Figure 3.4a and Figure 3.4b shows the drastic change in diversity and specificity of motivations before and after the Paro Nacional.

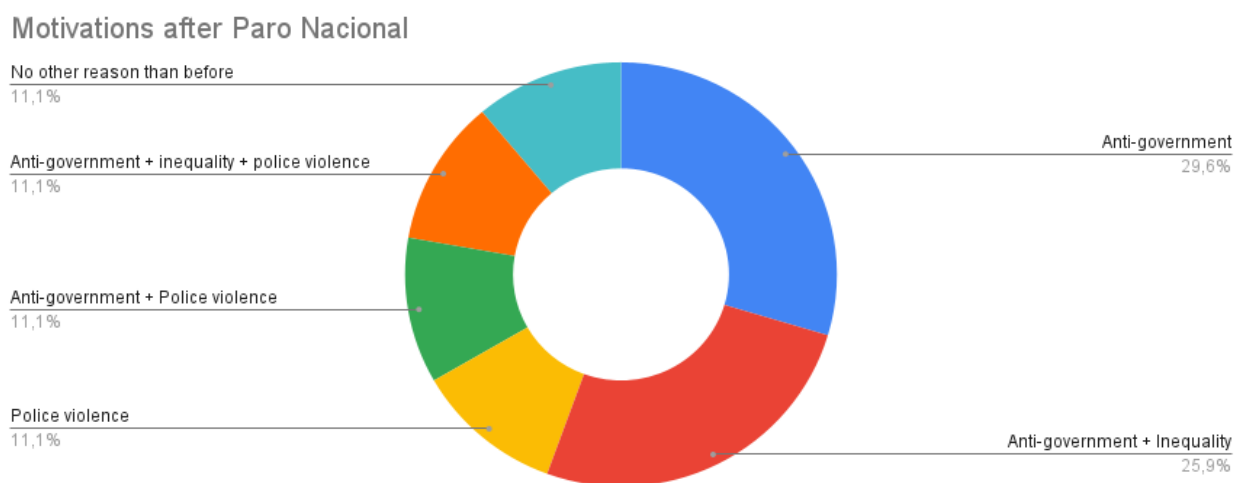
The consistency of the topic of police violence as a motivation before and after the protests supports the relation between offline and online protest. 89.3% of respondents claimed it as a reason to protest before the Paro Nacional, and 33.3% of motivations after the Paro Nacional were related to police violence. This is interesting in relation to the violence that was used by the government and police during the Paro Nacional, considering the several casualties which were widely protested against and commemorated by the participants. A collective identity thus already existed on the topic of police violence before the Paro Nacional, possibly supporting the sense of community in the process of bringing people from different personal action frames together which resulted in the creation of a collective identity under broader concepts as “anti-government” or “inequality”.

Figure 3.4a: Respondents' motivations before the Paro Nacional



Source: own elaboration on the basis of field data

Figure 3.4b: Respondents' motivations after the Paro Nacional



Source: own elaboration on the basis of field data

This overall change in thought suggests a broadening of horizons in the action frame of the participants during the Paro Nacional. This shows that while every participant started the Paro Nacional with a personal action frame (thus more particular reasons to participate in the protests), the personal action frame evolved into or was integrated in a collective identity, loosely framed around the concepts of anti-government, inequality and police violence.

When asked about their social media presence, all participants confirmed to be active on social media during the Paro Nacional. Of the participants, 85.4% claimed to use their social media “very often”, 7.3% “often” and another 7.3% “regularly”, supporting the previous expectation of social media as an actor in the shift from personal action frames to a collective identity. Afterwards, participants were asked about whether they thought social media functions as a medium to unite people who protest for different reasons (thus, who are motivated through different personal action frames). 96.4% confirmed this claim, which was reinforced by the interviewees. This passionate sense of unity is remarkable for a group of people who originally had such distinctive motivations. This is an interesting finding regarding the relation between collective identity and the organizational element of membership, as will be discussed in the next section.

When directly asked whether they thought the Paro Nacional led them to think more consciously or differently about certain themes in society, considering the variety of actors that were mobilized during the strike, 92.9% of participants affirmed that it did. This high percentage and the previously discussed change in action frame combined with the noted frequent social media use during the Paro Nacional, assigns social media as a significant actor in the shift of personal action frame and the construction of a collective identity.

### 3.3 Social media as a channel of information: legitimizing protest

As shown in the previous section, intensive use of social media contributed to increased consciousness about the plurality of grievances behind the Paro Nacional, facilitating the construction of a wider collective identity and the shifts from personal actions frames to collective action (see also section 3.1). This points to the role of social media as channels of information and communication.

When asked about the content of social media activity, 96.4% of the respondents reported posting on their social media about topics related to the protests during the period of the Paro Nacional (thus, between November 2019 and January 2020). In these posts, 89.3% of participants spread information about the motives behind the protest, 71.4% posted about practical information on the protest (such as times and dates), and 50% actively called for others to join the protest. When asked about what the participants thought of the function of social media in the Paro Nacional, 96.4% indicated that social media functioned as a medium to spread information on the motives behind the Paro Nacional, and as a medium to spread practical information. The subsequent open question on the influence of social media in the Paro in the survey led another 96.4% to state that social media

functioned as a medium to spread information where people could communicate about matters around the Paro Nacional. These high numbers point to the ability of social media as a platform where information is easily diffused, as was expected from the analysis of the hashtags #ElParoSigue and #ParoNacional. This diffusion of information is evidently at the base of the shift from a personal action frame to a collective identity: the frequent use of social media essentially equals the frequent exposure to new information. This leads to more people being informed on a variety of matters, broadening their horizons and converging under the collective “anti-government” identity.

The value assigned to social media as an efficient channel for communication and information needs to be understood in the context of Colombian society. When asked about their thoughts on the function of social media, some participants noted that social media was the place where they would be shown the ‘real’ news, instead of the government-controlled news through traditional media outlets. They stated that the government will often frame news that could negatively affect them in such a way that it will not look as bad, or they will simply not talk about aspects that badly reflect on them. Twitter is a platform that is in no way controlled by a government, and is open for anyone to post on, so there is a sense that people can post the real stories to call attention to matters that might not be shown on official Colombian news outlets. One interviewee stated that Twitter functions as one of the few places where one can feel free to express their opinion, without fearing the sort censorship often experienced in the comment sections of mainstream news outlets.

Studies have shown that mainstream media in Colombia are faced with corporate and governmental obstacles when trying to publish the truth (Barrios & Miller, 2007). The strong relations between the mainstream media and Colombia’s political class have roots in the armed conflict: in war, various sides of the conflict use the tactic of information control to prevent the enemy from using it in their favour, resulting in forced censorship (Ibrahim & Zarate, 2019). Not only are media and journalists under government control, they are often under serious threat of violent groups, sometimes leading to very unsafe situations for journalists who try to tell the true story. This image of mainstream media puts the accessibility of open platforms such as Twitter at the forefront for freedom of expression. Social media converge the idea of ‘real people’ telling ‘the truth’, without personal interest, the more important in a society where much dissent is quickly discarded as ‘criminal’. Friction is allowed on social media: seeing others share similar ideas, legitimizes protest against the ruling power.

The open access to Twitter and the ability for everyone to post information inevitably creates the risk of misinformation and fake news. Everyone can frame information in the way that is most appealing to them. One respondent in the survey claimed that social media had a negative influence on the Paro Nacional, only polarizing information and showing everyone what convenes them. The polarization of information leads to polarization of opinions (Azzimionti & Fernandes, 2018). This can result in the divide of people’s stance on certain topics, as is claimed by several respondents to the survey. Some respondents state that social media thus has a positive influence (by exposing

uncensored news), as well as a negative influence (polarizing and dividing). This is supported by the concept of fast diffusion of information through an algorithm: the bias of a party agreeing with the dominant ideological hegemony or otherwise being designated as “criminal”, as seen in the history of criminalization of protest in Colombia, can be either nuanced or supported by the information that reaches a person through this algorithm.

### 3.4 Membership in the Paro Nacional

With the construction of a new collective identity through social media, questions arise on the relation between this collective identity and the organizational element of membership. As previously discussed, traditional organization theory tells that a formal organization consists of all five organizational elements as defined by Ahrne and Brunsson (2011). From the analysis of the Paro Nacional and its protests, it can be concluded that the organizational structure of the movement is not that of such a traditional, formal social movement organization. While the elements of membership and hierarchy are present to some extent, the elements of rules, monitoring, and sanctions can not be identified. Therefore, the Paro Nacional is an example of partial organizing.

Regarding the organization of the protests between November 2019 and February 2020, the first call for the strike was made on October 4th by the National Strike Committee. This committee was a new unit that was formed through a National Emergency Meeting. While the identity of the members of the committee was never prominently exposed, many leaders of social or labor organizations spoke on behalf of the committee in public outings.<sup>18</sup> Along with the consideration that the document was signed by more than a hundred labor and social institutions, one can assume the committee consisted of the leaders of several of these institutions.

The unity of all of these organizations is remarkable in both the identity and the organization of the social movement. Often social movement organizations stand and fight for their own cause, and are organized through their respective system. In order to challenge a common opponent (the government of President Duque), the hundreds of organizations that supported the Paro Nacional had to design a new organizational structure to some degree, that all complied with. The analysis of this social movement asks for a flexible and greater perspective on the protests through organization theory, since the organizational structure at first glance does not represent a traditional formal organizational structure given its plurality of underlying organizations.

*Membership* is a tool to decide whether someone is in- or excluded from the movement, and it therefore provides some kind of identity. The National Strike Committee did not create a membership of the organization: it did, however, present the hundreds of underlying and supporting organizations

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<sup>18</sup> For example Diogenes Orjuelo, head of the Central Union of Workers (CUT), commented on the continuation of the Paro after on November 22nd. See: Ruiz Rico, M. (2019, November 22). El presidente de la CUT aseguró que el nuevo paro dependerá de la actitud que tome el gobierno. *La Republica*. Retrieved from: <https://www.larepublica.co/>

as some sort of “members” of the Paro Nacional. Of course, all of these organizations themselves had members who were in or excluded by their respective form of membership. Out of all the motivations for the Paro Nacional, each organization had a reason to participate: for example, the so-called genocide of indigenous leaders was a prominent reason for indigenous organizations to support the strike. Likely, their members would name the same reason for participating in the protest, which derives from their membership and the collective identity they thus comply with. Overall, there are different layers of membership in the Paro Nacional: that of one of the underlying social movement organizations, and that of the organization in the National Strike Committee.

In the Paro Nacional however, social media played a large role in the construction of personal action frames and collective identity for participants in the protests. In the widespread online information on different problems in Colombian society, every person could initially find a reason to protest in the Paro Nacional. People that were tied to all kinds of social movement organizations, or no organization at all, had personal relations to one of the many presented problems to motivate their participation. There was no need to comply with a collective action framework that was established by a formal organization, in order to partake in the protest. Instead of such a collective action framework, the continuation of the protests, both on and offline, generated a collective identity that many people could identify with. In this research on people’s motivation to protest before the Paro Nacional, versus the reasons they saw for it after the strike took place, a clear shift towards a larger, overarching notion of anti-government sense was found, under which all previous motivations converged. Where their personal reasons to protest varied widely and were often very concrete, the protests had broadened horizons and created this collective identity, uniting under the larger, anti-government stance.

The unification of these protesters led to larger digital networks, since they could find each other through hashtags and the previously discussed “sharing” nature of social media, in which they united under a stance against the Duque government. This is the digitally networked action that Bennett and Segerberg note as an organizational structure that can transcend the elemental units of organizations and individuals. The role of social media as an actor in the shift from various personal action frames to the construction of a collective identity is an example of a new type of membership, surpassing membership in the traditional sense. It is a flexible, evolving membership: since there was no explicit collective tool that decided whether someone is in or excluded from the movement, various personal action frames could be integrated into a larger/overarching collective identity, loosely articulated around a rejection of the Duque government. Through the sharing and exchange of information around hashtags, social media made visible the wide variety of forms of rejection of the Duque government through the personal action frames, reflecting while at the same time reinforcing a sense of community, similarity and solidarity, thus a collective identity. Not being able to identify with this overarching collective identity thus excludes someone from the “membership” of this movement.

An interesting finding in this research in relation to the notion of membership is that while social media constructs a new type of membership, it can coexist with a “traditional” form of membership. Of the respondents to the survey, 25% became an official member or strong supporter of a social organization after the Paro Nacional. A flexible membership through social media thus does not completely replace the demand for traditional membership.

Regarding the other traditional organizational elements in the Paro Nacional, the element of *hierarchy* can be found in the existence of the National Strike Committee: this group consisted of leaders of the various underlying social movement organizations, who thus were already appointed through their respective system of hierarchy. In addition, it was this committee that concretized demands, called for meetings with president Duque, announced new strikes, and released official statements to the greater public. While the announcement of new strikes was not a necessity for people to protest (as can be seen in the protests outside of the officially declared strike days), it did reinforce the protests and cause more people to take to the streets.

While the elements of membership and hierarchy are visible to some extent, the elements of rules, monitoring and sanctions in the traditional sense are absent from the organizational structure of the Paro Nacional. In the analysis of the organization, there is no sight of a set of *rules* or standards that are to be complied with. The National Strike Committee published very little information and no rules in respect to the actual development of the physical protests. The committee did publish the locations or routes for protest during the first Paro Nacional on November 21st, but there was no obligation to follow these routes. Therefore it cannot be considered a rule of the social movement.

The lack of rules causes difficulty in *monitoring* the actions in the Paro Nacional since there were no guidelines to control. Monitoring can also be interpreted as observing the behavior and measures within the movement, regardless of rules. However, this was not explicitly done. There was a livestream of the protests projected on the Strike Committee’s website on November 21st and the report written at the end of the first day of the strike by the committee, did thank all groups of participants separately and therefore acknowledged their participation. One could argue that this does not count as monitoring, therefore the element of monitoring is absent from this social movement.

The fifth element is the imposition of *sanctions*, both positive and negative. The organization did not enforce any type of sanctions on its members by prohibiting or favoring a group or organization through the provision of resources, for example. All participants were equal and had equal access to the little resources, such as templates for signs to hold up during the protest.

While the three elements of rules, monitoring and sanctions are absent in the Paro Nacional in their traditional sense, it can be argued that like membership, these elements can be present in another form or with other characteristics, taking factors such as social control or peer pressure into consideration. In this investigation, two of the five elements of traditional organization theory are found to some extent in the Paro Nacional, that of membership and hierarchy. Social media enabled participants to become a “member” of an overarching, collective identity that supported the Paro



Nacional, through their personal action frame. This created a flexible, inclusive membership that is open to evolution. The multiple layers of hierarchy in the Paro Nacional were found in the existence of the National Strike Committee and the various social organizations that supported the committee and the protests. This analysis of the organizational structure of the Paro Nacional and its remarkable notion of membership will, together with the conclusions from the quantitative and qualitative research, help the placement on the spectrum of connective and collective action networks as defined by Bennett and Segerberg.

### 3.5 The Paro Nacional and connective action

In Bennett and Segerberg's study on collective and connective action, the authors propose that in connective action networks, communication technologies change the action dynamics in these large-scale networks. As seen in the analysis, this is exactly what happened in the network that is the Paro Nacional on social media. The use of social media (the communication technologies), is what brought people from various personal action frames together, generating a new collective identity, under which people could literally "collectively identify" and protest together (thus changing the action dynamic in the network). Bennett and Segerberg proposed that there is much research needed on the logic of connective action to define its organizational principles, and similarities and differences from the logic of collective action. Following their statement, this research has examined the organizational element of "membership" in a connective action network, which has proven to be flexible, inclusive and therefore open to evolution.

On the scale as proposed by Bennett and Segerberg, the Paro Nacional is positioned between the Organizationally Enabled Network-model (OEN) and the Self Organizing Networks-model (SOM). The most prominent element on the scale that applies to the Paro Nacional is *the large-scale personal access to multi-layered social technologies (SOM)*. In the organization of the network around the Paro Nacional, digital media played an important if not the most important role. Since the website of the Paro Nacional and all social media is accessible to everyone with an internet connection, personal access to the social technologies in use was generated and it was not provided by the organization, as might be in Organizationally Enabled Networks.<sup>19</sup> This personal access to the multi-layered social technologies led to the second element of the spectrum, which is *personal expression shared over social networks (SOM)*. Digital social networks and the "shareability" of social media content is one of the most prominent methods through which the Paro Nacional gained its following. The research shows that half of the participants found out about the Paro Nacional through their friends, peers and other members of their personal online social network.

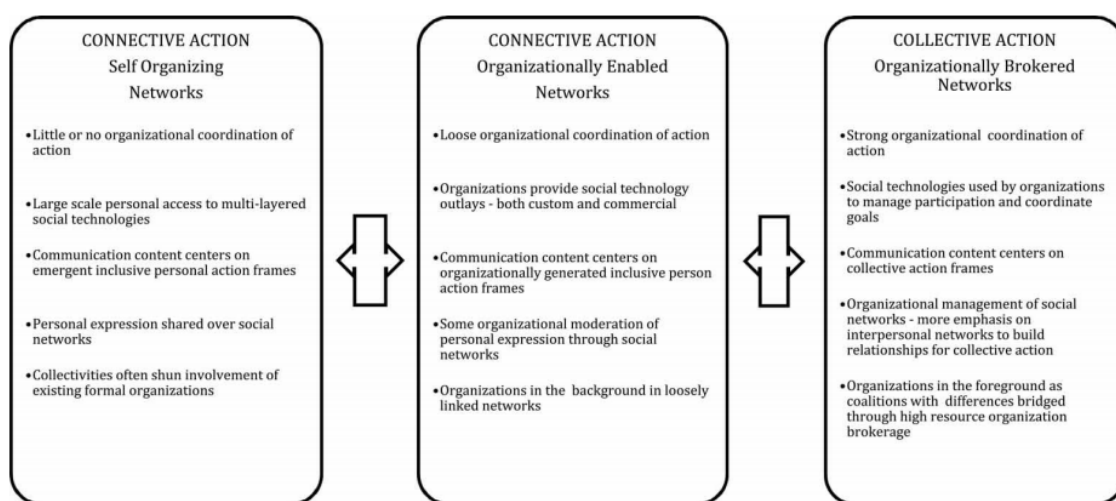
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<sup>19</sup> The accessibility to social media is naturally also dependent on internet availability in the country and literacy rate of the population.

This diffusion of communication content about the *Paro Nacional* was thoroughly supported by the *emergent inclusive personal action frames (SOM)*. In the beginning of the organization, the communication content as proposed by the only organizational actor, the National Strike Committee, was of a very inclusive nature: the hashtag #ParoNacional21Nov. It was the network that took this communication content and applied it to every personal action frame, adding specific hashtags and therefore adding various communities under this same hashtag. This led to diffusion of content, the construction of the various different personal action frames which converged under a collective identity, through which such a large number of people participated in the *Paro Nacional*. What started as a call to action under the #ParoNacional21Nov was effectively adopted into a very diverse spectrum of personal action frames.

While these aspects focus fairly on the network as the organizational actor, the organizations in the traditional sense should not be overlooked. There were indeed *organizations acting in the background in loosely linked networks (OEN)*. The National Strike Committee made the first call for the *Paro Nacional*, proposing the original #ParoNacional21Nov hashtag which generated the networks on social media. While the National Strike Committee presented itself in the organization of the *Paro Nacional*, it never displayed the wish to be widely known as the official organizer of the strike. The National Strike Committee and the *Paro Nacional* itself were officially supported by various social organizations that were linked to the *Paro Nacional* and each other through the existence of this committee and the shared demands for change. It was not these organizations and the National Strike Committee that were at the forefront of the movement, rather the people participating in the strike. A possible argument for the absence of a strong organization at the center of the strike could be the

Figure 1.1. Models of connective and collective action networks.



Source: *Elements of connective and collective action networks* by Bennett and Segerberg, 2012.

diversity in people that had to join the strike in order to be as successful. Essentially, the more people that would join, the greater of an impact the strike would have. If a strong organization presented itself at the center of the strike, this would ask for many people to comply with a collective action frame that was set by this organization. The lack of a collective action frame provided the opportunity for people to create their personal action frame and therefore participate for their own reasons. This would cause more people to join the protests and the strike to be a greater success.

Finally, the Paro Nacional was characterized by a *loose organizational coordination of action (OEN)*. The social movement organization in the form of the National Strike Committee did coordinate the first day of protest on the 21st of November 2019. Additionally, the committee provided information on their website on the times and places the protest would take place and people could gather. However, it was not necessary to follow these guidelines, which are therefore classified as “loosely coordinated”. Additionally, these guidelines were expanded by possible calls to action on social media, which could have been created by anyone and are therefore not centrally coordinated.

Following this multilayered analysis of social media, three functions of social media in the Paro Nacional can be concluded. First, statistical research shows that social media functions as a mobilizing agent for the protests. Then, it was found that the diversity of personal action frames that motivated people to participate in the protests, converged under a larger, overarching sentiment: the construction of a collective identity. Finally, the ability of social media as a diffuser of information and channel for communication was confirmed, which is essentially at the base of the former two conclusions. These conclusions on social media in the organizational structure of the Paro Nacional allows for an analysis of the elements of traditional organizational theory, which concludes that social media functions as a new type of membership in this network that is characterized by the logic of connective action. The nuances of involvement of traditional social organizations appoint the Paro Nacional as a Organizationally Enabled Network.

## Conclusion

From this study of the role of social media in the emergence, articulation, and continuation of the Colombian Paro Nacional movement and its sustained Colombian protests in 2019-2020, it can be concluded that social media acted as a mobilizing agent, a facilitator in the construction of a collective identity from various personal action frames, and a diffuser of information. Social media takes up such prominent roles in the Paro Nacional that the movement can be characterized as organized to some extent by social media, placing it as an Organizationally Enabled Network on the spectrum of collective and connective action as proposed by Bennett and Segerberg (2012).

The findings on the mobilizing role of social media in the Paro Nacional support the results of previous studies on social media's mobilizing and information spreading ability. The analysis of Twitter content based on two hashtags related to the Paro Nacional showed a clear relation to the protest days during the period of the Paro. The relation between offline and online protest was found in the function of social media as a diffuser of mobilizing content for the protests.

Not only is social media a rapid channel to diffuse information with the intention to mobilize, but this research shows that it functions as an open and accessible medium for public information and communication as well. This should be seen in context to Colombia's history of criminalization of protest: social media can function as a place where people feel free to advocate for their demands, anonymously behind their computer or phone screens, or by calling for action in their network. The survey and personal interviews conducted in this research confirmed this claim, while some participants went as far as claiming that social media was not only the place they could speak freely but also the place where they could obtain real information that was not censored by the government, as sometimes is the case with Colombia's mainstream media. Social media is open for anyone to write, spread and read certain information, which is inherently one of its flaws. The circulation of information on social media generates many examples of misinformation and fake news, which in combination with the algorithmic nature of most social media platforms, causes polarization of opinions, further dividing the country's population on societal topics. It is, therefore, a solution but also a contribution to the existence of bias in respect to protest criminalization. In a country where a party is either "good" (agreeing with the dominant ideological hegemony) or "criminal" (disagreeing with this hegemony), social media has the power to rapidly diffuse news that nuances this bias or to spread (possibly fake) news supporting these ideas.

Finally, it was found that social media can construct a collective identity through various personal action frames, creating a new type of membership in the organizational structure of a movement. At the start of the Paro Nacional, people were motivated by quite concrete demands from their personal action frame. These demands varied notably between the group of participants, proving the diversity in reasons for the protest. During the protests, these diverse personal action frames were integrated into a larger/overarching collective identity, loosely articulated around a rejection of the

Duque government. The motivations that were found after the protest could be divided into three larger categories. The frequent use of social media and thus the frequent exposure to information on a variety of topics facilitates a broadening of horizons that is at the cause of this larger collective identity.

The comparison between motivations before and after the *Paro Nacional* showed a continuation of the prominence of opposition to police violence as a motivation for protest. This was a widely shared part of personal action frames among participants before the *Paro Nacional* and was later identified as one of the three larger collective identities people united under. This suggests the existence of a collective identity to some extent before the protests happened. Opposition to police violence as a commonly shared element of personal action frames can have supported the further construction of collective identities: since they already agreed on this motivation, it was worth further exploring their common motivations, resulting in a union under the larger concepts of opposition to the government or inequality. This continuation also supports the relationship between offline and online activism: the police violence that the physical protestors were met with during the protests of the *Paro Nacional* were thus of such significance that they remained on the protestor's agenda as a collective identity to unite under, physically but online as well.

In their study on the logic of connective action, Bennett and Segerberg ask for further exploration of connective action formations and their organizational elements. Through the function of social media as a factor in the construction of a collective identity, this research adds an examination of the organizational element of "membership" to the logic of connective action. The analysis of personal action frames and the shift towards collective identity in the *Paro Nacional* concludes that the through social media generated collective identity provides a new type of membership: that of a flexible, inclusive, and evolving membership. This is an addition to the study of the organizational elements in the logic of connective action. However, a new type of membership does not suggest that it can't coexist with a "traditional" form of membership, which is supported by the number of participants who became official members of a social organization after the *Paro Nacional*. Therefore, this new definition of membership is not only an addition to the study of connective action; it is also an extension of the element of membership in the logic of collective action (in the traditional sense of the element).

Regarding further research, it can be analyzed whether, like membership, the other elements of traditional organizing such as monitoring, rules, or sanctions can be present in another form through social media. It is interesting to find out how these elements relate to concepts such as peer pressure or social control. The proposition of such research, like this study on the flexible nature of this new type of membership in the logic of connective action, emphasizes once again the need for a broad and extensive approach to the analysis of the organizing processes of social movements in relation to partial organizing but connective action especially. In the study of collective action, we are entering a new wave of social movements that are not only enabled by but that flourish because of

new digital technologies. With technology becoming such a prominent factor in politics and society, further exploration of digital technology and its powers for civil society is crucial for understanding and predicting the study of social movements and their organization. Ultimately, social movements give an important voice to civil society, enforcing democratic dynamics nationally and internationally, as seen in the wave of anti-government movements that has spread across Latin America since 2019.

A social movement in which social media plays such an important role can be seen in the context of not only a continental, but a global trend. New Social Movements have adapted a new character since the coming of new technologies due to the easy communication and diffusion of information that these social technologies provide. Social media allows for ongoing discussion on the movements' topics, which is seen in the homonymous continuation of the Paro Nacional in 2021, almost two years after its initiation in November of 2019 and the forced periods of physical inactivity. Within the Latin American Spring, similar grand movements in Chile, Bolivia, Peru, and Ecuador have functioned as examples that were made visible and seemingly achievable through social media. The fast diffusion of information can motivate people in other countries, copying the actions they have seen online. It is then extremely easy to find people with similar standpoints on social media, even though they might come from different backgrounds or live in different places. The term "Latin American Spring" indicates the size and significance of these movements in Latin America: something we can only wait for in the future.

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## Appendix

Appendix 1. The announcement of the Paro Nacional by the National Emergency Meeting, October 4th 2019.

### **CONTRA LAS POLÍTICAS DE DUQUE Y POR LA PAZ, PARO NACIONAL EL 21 DE NOVIEMBRE**

***Bogotá, octubre 4 de 2019***

El gobierno de Iván Duque y los gremios han anunciado la necesidad de unas reformas laboral y pensional, cumpliendo las ordenes de la OCDE, ambas reformas lo que buscan es empeorar las condiciones de los trabajadores, pretenden aumentar las ganancias de los empresarios a costa de la disminución del valor de la mano de obra, garantizar el fortalecimiento de los fondos privados de pensiones a costa de eliminar o marchitar Colpensiones, en suma salvaguardar los intereses del capital financiero especulativo en cabeza de Luis Carlos Sarmiento Angulo. Esto se resume en establecer el trabajo por horas, el salario mínimo diferencial por regiones, eliminación de las horas extras, el pago de dominicales y festivos, la indemnización por despido entre otras y en lo pensional aumentos de la edad de pensión y la cotización, disminución de la tasa de retorno y lo peor, establecer para todos el sistema de ahorro individual eliminando la solidaridad intergeneracional. También rechazamos la resolución 049 del Ministerio del Trabajo que atenta contra la estabilidad reforzada de los trabajadores.

Iván Duque a través del Congreso de la República aprobó en el artículo 331 del Plan Nacional de Desarrollo (Ley 1955 de 2019) la creación del “holding financiero estatal” inicialmente con 19 entidades del sector, entre las cuales están el Banco Agrario, aseguradoras Previsora y Positiva, Fiduprevisora, Fiduagraria y Fiducoldex, Fondo Nacional del Ahorro, Findeter, Finagro, Fonade, Icetex, Nueva Eps, Colpensiones y otras más, con el fin de privatizar el sector financiero público, es colocar dineros del Estado que hoy maneja y administra de manera directa, los pasa a manos del sector financiero privado para su negocio de especulación; dejando en la incertidumbre a más de 20.000 trabajadores de estas entidades.

El remate del patrimonio público continua con la venta el resto del 20% de las acciones de Ecopetrol, la subasta de ISA, la venta del oleoducto (Genit), también de las electrificadoras estatales y todo activo en que el Estado tenga menos del 49% de propiedad. La errática política económica de estos gobiernos la pretenden subsanar con más de lo mismo, lo cual implica recortes en los gastos del Estado para atender las necesidades de educación y salud entre otras, así como imponer nuevos impuestos a la población y persistir en los tratados de libre comercio. Se agrega a esto el incumplimiento por parte del gobierno de los acuerdos firmados con los sindicatos estatales y Fecode.

Exigimos el cumplimiento de los acuerdos de paz y las garantías para que este proceso se consolide, se detengan los asesinatos de los desmovilizados de la exguerrilla de las Farc, respeto a la JEP y las herramientas para su funcionamiento, cese inmediato de los asesinatos y persecución a los líderes sociales, también señalamos la agresión sistemática del gobierno de Duque contra la nación y el pueblo venezolano, con la observancia del respeto a la soberanía y la autodeterminación de las naciones, y que no se siga utilizando su crisis para colocar un distractor de los reales problemas que padecemos los colombianos.

Muchos sectores han salido a las calles, estudiantes, campesinos, maestros, empleados, transportadores, indígenas, ambientalistas, defensores de derechos humanos y comunidades enteras; sus justas peticiones no han sido resueltas por el gobierno, la constante ha sido la represión, la violencia policial, la estigmatización y la campaña para legislar su prohibición.

Ante la grave crisis que atraviesa la Nación producto de las políticas lesivas del gobierno de Duque, el movimiento social, estudiantil y sindical reunidos en el encuentro nacional de Emergencia este 4 de octubre aprobamos convocar a toda el pueblo a respaldar y participar en la gran jornada de movilización de los estudiantes universitarios el 10 de octubre, exigen el cumplimiento de los acuerdos firmados con el gobierno el pasado mes de diciembre; seguidamente convocamos a la gran jornada nacional de protesta el 17 de octubre de todos los sectores sociales y desembocar en la realización del paro nacional el 21 de noviembre con el fin de derrotar las intenciones del gobierno de seguir destruyendo al país, la paz, y los elementales derechos de los trabajadores y el pueblo.

**ENCUENTRO NACIONAL DE EMERGENCIA DEL MOVIMIENTO SOCIAL Y SINDICAL**  
**Presidido por: Comando Nacional Unitario (CUT, CGT, CTC, CPC), COS, Cumbre Agraria, Aconalferros, CRIC, UNEES, ACREES, y con la participación de más de 100 organizaciones sociales y sindicales.**

Appendix 2. The 13 demands from the National Strike Committee as presented to the Duque government on December 13th, 2019.



**AGENDA DEL COMITÉ NACIONAL DE PARO  
PARA LA NEGOCIACIÓN CON EL GOBIERNO NACIONAL  
Diciembre 13 de 2019**

**1. GARANTÍAS PARA EL EJERCICIO DEL DERECHO A LA PROTESTA SOCIAL**

- a. Retiro del proyecto de ley estatutaria por el cual se pretende regular el artículo 37 de la Constitución Política, y abstenerse de promover cualquier iniciativa normativa que tenga como fin regular la protesta social.
- b. Garantías para el ejercicio del derecho a la protesta social y la movilización, así como la libertad inmediata de las personas detenidas en las protestas y los presos políticos. Que la protesta social no tenga un tratamiento militar ni intimidatorio.
- c. Garantías especiales dirigidas a acabar con la violencia contra las mujeres en los procedimientos de la fuerza pública en intervención a la protesta social.
- d. Implementación de la Resolución 1190 de 2018. Instalación inmediata de la Mesa Nacional de Seguimiento a la Protesta Social, activación de Puesto de Mando Unificado y reconocimiento y fortalecimiento a misiones de verificación.
- e. Expedición de directivas precisas a los Gobernadores y Alcaldes para la implementación territorial de la Resolución 1190 de 2018.
- f. Desmonte del ESMAD y abstenerse de la creación de cuerpos similares en la Fuerza Pública.
- g. Prohibición del uso de las armas de "letalidad reducida" que han producido lesiones, mutilaciones y muertes por la actuación arbitraria de la fuerza pública.
- h. Revisión del Código Nacional en cuanto a las facultades que se otorgan a la policía para imponer los mal llamados "traslados por protección". Inaplicación inmediata de los "traslados por protección".
- i. Celeridad y efectividad en las investigaciones y procesos judiciales que recaen sobre responsables de graves violaciones a los Derechos Humanos y amplia difusión de sus resultados. Con enfoques diferenciales de género, derechos de las mujeres, étnico y territorial.
- j. El traslado de todas las investigaciones sobre ejecuciones extrajudiciales que son conocidas por la justicia penal militar, a la unidad de DDHH y DIH de la Fiscalía.
- k. Desarrollar procesos de investigación, juzgamiento y sanción de los responsables de los homicidios, torturas, heridas y detenciones arbitrarias que se presentaron en desarrollo de la participación en las jornadas de movilización y protesta en el marco del paro nacional de 2019, y remitir un informe al Comité Nacional de Paro el cual debe contener enfoques diferenciales de género, derechos de las mujeres, étnico y territorial.
- l. Desarrollar procesos de investigación, juzgamiento y sanción de los responsables de la muerte de Dylan Cruz, de los líderes y lideresas sociales asesinados, desaparecidos y amenazados.
- m. Adelantar procesos de atención, rehabilitación y reparación por las afectaciones físicas y psicológicas de las personas que fueron heridas por la acción arbitraria de la fuerza pública.

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- n. Libertad inmediata de las personas que están privadas de la libertad por su participación en las jornadas de Paro Nacional. No judicialización de quienes han sido retenidos y se encuentran en libertad.

## 2. DERECHOS SOCIALES

- a. Política pública que elimine la tercerización laboral y propenda por la formalización laboral y trabajo decente.
- b. Garantías de seguridad social y condiciones de trabajo para los trabajadores y trabajadoras en situación de precariedad, entre ellos especialmente los y las jóvenes, o trabajadores de oficio (recicladores), la industria manufacturera u otros en especial situación de precariedad.
- c. Pacto social y político por el derecho fundamental a la salud, universal, gratuito, de calidad y sin barreras:
- La financiación de la red pública hospitalaria estará a cargo del Estado.
  - Eliminar la intermediación de entidades privadas en la red pública de salud; las actividades y recursos de salud deben manejarse a través de instituciones públicas.
  - Formalización de los trabajadores y trabajadoras del servicio de salud, en un periodo no superior a seis meses, garantizándoles estabilidad laboral, y condiciones dignas de trabajo.
  - La nómina de los trabajadores y trabajadoras de las Empresas Sociales del Estado será responsabilidad directa del Estado.
- Reformar las normas pertinentes en materia de salud, contenido en la ley 100 de 1993 y normas afines.
- d. Definición de una tasa de interés para los créditos de vivienda, justa y acorde a los ingresos reales de las personas que quieren adquirir vivienda propia. Con enfoques diferenciales de género, derechos de las mujeres y étnico.
- e. Dignidad laboral y pensional para los y las artistas y trabajadores y trabajadoras de la cultura, creando condiciones para su acceso efectivo al sistema de seguridad social integral, utilizando los recursos de la estampilla pro cultura para su acceso al sistema pensional y no a BEPS.
- f. Garantizar la contratación de artistas nacionales en la realización de eventos y producciones financiados con recursos públicos, así como más y mejores oportunidades de empleo.
- g. El Estado Colombiano debe garantizar la atención y tratamiento oportuno, gratuito, de fácil y universal acceso, con calidad humana y científica a las y los adolescentes, jóvenes, mujeres, personas con identidades de género diversas, personas con discapacidad, personas mayores que viven y conviven con VIH sin ser juzgados(das), ni discriminados(das).
- h. Realizar periódicamente investigaciones científicas, generar información estadística y pedagogía asociada al VIH y SIDA.
- i. Inclusión en los currículos académicos de profesiones del área de la salud y otras áreas relacionadas, como trabajo social y psicología, formación en temas de prevención en violencia obstétrica y ginecología, parto respetado, parto fisiológico, derechos sexuales, derechos reproductivos, duelo gestacional y perinatal, lactancia natural basada en evidencia científica actualizada, mecanismos de participación e incidencia política para la defensa, exigibilidad y reivindicación de derechos.
- j. Implementación y presupuestos para la promoción de los derechos sexuales y los derechos reproductivos y la educación para la sexualidad que posibilite el desarrollo de la autonomía de las mujeres, las niñas, adolescentes y jóvenes y posibilite relaciones libres de todas las formas de violencia, entre ellas la violencia obstétrica.

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- k. La atención integral en salud debe tener un enfoque diferencial de género, derechos de las mujeres, étnico y territorial de acuerdo con la ley estatutaria 715 y la política de atención integral en salud (PAIS) en la atención a todas las personas que habitan en el territorio colombiano especialmente a las personas en mayor en situación de vulnerabilidad (LGTBI, Mujeres, personas viviendo con VIH/SIDA ITS, víctimas del conflicto sexual particularmente)
- l. Reconocimiento y garantía de los derechos económicos de las mujeres como avance en acabar con las brechas de la desigualdad social y la feminización de la pobreza.
- m. Aplicación de los convenios 190 (acoso laboral y sexual) y 161 (servicios de salud en el trabajo) de la OIT, en la política laboral nacional con enfoque de género y derechos de las mujeres.
- n. Dar efectiva aplicación a la política de emigración e inmigración con enfoque de Derechos Humanos.

### **3. DERECHOS ECONÓMICOS**

- a. Retiro de Colombia de la Organización de Cooperación de Desarrollo Económico-OCDE
- b. Eliminación de la brecha salarial entre hombres y mujeres.
- c. Garantizar al sector del transporte terrestre en todas sus modalidades la *reposición uno a uno* del parque automotor.
- d. El Gobierno no adelantará proceso alguno de privatización o enajenación de bienes del Estado independientemente de su participación accionaria.
- e. Ecopetrol debe ser una empresa 100% estatal.
- f. Aumento del presupuesto de Cultura a mínimo el 2% del Presupuesto Nacional.
- g. Eliminación del impuesto 4 por mil
- h. Implementación de políticas públicas para el fomento y fortalecimiento de las entidades Cooperativas y Solidarias.
- i. Revisión del marco normativo que obstaculiza la creación y desarrollo de las entidades cooperativas y solidarias.
- j. Priorizar en los fondos de emprendimiento los proyectos asociativos cooperativos y solidarios.
- k. Promoción de la educación solidaria en todos los niveles de formación.

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### **4. ANTICORRUPCIÓN**

Trámite inmediato en el Congreso de la República de los proyectos de ley anticorrupción y garantía de aprobación de estos.

### **5. PAZ**

- a. Implementar en las políticas públicas nacionales y regionales la Cultura de Paz, con enfoque de género y derechos humanos de la mujer.
- b. Desarrollar un programa Nacional de cultura y arte para la Paz, la memoria y la convivencia.
- c. Garantizar el cumplimiento e implementación integral de los acuerdos de paz firmados en La Habana. Implementando enfoque transversal de género, mujer, familia, generación, étnico y territorial.

- d. Dar funcionamiento a la Comisión de Seguimiento Impulso y Verificación a la Implementación del Acuerdo de PAZ – CSIVI
- e. Cesar definitivamente cualquier intento de reformar mediante ley o acto legislativo, el Acuerdo de Paz.
- f. Presentación, previa discusión en la CSIVI, al Congreso de la República, con moción de urgencia, de los proyectos de acto legislativo y de ley, que hacen falta para la implementación normativa del acuerdo de paz y garantía de respaldo por los partidos de Gobierno.
- g. Garantías efectivas para la reincorporación económica, social y política, tierra para excombatientes, protección y seguridad, reconocimiento e interlocución con el partido FARC.
- h. Adecuación del presupuesto para la paz de conformidad con el Plan Marco de Implementación y el Acto Legislativo 01 de 2016.
- i. Promoción de la inclusión de las disposiciones de paz territorial en los Planes de Desarrollo Municipal y Departamental. Realizar para ello la discusión con Alcaldes y Gobernadores.
- j. Retomar la agenda firmada por el Gobierno colombiano y el ELN.
- k. Respeto a los protocolos firmados por el gobierno nacional y el ELN, y la continuación de los diálogos de Paz, con base en la agenda pactada y firmada.
- l. El Estado promoverá diálogos con todos los grupos armados para la consecución de la Paz. Desmantelará los grupos paramilitares.



## **6. DERECHOS HUMANOS**

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- a. Replantear y modificar la doctrina militar y la política de seguridad y defensa.
- b. Depurar de la Fuerza Pública a los agentes vinculados a presuntas violaciones de Derechos Humanos.
- c. El desmonte total de las estructuras paramilitares y la judicialización penal de sus actores, con una veeduría internacional que garantice la transparencia de dicho proceso. Realizar investigaciones eficaces que revelen los vínculos entre diversos sectores económicos, políticos, y militares con los paramilitares.
- d. Reconocimiento integral por parte del Estado de la objeción de conciencia al servicio militar obligatorio, la eliminación de las batidas militares con fines de reclutamiento y reformulación ley 48 de 1993 en función del reconocimiento del servicio social alternativo para la paz.
- e. Construcción participativa de una política pública integral de respeto y garantía para la defensa de Derechos Humanos.
- f. Implementación de la normativa en materia de Garantías para la defensa de Derechos Humanos en Colombia:
  - Sistema Integral de Seguridad para el Ejercicio de la Política – SISEP (Decreto 895 de 2017).
  - Programa Integral de Seguridad y Protección para Comunidades y Organizaciones en los territorios (Decreto 660 de 2018)
  - Sistema de Prevención y Alerta para la Reacción Rápida SAT de la Defensoría del Pueblo, (Decreto 2124 de 2017)

## **7. DERECHOS DE LA MADRE TIERRA**

Definición de las políticas ambientales, minero-energéticas, de protección de páramos, demás ecosistemas esenciales para la vida y de la biodiversidad, con las comunidades indígenas, población negra, campesinos, habitantes del territorio, habitantes de páramo, organizaciones ambientales y sindicatos del sector.



- a. Reconocimiento al carácter vinculante y decisorio de las consultas populares y los acuerdos municipales en defensa del agua, la vida y el territorio.
- b. Prohibición total del Fracturamiento Hidráulico (fracking) y cancelación de los proyectos pilotos.
- c. Declaración de emergencia climática y ecológica; avance decidido en la transición energética justa, cambiando el modelo energético de manera progresiva, que respete los derechos de la naturaleza y los Derechos Humanos.
- d. Reconocimiento del agua como derecho humano fundamental, bien público y común, garantizando su flujo natural.
- e. Protección de las selvas y la Amazonía como sujeto de derechos. Garantizar la protección de ecosistemas estratégicos, incluyendo el territorio Amazónico, a partir de modelos concertados entre el Sistema Nacional de Áreas Protegidas, con las comunidades campesinas y étnicas del territorio, la ordenación del territorio en términos socioambiental, tomando como instrumento de planeación la Zonificación Ambiental Participativa (ZAP) y fortaleciendo la confirmación de Zonas de Reserva Campesina y Resguardos Indígenas.
- f. Prohibición del uso del glifosato para la fumigación de cultivos de uso ilícito.
- g. Prohibición de actividades de alto impacto y de mediana y gran minería en los páramos y otros ecosistemas esenciales para la vida, respetando las actividades ancestrales de las comunidades rurales que han habitado estos territorios históricamente.
- h. Firma, ratificación e implementación del Acuerdo de Escazú.
- i. Formulación de una nueva política ambiental que contemple la reforma al Sistema Nacional Ambiental – SINA y al proceso de licenciamiento ambiental, con enfoque proteccionista.
- j. Construcción de una política de gestión integral de residuos sólidos que tenga en cuenta las asociaciones de recicladores y prohíba los plásticos de un solo uso.
- k. Conformación de Mesa de conflictos por extractivismo y transición energética.

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## 8. DERECHOS POLÍTICOS Y GARANTÍAS

- a. Realización de un nuevo censo de población que visibilice y reconozca a las Comunidades negra, afrocolombiana, raizal y palenquera.
- b. Desarrollo de un marco normativo, financiero e institucional para garantizar la autonomía jurisdiccional y administrativa, de los territorios colectivos titulados a comunidades étnicas.
- c. Cese de todos los tipos de violencias contra las mujeres, desde la concreción de políticas públicas con enfoque de derechos de mujer y género, así como acoger los acuerdos internacionales en protección de la vida y derechos de las mujeres.

## 9. AGRARIA, AGROPECUARIA Y PESQUERA

- a. Tramite con las diferentes comunidades campesinas y organizaciones del sector agrario, agropecuario y pesquero, los temas relacionados con las necesidades del sector, entre estos la revisión de los Tratados de Libre Comercio, OCDE y, todo lo relacionado con la economía campesina, pequeños y medianos empresarios y productores agrícolas nacionales y, pescadores continentales y marítimos, la soberanía alimentaria.



- b. Adoptar la Resolución A/C.3/73/L.30 Declaración de las Naciones Unidas sobre los Derechos de los Campesinos y de Otras Personas que Trabajan en las Zonas Rurales
- c. Reconocimiento del campesinado como sujeto de derechos políticos. Cumplimiento integral de la sentencia STP 2028 de la Corte Suprema de Justicia
- d. Cumplimiento del Artículo 253 del Plan Nacional de Desarrollo referente a la construcción participativa de la Política Pública del Campesinado Colombiano.
- e. Adoptar una política de reforma agraria integral.
- f. Promoción y apoyo a los mercados campesinos y agroecológicos, seguros de cosecha, compras públicas con normas para organizaciones locales de pequeños y medianos productores.
- g. Adoptar políticas de defensa de la producción agropecuaria nacional, asistencia técnica, reducción de precios de fertilizantes, precios justos, remunerativos y estables, proyectos productivos, y revisión de los impuestos al agro.
- h. Financiación y crédito agropecuario. Condonación de deudas y acceso a mecanismos de financiación, subsidios y créditos de bajo interés.
- i. Protección a semillas propias y nativas.
- j. Reconocimiento y desarrollo de figuras territoriales campesinas y de pueblos indígenas y negros. Respeto a su ordenamiento territorial, tierras y territorio.
- k. Condiciones especiales para el acceso del campesinado a los sistemas de seguridad social integral.
- l. Política de Formalización del empleo campesino y agropecuario
- m. Plan Nacional de Salud Rural en su totalidad con presupuesto asignado, con énfasis a la atención en las mujeres rurales, históricamente invisibilizadas, relegadas y discriminadas en la atención en salud, así como en los beneficios de estrategias de salud rural comunitaria. Articular el PDET en el pilar salud junto al PNSR.
- n. Garantías de acceso y propiedad de la tierra y el agua para las mujeres campesinas.
- o. Constitución de una mesa para la discusión de garantías para el ejercicio de la pesca artesanal continental y marítima.

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#### 10. CUMPLIMIENTO DE ACUERDOS ENTRE EL GOBIERNO, Y PROCESOS Y ORGANIZACIONES

El Gobierno reactivará e iniciará de inmediato con los sectores, procesos y organizaciones respectivas la implementación y cumplimiento de los acuerdos firmados por los anteriores y el actual Gobierno con:

- Estudiantes universitarios
- Organizaciones indígenas
- Comunidades negra, afrocolombiana, raizal y palenquera
- Organizaciones sindicales estatales
- FECODE
- Madres comunitarias
- Sectores campesinos y agrarios
- Movimiento social de mujeres
- Movimiento de víctimas
- Transportadores
- Población con discapacidad
- Organizaciones de derechos humanos
- Minga social por la defensa de la Vida, el Territorio, la Democracia, la Justicia y la Paz
- Mesa Única Nacional del Decreto 870 de 2014. Cumbre Agraria, Campesina, Étnica y Popular.



- Asociación Colombiana de Campesinos
- Mesa Campesina del Cauca.
- Mesa de Derechos Humanos por la Defensa de la Vida y el Territorio en el Departamento del Cauca.
- Paro cívico del Chocó
- Paro cívico de Buenaventura
- Paro cívico de Tumaco
- Comunidades negras del Norte del Cauca
- Acuerdos obtenidos con las mujeres indígenas del CRIC que han sido atropelladas en diferentes formas

#### 11. RETIRO DE PROYECTOS NORMATIVOS

- a. Retiro del proyecto de ley de Crecimiento Económico, reforma tributaria en tránsito en el Congreso de la República. (No. 278 de 2019 Cámara – 227 de 2019 Senado), abstenerse de sancionarlo si ya hubiese agotado su trámite legislativo o proceder con su derogatoria inmediata.
- b. El Gobierno se abstendrá de tramitar la reforma al sistema pensional. Garantizará un sistema de protección social a la vejez público y solidario. El enfoque de protección a la vejez no puede ser hacia sistemas contributivos o semi-contributivos individuales.
- c. El Gobierno se abstendrá de realizar reformas laborales que desmejoren los derechos y garantías contemplados en el ordenamiento jurídico, actualmente. Especialmente se abstendrá de regular el trabajo por jornal o por horas, establecer salarios mínimos diferenciados por sectores o para jóvenes o de otro tipo, o flexibilizar la estabilidad laboral.

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*Yusef...*

#### 12. DEROGATORIA DE NORMAS

- a. Derogatoria de los artículos 83, 193, 198, 240, y 242 de la ley 1955 de 2019, Plan Nacional de Desarrollo.
- b. Derogatoria del impuesto o Tarifazo Nacional relacionado con el tema Electricaribe.
- c. Derogatoria inmediata del decreto No. 2111 de 2019, por el cual se crea el Holding Financiero.
- d. Derogatoria de la Circular no. 049, de 2019, sobre estabilidad reforzada.
- e. Derogar Ley Naranja, Ley 1834 de 2017 y Ley TIC, Ley 1978 de 2019.
- f. Derogar Ley Zidres, Ley 1776 de 2016.

#### 13. CONSTRUCCIÓN NORMATIVA.

Creación de espacios de construcción participativa de las siguientes iniciativas:

- a. Creación del Sistema Nacional del Cuidado, y de condiciones pensionales especiales dignas para cuidadores y cuidadoras, en desarrollo de la ley 1413 de 2010.
- b. Concertar el contenido de un Estatuto del trabajo conforme al Artículo 53 de la Constitución Política de Colombia, que beneficie a la clase trabajadora, en especial a la juventud y sobre la base de principios mínimos fundamentales allí establecidos, así como el respeto al derecho de asociación, la no persecución sindical y respeto por las iniciativas que este desarrolle especialmente en lo referente a Convenciones Colectivas de Trabajo.



# COMITÉ NACIONAL DE PARO

- c. Garantizar que la prestación de servicios públicos no se privatice; se revierta a favor del Estado las que ya fueron privatizadas y se reformen las normas necesarias para ello (Ley 142 de 1994, Por la cual se establece el régimen de los servicios públicos domiciliarios y se dictan otras disposiciones, entre otras).
- d. Actualización del código nacional de tránsito, nuevo código nacional de transporte, nuevo régimen sancionatorio del sector transporte, cambiar el modelo de regulación económico del sector transporte que proteja el pequeño propietario
- e. Reforma participativa del Sistema General de Participaciones
- f. Implementar la ley 1346 de 2009 que acoge la convención del protocolo facultativo para las personas en condición de discapacidad. Suscribir plenamente el protocolo facultativo para personas con discapacidad.
- g. Reglamentar la Ley Estatutaria de Salud.

## COMITÉ NACIONAL DE PARO



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Appendix 3. The message that was sent to Twitter users to explain the research and ask them to fill in the survey.

Message 1:

El enlace de la encuesta (Google Form):  
<https://forms.gle/6FtKQjoHhDFdBF56>

Message 2:

Hola {name},

Me pongo en contacto con usted en relación con una solicitud. Soy un estudiante de la carrera de Estudios Latinoamericanos en Leiden, Holanda, con una gran pasión por Colombia. Para mi proyecto final, estoy investigando el Paro Nacional de 2019-2020 y el papel de las redes sociales en estas protestas.

Para investigar esto, quiero encontrar a personas que participaron en las protestas o son apasionadas por el tema para hacerles algunas preguntas a través de una encuesta. He encontrado su perfil a través de Tweets publicados durante el Paro Nacional: me gustaría mucho hacerle algunas preguntas. ¿Estaría dispuest@ a completar mi encuesta? Se tarda unos 5 minutos y sus respuestas se procesarán de forma totalmente anónima. Puede encontrar la encuesta en el enlace de mi mensaje anterior. (^^)  
Su contribución sería de gran valor.

Si conoce a más personas que puedan estar interesadas en ayudarme con esta investigación, le agradecería mucho que reenviara este mensaje o si podría retweet el enlace de mi encuesta (de mi perfil).

Gracias por su tiempo, y si tiene alguna pregunta o duda, por favor hágamelo saber.

Atentamente,

Juliët Tinebra



Appendix 4: The survey that was used to gather data on motivations and social media use from the participants in the protests of the Paro Nacional.

18/6/2021

Investigación Paro Nacional 2019-2020

## Investigación Paro Nacional 2019-2020

Estimado/a Sr./Sra.,

Esta encuesta forma parte de una investigación sobre el Paro Nacional en Colombia entre el 21 de noviembre de 2019 y el 21 de febrero de 2020. Sus respuestas se procesarán de forma anónima. Los resultados de la investigación se utilizarán únicamente en una tesis de maestría sobre el Paro Nacional, de la Universidad de Leiden, Holanda.

Si le surge alguna duda al completar la encuesta, por favor, póngase en contacto con [jtinebratesis@gmail.com](mailto:jtinebratesis@gmail.com).

Muchas gracias por su participación!

Juliët Tinebra

**\*Obligatorio**

1. ¿Cómo se enteró del Paro Nacional por primera vez? \*

*Marca solo un óvalo.*

- En las redes sociales a través de amigos/acompañantes
- En las redes sociales a través de una organización a la que me asocio
- Otro canal de comunicación de una organización a la que me asocio
- Las noticias en línea
- Las noticias en la televisión
- Periódico
- Amigos/familiares
- No me acuerdo
- Otros: \_\_\_\_\_

## 2. ¿Participó físicamente en las protestas durante el Paro Nacional? \*

Marca solo un óvalo.

- Sí
- No
- No pude por las circunstancias, pero quise.

## 3. ¿En qué medida fueron las siguientes razones las que le llevaron a protestar durante el Paro Nacional? \*

0 = No era razón para mí ----- HASTA ----- 3 = Era una razón importante para mí

Marca solo un óvalo por fila.

	0	1	2	3
Contra la reforma laboral	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Contra la reforma pensional	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Contra el holding financiero	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Contra la corrupción	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Contra la reforma tributaria	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Contra el tarifazo nacional	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Contra la violencia policial	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Por el salario mínimo	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Por el cumplimiento de los acuerdos con sectores o grupos sociales	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Por el cumplimiento de los acuerdos de paz (2016)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Por la defensa de la protesta social	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4. Además de las razones anteriores, ¿había alguna otra razón para usted para protestar? Si es así, ¿cuál?

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5. Antes del Paro Nacional de 2019-2020, ¿estaba asociado a una organización que defienda una de las siguientes causas? \*

"Asociado" se puede definir como miembro oficial o fuerte partidario de una organización.

*Selecciona todas las opciones que correspondan.*

- Los derechos de trabajadores (Sindicato)
- Los derechos estudiantiles
- El proceso de paz
- Las víctimas del conflicto armado
- Los derechos humanos
- Los derechos de mujeres
- Los derechos indígenas
- El medio ambiente
- La comunidad LBGTQ+
- Los derechos de campesinos
- Los derechos transportadores
- No estaba asociado a una organización.

Otros:  \_\_\_\_\_

6. ¿Estaba conectado a las redes sociales de la organización? \*

*Marca solo un óvalo.*

- Sí
- No
- No estaba asociado a una organización.

7. Después del Paro Nacional, ¿cuál fue para usted el motivo más importante de las protestas? \*

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8. El Paro Nacional ha movilizado a muchos actores de la sociedad. ¿El Paro Nacional le hizo pensar de forma más consciente o diferente sobre ciertos temas de la sociedad? \*

*Marca solo un óvalo.*

- Sí
- No
- Otros: \_\_\_\_\_

9. Después del Paro Nacional, ¿se hizo miembro o partidario de alguna organización como las anteriores? \*

*Marca solo un óvalo.*

- Sí
- No

**Redes sociales  
durante el Paro  
Nacional 2019-2020**

"Redes sociales" son redes como Twitter, Facebook (y Messenger), Instagram, Snapchat, Youtube, Tiktok, grupos de Whatsapp/Chat, u otras plataformas digitales.

10. ¿Utilizó las redes sociales durante el Paro Nacional para mantenerse al día de los acontecimientos? \*

*Marca solo un óvalo.*

Sí

No

11. ¿Con qué frecuencia consultó las redes sociales durante el Paro Nacional? \*

*Marca solo un óvalo.*

Casi nunca

A veces

Regularmente

A menudo

Muy a menudo

12. ¿Publicó algo en las redes sociales sobre la protesta o una causa antes o durante el Paro Nacional? \*

*Marca solo un óvalo.*

Sí

No

13. ¿Cuál fue el contenido de tu publicación en las redes sociales? \*

*Selecciona todas las opciones que correspondan.*

Información sobre los motivos de las protestas

Información práctica sobre las protestas (fechas, horarios, etc.)

Un llamamiento para que otros vengan a protestar

No publiqué algo en las redes sociales.

Otros:  \_\_\_\_\_

14. ¿Cree que una función de las redes sociales durante el Paro Nacional fue difundir el mensaje sobre los motivos del Paro Nacional? \*

*Marca solo un óvalo.*

Sí

No

15. ¿Cree que una función de las redes sociales durante el Paro Nacional fue difundir información práctica sobre las protestas del Paro Nacional? (Fechas, horarios, lugar, etc.) \*

*Marca solo un óvalo.*

Sí

No

16. ¿Cree que una función de las redes sociales durante el Paro Nacional fue crear un sentimiento de unidad entre las personas que protestaron por diferentes motivos? \*

*Marca solo un óvalo.*

Sí

No

17. En general, ¿cree que las redes sociales han influido en el Paro Nacional? Si es así, ¿de qué manera? \*

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18. Entiendo que mi participación en esta encuesta es completamente anónima y doy permiso para el uso anónimo de mis respuestas en esta investigación sobre el Paro Nacional. \*

*Selecciona todas las opciones que correspondan.*

Acepto

19. Información de contacto (opcional)

Para el propósito de esta investigación, me gustaría encontrar a las personas que participaron o tienen una fuerte opinión sobre el Paro Nacional de 2019-2020. Si está interesado en contarme más sobre este tema (digitalmente), por favor deja su información de contacto abajo (nombre/correo electrónico/número de teléfono/enlace de redes sociales) para que pueda contactarle. Si no está interesado, puede dejar este espacio en blanco.

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## Appendix 5. List of Interviews Conducted

<b>Interviewee</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Duration</b>
Camilo Monsalve	Journalist and Political science graduate	June 3, 2021	01:13:28
Anonymous	Journalist and artist	June 7, 2021	39:51
Jorge Zuluaga	Professor at the University of Antioquia	June 9, 2021	35:10
Felipe Grajales	Political science graduate, Director of youth music festival	June 12, 2021	46:34