***Documentality and Display: Archiving and curating the violent past in contemporary Argentina, Chile and Colombia.***

**British Academy’s Sustainable Development Programme 2018, supported under the Global Challenges Research Fund, Reino Unido**

**April 2020**

**I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Institution: **Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, Carrera 7 # 27, Bogotá, Colombia**

Name and position:

* **Darío Acevedo, Director of the Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica**
* **Marcela Rodriguez, Director of Human Rights Archives**

Interviewer: Jaime Hernández

Location: interview conducted via Skype

Date: 27th April 2020

Duration: 68:32

**II. TRANSCRIPTION**

Jaime: Yes of course. Hello again, it’s nice to see you.

Darío: Can you turn up the volume? Or is it just me?

Paula: It’s just a little turned down.

Darío: It’s me. There it is.

Jaime: Ok. So, good afternoon again. Thanks for answering my call. It's my pleasure to speak with you. I apologise for not being able to use my camera, I don't know what's wrong with it. Like you, I’m having lots of online meetings lately and the camera always works very well. But I don’t know what’s going on today. Maybe it’s because I don’t use Google Meets that often. I always use Teams or Zoom.

Ok. But let me tell you about our project. I already sent Paula some general information about it, but, my name is Jaime Hernández, I’m a professor at the Universidad Javeriana and I work in the Aesthetic department since some time ago. I’m an architect and a town planner, and when I did my PhD in England years ago, I studied territorials and urban informality issues. And those subjects plus the research work that I have been doing for a while, bring me to this project.

This interview or conversation it’s done within the framework of a research that’s called ‘Documentality and Display: The use of human rights violations archives’. The person who leads this research is currently in England, working at London University, at Goldsmiths University. This research explores the use of archives, memory building and the use of different type of tools in three countries. Colombia is one these countries and here we have focus ourselves in the work done by the Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica. We are also working on the case of the ESMA in Argentina, and the Vicaría de la Solidaridad in Chile. You probably know all of them.

The research team is led by Vikki Bell, Victoria Bell, from the Universidad de Londres; There is also Oriana Bernasconi who is professor at the Universidad Alberto Hurtado in Santiago of Chile; Cecilia Sosa who is an Argentinian professor that is currently living in England. She is the one working on the ESMA issue. And I’m the one who is representing Colombia. This research began around 2 years ago, and we are in the last months of it. Finishing the last details.

As I told you before, the aim of our research is to explore in the work done by all these organizations in each of these countries, in relation to documentation, archives and the way in which those archives are used, memory building, the use of those archives in judicial processes, etcetera. The research team has come to Colombia a couple of times. The first time that they came was on September-October of 2018 and we interviewed the team that was working on the Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica at that moment. So we can say that we have plenty of information about the centre’s history.

What we don’t know is how the centre is today, and that’s the purpose of this conversation. I proposed to Paula 3 subjects that we could talk about during this interview. The first one is to talk about the current challenges of the Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica. The second one, is related to the other two too, to talk about the future perspectives and challenges of the centre, considering that the centre will be running until 2021 and then it will become the museum. And the third one, it’s about what have you learnt in this period and what recommendations could you provide to other organizations working on the same issues of documentation and archives related to human right violations.

So, this is basically what I wanted to discuss with you, professor Acevedo, Paula and Marcela. And before I yield the floor to you, I would like to know if you don't mind that I use the notes that I’ll take of this conversation for the purpose of this research.

Darío: Good afternoon again Jaime. Thanks for the interest you have shown in our organization and the policies that we are promoting. Feel free to ask me any institutional general question and to Doctora Marcela Rodríguez any technical question related to archives. And of course you can use this conversation, I don’t know if you are recording it. Are we recording it Paula?

Paula: We are recording it.

Darío: We are recording it, so it should not be a problem as long as you give credit to all the centre’s declarations and to the person that made the declarations. So without further ado, let’s begin with the interview.

Jaime: Perfect, thanks a lot. I can’t record it because it must be done by the person that organize the meeting. If you can share with me the audio later it would be awesome. Thanks again for your great disposition and your kindness. So we can start with the first question, the first subject. From your perspective, what are the current challenges of the Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica?

Darío: Ok. Each technical department has taken over a challenge. And we have 4 technical departments. I’ll begin by explaining you about the memory building department. This department it’s in charge of promoting memory initiatives that are field activities with the victims. We do a procedure that’s very similar to the one done by the former management. There haven’t been many changes. We have simply tried to meet with the diverse communities that were affected by the armed conflict by using different approaches, as it is required by the law. However, unlike the former management, we have included in this group, soldiers, policemen and businessmen.

There is also a project which we consider central in the memory building field. It is a challenge because it involves a change in the methodology used to choose the people that do the researches. We signed an agreement with Colciencias and after that with Minciencias, and a national call was launched for A and A1 research groups, and B and C groups in alliance with the two first.

The call is for project proposals on armed conflict and all its connections, its relations with economy, culture, religion, regional issues, cases, specific approaches, etcetera. There will be 15 projects. The centre has contributed 5,600 millions of pesos. The call is still open and closes on the 6th of May. From that date onwards, the preparation period for the groups begin. And probably at the end of August or beginning of September, the winner projects will begin to work.

As a centre, we don’t get involved in those projects. We just set the requirements, and the Francisco José de Candas trustee and the Ministry of Science and Technology manage the operative and administrative issues. They chose 15 projects on the basis of traditional parameters, that you probably know since you are a researcher. The results of the projects may be presented on the first semester of 2022. We’ll see what happens. I mean, we don’t know what will happen.

We believe that if there is an issue of national and institutional interest, that is controversial and hasn’t been fully researched, we must involve all social sciences and humanities groups that have worked in the armed conflict or the political violence issue in the last 50 years. That’s the philosophy that drives this project. That’s all I have to say about that issue. If you have any questions about this, please ask me.

The second technical department focusses in the field of the Museo de la Memoria de las Víctimas. It’s already regulated by a law and there are already some established functions. We are in the process of choosing the construction company that will build the museum premises. This Thursday is the closing date for the receipt of tenders, but is not a bidding. It’s a process that has been done by the Virgilio Barco Agency, that’s part of the Infrastructure National Agency. So we are not involved in the selection procedure of the construction company. We simply provide the plans, the design, and we’ll provide the conceptual guidelines and the museographic script in the future. The construction of this museum will take a while. It will probably begin in June or July and is expected to last around 2 years, if this new 'covid context' doesn’t affect the operating staff. This is our strategic goal.

In the course of the coming two years, we need to have everything legally and administratively solved for the Museo Nacional de Memoria de Colombia, that is where the Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica will be deposited. The [construction of the?] museum could be postponed for 10 years, the details of that draft law are discussed in the Congress, at least the Victims Law. So even if the Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica is absorbed by the museum and ceases to be an independent entity, the museum will still be the organization in charge of receiving the processes and projects which are not yet completed, because the goals and the mission are still the same. It is the institution the one that ends and become part of another entity. Also, some of its tasks could be done by the Victims Unit or the Ministry of Science and Technology, in the case that some of those tasks must be researched.

Ok, the third line…

Jaime: Excuse me professor, just to be clear. Are you saying that the Victims Law could be postponed for 10 years? And along with that the entry into force of the Centro Nacional?

Darío: It is a possibility, but it is uncertain. I mean, the Victims Law it’s postponed. How will be postponed or the terms that will be amended will depend on the will of the Congress, not ours.

Jaime: Ok. Alright.

Darío: Ok. The third one is the department of [inaudible 00:15:45:06] that is a technical department in charge of working with the demobilised paramilitaries, whose cases remained unsolved in a sort of legal limbo. By contributing to revealing the truth and certifying it, they solve their problems, and they commit themselves to ensure the non-repetition of the events and clarifying the facts. The challenge of the project is to reunite around 18,300 certifications of contribution to the truth. And we will meet this goal by next year. But it also depends on how this new 'covid context' will evolve, because it could affect the way in which we reach people. There are people that are hard to find, like paramilitaries that have been demobilised for more than 12 years, that are scattered throughout the territory or could be dead, or out of the country, etcetera.

But that’s our third goal. And this department can be shut if we reach that goal.

Ok. I now yield the floor to Marcela, so she can tell you about the fourth line. Marcela, can you please explain professor Jaime what you found and what are we doing in terms of management, collection, classification, among others, of documentation and archives related to human rights violations?

Jaime: Sorry to interrupt professor Acevedo, I would like to ask you a question before Marcela begin. You told me that for the first action you launched a call with Minciencias. Paula already sent me those links and I imagine that is an ongoing process. But there is something that I didn't understand. Is the centre still conducting researches? Or will those researches be conducted by the projects chosen in the call done by the Minciencias? Or you will keep both? Research done by the centre and research done by the projects?

Darío: Most of the research is going to be foster by Conciencias but with our funding and considering our criteria. We design the profiles of the researches that are going to be done by Minciencias and the centre is going to remain doing just minor research. For example, we are currently finishing a research on the Montes de María region, that it’s going to become a book that will be part of the ‘Basta Ya’ collection. This is a research work but is also a memory initiative. And for you to understand, the memory initiatives are easier works, more like a chronicle, or a narrative, or a story. A research instead, involves many other things.

So the answer is yes. The centre is still interested in doing research, but not by taking over everything related to the armed conflict issue.

Jaime: Right.

Paula: Excuse me professor.

Darío: Yes, Paula.

Paula: Excuse me Marcela, just one second. Professor, I’m sending you all the links where you can find all this information through the chat window. There you will find the project proposal’s call, a link to the terms of the museum’s bidding, the *micrositio* of the [EDAP? inaudible 00:20:04:00] that is in the centre’s website. So you can have all the information about the memory initiatives that the professor just mentioned. You can also find what a memory initiative is, where it is placed, how it is done, in case that you want to go deeper into the subject.

Jaime: Excellent, thanks a lot.

Darío: Thank you very much. Go ahead Marcela.

Marcela: Ok. Good afternoon. I would like to explain to you that the Human Rights Archives Management, under the Victims Law has a core mandate which is to collect all the archives related to serious human right violations. Additionally, under the same law, the Human Rights programme has two components, the Human Right Archives Special Record and the Record Management protocol.

That is in broad terms what is mandated by the law. In practice however, there are very specific functions, and those are: strengthening, registration, collection, technical processing, custody, consultation and digital preservation of the human right violations archives.

I would like to add a detail. Can I share my screen with you so I can show you my presentation?

Darío: Yes, of course. As long as we can still see each other.

Marcela: Well. I’ll do it then. Professor, please let me know if you can see it. Can you see it now?

Darío: It’s loading. It says that is showing.

Paula: No, we can’t see it yet Marcela.

Darío: It says that is being shown but you need to move something.

Paula: Now we can see it.

Marcela: Ok, you are looking at the micrositio. We are currently making some adjustments to the figures. So, what do we have to accomplish our task? We have strengthening tasks, and where are they in here? [pointing something in the screen] They are here. Those are tasks that are being carried out not only on a local level, but also on a regional one. What does strengthening means? It means to develop the skills of victims’ organizations, victims, civil society and some public entities that owns human right related archives. And what is the purpose of it? [To help them on] the management, organization, safekeeping and preservation [of their archives]. So this is it in terms of strengthening.

For this year, we have planned 4 national level strengthening workshops and we have already carried out 2 of them. Additionally, last year we organized an international archive and human rights seminar, that is the one that you can see over here [pointing something in the screen]. We invited renowned international speakers such as the president of the Human Right Archives Group of the International Council on Archives, Doctor Antonio González Quintana, which is the highest authority on an archives and human rights level.

Additionally, within the framework of the Programa de Derechos Humanos, we have to carry out the following 4 tasks as a centre: Historical Memory reconstruction research, pedagogical actions, Human Rights Archive Special Record and document management protocols. To achieve these 2 tasks and to comply with the Victims Law we have an inter-administrative agreement with the Archivo General de la Nación. We are currently developing the Human Rights Archive Record and we are implementing it in some public entities and private ones. In some civil society organizations, we are implementing the document management protocols that was developed by the Archivo General de la Nación and the Centro Nacional de Memoria.

We have already collected around 3,258 records for the Human Rights Archive Special Record and that number is growing fast. As we submit that information on a quarterly basis, at the moment we don't have the updated figures.

Regarding the protocol, we are accompanying some entities so they can use it. What is important to know about the programme protocol and the strengthening activities that we have conducted? Last year, around 700 people participated in strengthening activities on a national level, not a local level but a national one. Regarding register, we already have more than 2,558 records and the people who participated in strengthening activities were also accompanied in the protocol presentation. So we have talked about strengthening and register.

Then it comes the collection process. We carry out the collection process here in the management office with the purpose of organizing our Human Rights Virtual Archive, were we explain what a human rights archive is. And I need to clarify that, in broad terms, almost any record can be a human rights archive, but records related to serious human rights violations and international humanitarian law in an armed conflict context, are just the ones that we have. And they are part of our virtual archive. So we are the ones who collect all that material. When I arrived to the management office on May of last year, there were around 380,000 digital objects available. [The people before us] managed to collect 380,000 digital objects in 5 years. Our goal is to collect 380,000 by this year.

I can’t tell you how much progress we have made so far, because the collection process involves a range of technical processes such as organization, classification, description and packaging of digital documents. After the strengthening process succeeds we reach the victims or the victims’ organizations to see the specific characteristics of their archives and only after that we collect their material. So, we received around 380,000 digital objects that were collected during a 5-year period. Our goal is to add 380,000 more objects. We have made a significant progress so far, so if we are successful we could reach over 900,000 digital objects.

Those mentioned above are important issues regarding the archive and the collection process.

There is another important issue related to the technical processing. In order to the virtual archive to be preserved properly, it requires some digital preservation guidelines of global standard. By global standard I mean to produce documents that can last more than 10 years beyond the changes in technology. For this to happen, regardless of whether they are stored in a software or a hardware format, electronic documents must comply with certain characteristics and have a special treatment. For example, if the management office hand me a Betacam recording or a document stored in a diskette, I have to be able to upload that information into the virtual archive, and in order to do that I should follow some digital preservation specific rules. That is what we do in Digital Preservation, to ensure that the information is kept safe, accessible to everyone, and that can be used beyond any change in technology.

Additionally, we are also uploading into the Virtual Archive all the Centro de Memoria’s publications and our specialised library which has more than 30,000 resources, not counting all the videos, podcasts and any other material related to the internal armed conflict and human rights.

Even though we are still providing an in-person service, we are looking at expanding our virtual coverage. And that is why this year we decided to increase the supply of available digital objects on our Virtual Archive.

In fact, we are currently working on a very interesting issue, related to one of our funds. At the present we manage more than 150 funds, each one of them bears an entity or an organization name. We are reinforcing the number of funds, so more people can have access to that information and to expand the coverage considering that the Virtual Archive has a place in the digital world.

Do you have any question?

Jaime: I do. Yes, hello?

Darío: Oh, ok. I’m sorry, I forgot to switch the sound back on.

That was a very complete version of what we do here, that it’s the result of the great work that the state has been doing since 2011 in order to fulfil what is mandated by law. So, what you just heard is the work that Marcela has been leading. Marcela has 20 years of experience working in the Archivo General de la Nación. She doesn’t have any ideological, political or religious bias, that could risk the transparency of the important work that we are carrying on in here.

Jaime: I have a couple of questions Marcela. Thank you very much for your presentation, it was very interesting and clear.

You were saying that the archive contains a big number of digital documents. And that those documents are part of the human rights violations archive within the armed conflict framework. You were also saying that you are currently working on collecting new digital documents. I would like to know; how do you collect these new information?

And the other question is, what exactly do you mean with ‘digital elements’?

Marcela: Ok. So, how do we carry out the documents' collection? We organize ‘accompaniment activities’ with victims, victims’ organizations, civil society and public entities all year round. Those are all public activities. We also carry out strengthening activities, different memory exercises of the Centro de Memoria or activities to achieve the memory building. What we do is to build a contact network with all those people. We already have a very consolidated contacts database, so we start by contacting them. So we call them and tell them: Would you like for your archive to be part of the Human Rights Virtual Archive? Most of them say yes. In fact, we have a small waiting list. But, as you can see, if the previous administration was able to collect 382,000 digital objects in 5 years, is not an easy or a fast task. That’s why we divide the strengthening tasks from the collection ones.

When I assumed this position, we had around 116 funds that were ready, on a technical processing stage. Now we have 56, and we have 40 that have been pre-collected. Pre-collected means that we tried to have them ready, however the ‘covid context’ hindered our work. So, that’s how we collect the material. Is it clear?

Jaime: Yes, Sure.

Darío: Don't forget the digitization.

Marcela: Now, what is a digital object? An archive can be made out of any type of information. But if you want to make that archive available to the public, you need to differentiate between a text file, an image file, and audio file or a video file. And a ‘digital object’ can be any of those files. It’s like the broader concept. So, let me give you an example, in a same fund, let’s call it the ‘Pedro Pérez’ fund, you can have 10 image files, 10 video files and 10 pictures. So in that case you would say: ‘I have 10 digital objects’, and that means: ‘I have 10 archives, but in different formats’. It’s like if each one of them was a whole unit.

Jaime: Perfect, ok. But, as a centre, do you need to have the original ones to digitize those objects? Or do people or the entities send you the documents already digitised?

Marcela: Sure. Within the collection process framework, certificates are issued to ensure the validity of the information exchange. People lend us their original material, unless they want to donate it, because there have been some organizations that have donated it to us. We keep the material safe while we carry on with the technical processing of it, and then we give them the material back already processed. We give them a copy and we kept a copy too. We give the originals back to the organizations too.

Jaime: Perfect.

Marcela: We don’t keep any original material. That’s why we talk about ‘giving it back’. So, when you heard that they are ‘taking it back’, is not that they are doing that, because we are the ones who are giving the material back to them.

Jaime: Sure, sure.

Marcela: Because they are the owners. It is not ours.

Jaime: Perfect. Let me ask you something else. It’s something broader and that you have briefly mentioned before. It’s about the data use. The data use is obviously related to the platform access, to the online information and those kind of things. However, have you detected how the civil society in general is using these type of information? And also, because that is a central issue on our research, and particularly in the Argentinian and Chilean archives. Are those archives ever requested by the judicial body? Are they ever used, for example, for symbolic or artistic works?

Marcela: Ok. Those are different points. All the archives that we work with are open to the public. I mean, it is not information that… There are different levels in which we classify the information in Colombia. In that sense, our archives have nothing in particular. However, even though under the Transparency Law and the Personal Data Protection Law all the information is public, that doesn't apply to sensitive data. And because our archives contain sensitive data we are obligated to being rigorous in the way in which we treat the information. As we are working within the framework of the Archives Law, we are fulfilling with the ‘tablas de retención documental’, with the ‘tablas de control de acceso’, with the Transparency Law, with the reserved and classified information index, and with the Habeas Data Law. To sum up, all the information is public except for the sensitive data.

That said, it should be remembered that the information that we produce is only for symbolic reparation, and not for judicial issues. But it is true, there has been judicial bodies that have asked us for information from our archives. But the information that we produce is made to be used for a different context, not for a judicial process.

Jaime: Perfect. And can you give me an example or tell me about a case that used archive documentation for artistic or symbolic purposes?

Marcela: Yes. I can’t tell you about a specific case, but I do know about two researches of that kind that are being carried out at the moment that are using the archives material.

Jaime: Perfect, very good. Thank you very much Marcela.

Marcela: It’s my pleasure. Do you have any other question?

Jaime: Yes. The third and last one is related to the special context in which we are living today, where present and future are getting together. When you think on the future challenges, while the law is still in force and considering that it can be extended for 2 more years, and bearing in mind the current context, what do you think that is missing or what are the challenges that you would like to achieve in the next year before the centre begins its functions? I mean, even though some of these activities could still be developed by the museum by the new administration of the Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, which one of them would you like to finish before it becomes part of the museum? Can you mention any specific one that you would like to finish before it becomes the museum? Professor Acevedo?

Darío: I believe that this is something very important. I will follow the same order in which I exposed the technical directions. In terms of memory building, we know that it’s very hard to reach all of the victims. However, what we can do as a Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, from now on, is to build and leave a wide reports record. So readers, experts and researchers can read the stories of the numerous victims of the armed conflict. We want to be able to become aware of the most shocking cases that happened in the country, like Bojayá, Machuca, the falsos positivos, minors’ recruitment and sexual offences, assassinations out of combat, kidnapping, razing of towns, etcetera. So, our goal is to have a representative sample as large as possible.

In the research field of memory and conflict, we aim to achieve two things. The first one is to leave the Memory and Conflict Observatory with the most up-to-date data of victimizing events occurred in the last 50 years. And I hope that we can include in that data the last events that have occurred in the country. I also wish that the people who come after us can finish that job or can keep the Victims of the Colombian armed conflict statistic record updated. That’s a technical job that we are going to use in a very particular way this year.

The second one, in the field of memory building, is related to researches. As I told you at the beginning, what we and the Science Ministry are looking for in this research, is to reach the creation of a stronger environment of knowledge production. In that way, in the future, all kind of researches similar to the ones that were made around the liberal-conservative violence can be conducted. When that occurred, numerous master dissertation and PhD dissertations, conducted by national and international researchers, research groups, intellectuals and academics were conducted, without anyone putting an end to it. [Those researches] represented just one version of the events, a homogeneous one. Numerous authors like Marco [inaudible 00:46:54:04] and even Daniel Pécaut have referred to this issue. Some historians have suggested that it’s impossible to have only one version of such a complex event. There are many views on the conflict and also many layers to look at within it. That's why our main goal is that this first experiment with the Science Ministry allow us to keep this task alive, no matter whether the Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica continue to function or not.

Regarding the museum, first and foremost we hope that it becomes the museum of the plural and diverse victims. That is to say, we hope that in there, every victim with all their objects, products, artistic contributions and narratives can feel to be represented. Equally important to us, is to show to the general public all the different kinds of victimizing events that occurred in the country, that can be considered severe human rights violations by the International Humanitarian Law. And at the same time, to represent everything happened in the different territories. We cannot forget to mention what happened in Llanos Orientales, in the Atlantic coast, or in the south or the north of the country, to give you an example. We need to show what happened to the indigenous people or the Afro communities, where good research has been done. And also to display what happened to children, adolescents, women, older adults, people with disabilities, and every other group of people that suffered with the armed conflict.

Then, the museum needs to be able not to stating a position or reflecting a point of view, because the Law says that we cannot produce official truths. So, the museum needs to provide enough information and elements [so people can make their own judgement], like statistic data, geographical data, human geography, victimizing event, number of victims, the relation of those events with others situations occurred in the Colombia of those days, institutional handling, description of the politic life during the 50’ and 60’ in Colombia. The aim is for that information to help the museum visitor to build his own mind about this issue, or for him to say: ‘This was a pretty entangled issue’, or maybe for him to leave the museum thinking something different from what he thought before coming in. But without the Management of the museum being the one who tell them what to think. The museum will be a wide, numerous, rich, plural and diverse platform where anybody can come by itself and feel represented in it. Because if we are going to have a museum that shows only one version of the history, the people who believe in other versions are not going to feel represented and they are not going to come. And what we want is for every Colombian to visit the museum.

The museum is also going to conduct researches, because we would like for it to have its own Documentation Centre, and for that building to be the one that keeps the Human Right Archive. But that’s something that we still need to ask. We also want for the Museum to promote the academic debate, by presenting researches results, PhD dissertations, organizing forums, panels and conferences with specialists in politic violence, human rights, international conflict, international humanitarian law, among others.

And, finally it is the Agreement division of the [inaudible 00:51:42:02] to have reached the aim that we proposed ourselves from the beginning. The product of our work has inspired the development of other researches and the publishing of our books still help those who want to go more deeply into the study of the Colombian para-militarism.

Marcela: Can I add something else doctor?

Darío: Yes.

Marcela: Ok. Professor Jaime, everything that doctor Darío has mentioned about the information that it’s been developed in the memory field, like the archives, researches and publications, will be available in the Virtual Archive, which together with the Archive Management will be placed in the Museo de la Memoria. But we have also made considerable progress because we have developed a platform for information processing that allows us to make the information available in the long run. This mean that there is currently an App that it’s available and that you can download if you have an Android mobile. This App allows to look from your own mobile into the different archives that we have made available.

Jaime: That’s very interesting, thank you Marcela. Also, thanks for your words professor Acevedo, they were also very interesting. I guess that it must be a huge challenge to try to show all the different perspectives under one roof. Specially today when the conflict in our country has been polarised so much. But I think that it’s important to do this job, or at least to try to do it.

Just one last question professor and Marcela. During the time in which you have been involved in the management and development of the Archive centre, and considering that our research is focussed in the Colombian, Chilean and Argentinian processes with the aim of producing debate elements that can be shared with countries that are currently living similar situations, that seems to be the case of more than half of the countries of the world. I would like to know; what lessons have you learnt during the work that you have done here that you could share with us? Can any of them be replicated in other contexts? And on the contrary, what do you think that has not been done right that you think that should not be replicated? There is something that you could warn to other countries that are facing similar situations?

Darío: Well, that’s one of the hardest questions that I have always had to face in different places that I go to, interviews, discourses, because it links us back to the complexity of the problem. That is to say, to place ourselves in front of the world, what do we have in common and what distinguishes us from other experiences? What are we doing great and what are we doing wrong?

I have always insisted in the existence of differences between the Colombian armed conflict and the Jew holocaust and the South-African apartheid. And why is that? Not because I think that one is worse than the other, because in all of those places terrible things happened. Of course that the magnitudes are different, but it was a serious matter in all the cases. However, in the South-African and in the German case it’s easier to reach consensus. They have achieved consensus more easily than us. For example, most of the European opinion from an academic and political-institutional point of view, and even the post-war laws condemned the Nazism, and they still do. They even consider to be crime to support it, and they banned any attempt of founding another Nazi or Fascist political party.

There is a famous anecdote according to which Juanes, the singer, was forbidden of entering Italy because he sang a song called ‘Tengo la camisa negra’, and in Italy the black shirt is associated to fascism. So he was prohibited of entering the country for a while, until they realized that it was a mistake.

What I want to say is that there is a difference between those cases and our case. [In the Colombian case] there were not 2 actors, instead, several groups were involved, and each one of them contained other groups. How many guerrillas operated in Colombia? 6, 7, 8. There were different kind of guerrillas: Maoist, pro-soviets, pro-Castro, nationalist, pro-indigenous, among others. So, that complicates everything. There were also many paramilitarist groups involved, some of them linked to official agents, or to the public force, or to civil society sectors. But there was also the state, that while it was looking for a solution, at the same time was being accused of violate the human rights, reforming institutions, creating a new constitution, calling for mayor and governor election, and guaranteeing press freedom in the middle of massacres that were being committed in the territories and even in the cities and neighbourhoods.

What I just described can give you an idea of how our conflict was very different from the other ones. And I believe that it cannot even be described by using just the concept of 'armed conflict'. Because it has so many dimensions that it could even enrich the discussion around the international human rights. That’s on one hand.

On the other hand, we have the experiences of our neighbouring countries, the ones in Central America, like Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, the experiences of military dictatorships faced by the countries in the southern hemisphere like Argentina, Chile and Uruguay, but also the Cuban dictatorship. There is also the Venezuelan case, however in its case, it hasn’t been an armed conflict.

However, the Colombian case is different from the ones above, because as I said before, the Colombian conflict occurred in a context of democracy that began just after the restrictive period in which the National Font ruled. After the 60’ and 70’ bipartisanship, we increasingly became a democracy until becoming the multi-party system that we have today. Today multiple political parties rule the country, and the ones that were accused in the past of monopolizing the power, nowadays reach the fourth or fifth place during election time.

Finally, what I mean to say is that the Colombian case is different from the ones who had a dictatorship, because in those cases the human right violations were planned as policies by those who were in power. That is to say, they were the product of decisions taken by the president, the dictator and all his team of generals, advisers and officers, as it happened in the Argentinian dictatorship and what occurred in the ESMA. Last year, during a conversation that I had about the experience of violence, with the ESMA director that I believe is called Alejandra, we agreed that: ‘Yes, we live in very different [countries], even when they look alike from a cultural point of view. But our conflicts are very different.’

This is what I have to say and what lead me to think that, respecting the law and the main mission [of the centre], we need to promote the research development. We need to develop more ‘robust’ research capable of reflecting our own complexities.

Jaime: Perfect doctor. Marcela?

Marcela: I would just like to add something else. I’m going to share with you my screen content, so you can look at it while I explain you one last thing. Because what the professor is saying is particularly relevant.

Jaime: Yes. I was just going to ask you something Marcela. I totally agree with what professor Acevedo was saying about the particularities of our conflict and what distinguishes it from what happened in other countries. And that that is a reason why it is not an easy job to provide recommendations to other countries. But maybe there is some knowledge that you have gained in the archive area that you could share with other human right violation archive centres.

Marcela: Definitely. I’m sharing with you my screen content so I can keep telling you. There is a reason that explain why the director took the decision of choosing a person with technical knowledge, as I am, for this position. It's because it allows to have technical support for the work done and to work in association with the Asociación Latinoamericana de Archivos and the ICA (Consejo Internacional de Archivos). And why do I think that it’s important for you to know this? Because we are trying to validate the experiences that we have learnt. And I would like to tell you about one experience of rescuing that the centre had, which I think that it’s important to share. And I tell you about it because it’s related to the Registro Especial de Archivos de Derechos Humanos.

In 2016 I was in charge of providing accompaniment to the Ecuador Archives after the earthquake happened. The problem that they were facing was that after the earthquake occurred, people began to steal the archives from the register officer and the notary offices. And this happened because whenever there is an emergency situation, like a natural disaster or a war, the first things that are affected are ownership and identity.

What I want to say is that, they were able to rescue some of the archives thanks to the census information, however they couldn’t rescue all of them. That’s why is so important to have a Registro Especial de Archivos de Derechos Humanos. We have established the existence of around 320,000 entities that own archives in the country. 11,700 of them could own human rights related archives. However, we have identified 6,800 of them, and just 3,200 have been registered. I think that that allows you to understand better the magnitude of our problem and the importance of keep doing this job.

Jaime: For sure.

Marcela: And of course that there is still room for improvement. But I believe that techniques are constantly changing so we need to stay alert, and keep working in the way in which you are doing it, in a cooperative way between professionals. But I do believe that technique is very important for this type of work, specially to keep information safe.

Jaime: Very good.

Marcela: So, I hope I have been able to help you with what you needed to know. We showed you the ‘behind the scene’ and the App. And that’s the best act of transparency that the centre can make, because it contains not only the copy of information produced by the victims but also the one that has been produced by the centre, and that’s very important. And the App is available for anyone who want to access to it.

Jaime: Very good Marcela. Thanks a lot professor Acevedo and Paula. Thanks for your time, your interest, your accessibility and cooperation. This information is going to be very useful for us, it’s going to help me and the research team to clarify certain doubts that we had, particularly about the issues that we talked today. As I was telling you when we started the interview, this research began a couple of years ago, and in a certain way, we just knew about what was happened 2 years ago. And I think that what you are currently doing and what you are trying to do it’s very interesting. Well, thank you very much again. You have all my information Paula, so feel free to contact me if there is anything that I can do for you. I’ll share with you the results of the research when it’s done. Paula, maybe you can share with me the interview recording?

Paula: Of course professor, I’ll send it to you by email.

Jaime: Perfect Paula, thanks a lot.

Darío: It was a pleasure professor Jaime.

Marcela: Thank you very much.

Darío: Thank you for your interest in the centre and in the work that we are doing. We wish you the best of luck in your international research. We will be attentive to any other requirement. And feel free to come any time you want.

Jaime: Thank you very much again to all of you. It was nice to meet you. Good afternoon.

Paula: Thanks a lot, good bye professor Hernández.

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