

**¡QUE SE VAYAN TODOS!
LEADERSHIP, FORMAL ORGANIZATION AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS: THE
CASE OF THE “REBELIÓN DE LOS FORAJIDOS”**

by

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Research in social movements has emphasized the role of leadership and formal organizations in promoting and organizing collective action. In this study, I analyze an episode of mobilization that has been characterized by its participants as a leaderless spontaneous movement. Using data from audio archives, newspapers, and videos of interviews with former participants I conclude that although there were organizations and some forms of leadership behind the mobilizations, they did not have the preeminent role that theory predicts in organizing demonstrations. In fact, the work of the main organizers of the mobilizations reinforced the idea of a leaderless movement. In addition, I show that the notion of spontaneity grew out of the specific mechanism that allowed people's direct participation in organizing the mobilizations, coupled with participants' self-understanding of acting on their own with no external influence.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION.....	1
2.0 THE <i>REBELIÓN DE LOS FORAJIDOS</i> (OUTLAW’S REBELLION)	5
2.1 SOME PRELIMINARY FACTS	5
2.2 THE ROLE OF PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES.....	15
2.3 THE MOMENT OF REBELLION	17
3.0 SOME THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS.....	27
3.1 POLITICAL OPORTUNITIES, MOBILIZING STRUCTURES, AND FRAMING PROCESSES.....	27
3.2 SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND LEADERSHIP.....	30
3.3 LEADERSHIP DURING THE <i>REBELIÓN DE LOS FORAJIDOS</i>	34
4.0 DATA AND METHODOLOGY	39
5.0 INTERPRETING THE REBELLION.....	47
5.1 TIME TO TAKE THE BULL BY THE HORNS	47
5.2 LOOKING AT <i>LA LUNA</i> AND MAKING SENSE OF SPONTANEITY	54
6.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	63
APPENDIX.....	66
BIBLIOGRAPHY	69

LIST OF TABLES

Table A 1: Social movements in recent episodes of presidential dismissal	66
Table A 2: Spanish names used.....	67
Table A 3: Repertoires of the <i>Rebelion de los Forajidos</i>	68

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.Ecuador. Monthly number of social conflicts (Jan 2004 - Dec 2005)	8
Figure 2. Ecuador. Type of conflict - Number of conflicts per type (Jul 2004 - Jun 2005).....	11
Figure 3. Quito. Electoral results of October 2004 elections (percentage).....	48

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Ecuador returned to democracy in 1979, after several decades of military and civilian dictatorships. However, rebuilding democracy has not been an easy task for the country. Only three consecutive presidents have been able to finish the terms for which they were elected, and the possibility of *coups d'état* has constantly threatened the stability of the system. During the last twelve years the country has had 8 presidents, and no elected president since 1996 has been able to finish his term. Three presidents have been overthrown and replaced as a consequence of mass mobilizations and political contention, and the political instability is likely to continue in the years to come.

Apart from the political and economic costs of this complicated environment, there is one common feature in the last episodes of presidential dismissal that is worth emphasizing: the participation of social movements and organizations as key actors in the events. In fact, in all those cases organizations of indigenous peoples, students, workers, unions and other forms of organized civil society have successfully pressured the congress and the armed forces until they withdraw their support from the president. Abandoned by politicians and the military, presidents have been dismissed and replaced while people were still demonstrating on the streets. Nonetheless, the mobilizations that overthrew President Lucio Gutiérrez on April 20,

2005, known as the *Rebelión de los Forajidos*, differ considerably from the previous ones that removed presidents in 1997 and 2000.¹

Unlike previous cases this particular episode did not show a visible leadership, included “new” participants (children and seniors) and used repertoires with an enormous charge of symbolism behind them. Above all, some Ecuadorian scholars have emphasized the *spontaneity* of the movement, claiming that since people were able to mobilize without the help of formal organizations or traditional leaders, this mobilization has paved the way for a new form of democratic participation in Latin America where people affect directly the decision-making process.

Research on social movements has studied extensively issues concerning leadership, participation and repertoires of contention; however, this literature has concentrated almost exclusively on cases of long-standing struggles that have initiated equally long-lived social movements. But, what happens when mass mobilizations do not generate a well-defined social movement or a sustained struggle? Do week-long mobilizations follow the same logic as struggles over years? What “adjustments” do we need to do to the existing theory to consider these cases? Current research makes no clear-cut distinction between social movements pursuing a long-standing struggle and short-term mobilizations that arise and disappear within a few days. I maintain that an unambiguous distinction between short-term mobilizations and long-lived social movements is needed in the field, since temporary episodes, like the *Rebelión de los Forajidos*, offer distinctive features that still need an appropriate explanation. In this

¹ Table A1 in the Appendix schematizes the main differences and commonalities among the three cases of presidential dismissal of the last decade.

study I hope to contribute to the field by analyzing the mechanisms that made a short-term episode possible. To do that, I will concentrate on the particular leadership of the demonstrations and on the self-understanding of participants. I argue that the interaction between these two aspects facilitated the mobilization and reinforced the belief that the rebellion was *spontaneous*.

Recently, McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (2008) have pointed out that the study of processes and mechanisms has “the same ontological dignity as correlation” (p. 308). They claim that since mechanisms help to explain “what sort of event produces the correspondence between the presumed cause and the presumed effect” (p. 309), they enrich mechanistic explanations that look for correspondence between two variables. I rely on this idea to develop the approach I use in this paper.

In this study, I conclude that although there were organizations and some forms of leadership behind the rebellion, they did not have the preeminent role that theory predicts in organizing demonstrations. This happened, in part, due to the nature of the rebellion understood as a short-term mobilization that did not produce a long standing struggle. In addition, I will show that the notion of spontaneity grew out of the specific mechanism that allowed people’s direct participation in organizing mobilizations in Quito, coupled with participants’ self-understanding of acting on their own with no external influence. The result was a mobilization where people feel that they act only following their own will, although I will show that they were coordinated and led by a public figure.

The rest of this study is organized as follows. Chapter 2 presents the most important historical facts for understanding the *Rebelión de los Forajidos*. Chapter 3 offers a brief discussion about leaders and leadership in social movements. Since one of the most debated characteristics of the rebellion has to do with leadership, I present in this section a short review that allows me to use properly the notions of leader and leadership. Chapter 4 describes the data and methodology used in this research, and Chapter 5 presents findings and discussions. Chapter 6 concludes.

2.0 THE *REBELIÓN DE LOS FORAJIDOS* (OUTLAW'S REBELLION)

2.1 SOME PRELIMINARY FACTS

Lucio Gutiérrez became president of Ecuador on January 15, 2003. During his campaign he was presented as an outsider to the Ecuadorian political system, champion patriot of noble ideals and *hombre de pueblo* (man of the people) excluded from political power² (Merino 2005, Saad Herrería 2005a). He based his campaign on a leftist discourse which gained support from movements and parties from that part of the political spectrum.³ Nevertheless, when his chance of gaining the presidency increased considerably, he moderated his radical discourse and finally lost any clear ideological orientation.⁴

From the beginning, Gutiérrez's administration was involved in scandals of illegality, corruption and nepotism that, so it was widely claimed, quickly surpassed all levels previously

² The image of patriot soldier was based on Gutiérrez's participation in the events that caused the dismissal of President Jamil Mahuad in 2000. Due to his participation, Gutiérrez was separated from the army. The image of man of the people, on the other hand, was based on his ethnic appearance that does not correspond to the white elite that has traditionally held political power in Ecuador.

³ The most important of these organizations were the Ecuadorian indigenous movement under the national leadership of the *Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador (CONAIE)*; the *Movimiento Popular Democrático (MPD)* a political party closely related to one of the biggest public unions in Ecuador (the *Unión Nacional de Educadores UNE*); and the Communist Party of Ecuador. Table A2 in the Appendix presents a list of Spanish names of movements, parties and institutions mentioned in this study with their translation to English.

⁴ During his speech in Congress as new president, for example, Gutiérrez said that: "if sharing and being supportive, if fighting against corruption, social injustice and impunity means being a leftist ... then I am a leftist! If producing wealth and promoting production means being a rightist ... then I am a rightist!" (Quoted in Saad Herrería 2005b: 45)

observed in Ecuadorian politics. However, as Bustamante (2005) argues, Gutiérrez did not introduce new illegal practices into Ecuadorian public administration, since illegality, nepotism, and a general disrespect of the law are chronic problems of politics in Ecuador. What was new in Gutiérrez's administration was the way in which illegalities happened: openly, without even trying to conceal them from the scrutiny of public opinion.

In order to advance his governmental plan, Gutiérrez established different coalitions with the same economic and political groups that he had blamed during campaign as responsible for the serious crisis of the country. Those coalitions did not last long and frequently ended as irreconcilable confrontations between Gutiérrez and his former allies, with a consequent search for a new coalition in congress. For instance, the breaking-off of the initial partnership with the rightist *Partido Social Cristiano (PSC)*, the most important political force in Congress at the time, forced Gutiérrez to look for support from any political party willing to form a new governmental coalition in the legislature.

The increasing opposition in Congress against the president and the threat of a legal way to remove him from office⁵ paved the way for the coalition that Gutiérrez formed with the populist *Partido Roldosista Ecuatoriano (PRE)*, a party "owned" by the former president Abdalá Bucaram, also removed from office in Quito in 1997.⁶ In exchange for its support the PRE would have asked to bring Bucaram safely back from Panama, where he was avoiding the Ecuadorian

⁵ The strategy under consideration was a *political suit (impeachment)* against the president for illegal use of governmental resources. This strategy initially had the support of important parties in Congress (*Social Cristiano, Izquierda Democrática*, and *Pachakutik*). In the end, however, it could not get enough votes for consideration.

⁶ Abdalá Bucaram was the first Ecuadorian president removed from office during the democratic period that began in 1979. His extravagant style of government not only led the most important political parties at the time to oppose him, but also important sectors of the population, particularly in Quito.

legal process. To do this implied the total reorganization of the Ecuadorian Supreme Court. Merely the announcement of the possibility of bringing Bucaram back to Ecuador shook Quito's public opinion (Saad Herrería 2005a).

Defending a policy aimed at eliminating the influence of traditional political parties on state institutions of control and regulation, Gutiérrez and the parliamentary majority that he formed removed from office important state officials, violating legal and even constitutional regulations, and new appointments were made with people loyal to the government. The officials removed from their offices were the members of the *Tribunal Supremo Electoral* (Supreme Electoral Court), in charge of the organization of elections, and the *Tribunal Constitucional* (Constitutional Court) in charge of constitutional supervision. Nevertheless, the most controversial action in terms of public opinion was the replacement of all the judges of the Supreme Court by judges close to the government and its partners in Congress. These new judges were to review and eliminate all trials against Abdala Bucaram, allowing him to return to Ecuador (Merino 2005; Saad Herrería 2005a, 2005b).

To many Ecuadorians, these actions were only examples of a shameless and offensive style of government that jeopardized the image of Ecuador around the world (Saad Herrería 2005a, 2005b). This style also included the appointment of people closely related to the president or his family as important state officials, but who lacked qualifications for such positions; the betrayal of the principles defended during the campaign and of the movements that supported them (mainly the indigenous movement of Ecuador); and the uncertainty caused by the huge number of poorly-considered official speeches and declarations that

constantly had to be corrected. Incompetence and even stupidity (Saad Herrería 2005a, 2005b) in public administration were evident,⁷ so that at the end of his second year in office, Gutierrez was opposed by important sectors of the population. However, it was the removal of state officials in charge of the highest courts of the country (November 2004) and particularly the judges of the Supreme Court (December 2004) that triggered a wave of social conflicts that later began the *Rebelión de los Forajidos*. (Figures 1 and 2)

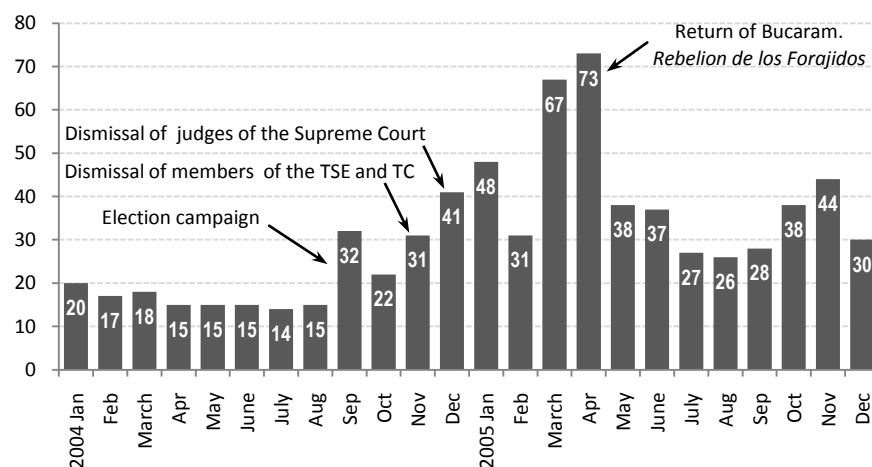


Figure 1. Ecuador. Monthly number of social conflicts (Jan 2004 - Dec 2005)⁸

Source: Centro Andino de Acción Popular (CAAP)

Figure 1 shows that there was also an important increase in the number of conflicts in September 2004. Those conflicts probably were more the result of the political campaigns for the elections of October 2004, which began to decline when the elections ended. As the reader

⁷ A large list of governmental actions that exemplify this assertion can be found in Jaramillo (2005), Merino (2005), Ramos (2005), and Saad Herrería (2005a, 2005b)

⁸ Based on a review of two national newspapers (Quito's *El Comercio* and Guayaquil's *El Universo*) the *Centro Andino de Acción Popular* selects as social conflict any event that, being originated in political contention, can be classified under the categories: Threat, Blockade of streets, Removal of demonstrators, Arrest, Injured/Deaths, Invasions of private or public property, Trials, Marches, Strikes, Protests, and Seizures of public spaces.

can see in Figure 1 the dismissal of the officials of the highest courts in the country provoked a sustained wave of conflicts that starts in November 2004 and ends in April 2005 with the dismissal of the president. Nonetheless, the figure suggests that social unrest declined during February although it remained above the levels that had prevailed until September. This fact requires a short explanation. During February, political parties and traditional social movements tried to find an institutional solution to the political crisis of the country. They put pressure on the congress and some other institutions to find an answer mainly to the problem of the judges of the Supreme Court. The expectations generated by the results of these negotiations could have reduced the number of conflicts observed and reported by newspapers, such as street demonstrations, giving the impression that social unrest was also reducing. However, it is likely that political conflicts did not decrease but changed their locus moving from public places to institutional settings, something not reflected in the available data. Ultimately, those attempts failed and people returned to the streets in the last days of February since they perceived that they could do nothing to stop the situation, because virtually all state institutions were run by officials loyal to the government.

One of the first groups that organized marches and demonstrations in December 2004 was the law students of Quito's private universities. Their demonstrations did not achieve a large number of participants, but they were successful in disrupting the typical political scenario of the city. Although street protests are quite common in Quito, their participants usually belong to public high schools and universities, generally gathered by the *Federación de Estudiantes Secundarios del Ecuador (FESE)*, and by the *Federación de Estudiantes Universitarios del Ecuador (FEUE)*, respectively. Both organizations have close links with the political party

Movimiento Popular Democrático (MPD) and with the *Unión Nacional de Educadores (UNE)*, so that they are considered as part of the institutional political system.

From January 2005 on successive marches and demonstrations took place in Quito and Guayaquil. These activities were called by various organizations and social groups, and achieved diverse results in terms of participation. However, huge marches took place in Guayaquil (January 26) as well as in Quito (February 16) that had been called and led by the mayors of those cities, both members of the most important political parties at the time: Jaime Nebot in Guayaquil from the *Partido Social Cristiano (PSC)* and Paco Moncayo in Quito from the *Izquierda Democrática (ID)*. The government tried to confront the opposition on the streets and organized counter-marches. However, in Quito as well as in Guayaquil the marches of the opposition were larger than the counter-marches (Ramos 2005; Saad Herrería 2005a)

Some observers of the marches in Quito during February (Ramos 2005; Saad Herrería 2005a) have pointed out the inability of their leaders to keep up with people's demands on the streets. For example, Saad Herrería (2005a) says that: "the 'direction' of the movement, its 'leadership' [...] is being surpassed by the demands and impetus of their own soldiers." And he continues "people that occupied [San Francisco's] square shouted '*¡Lucio Fuera!*' (Lucio Out!), but speeches from the stage [of Paco Moncayo] still talked about ruses, and legal tricks (p. 42, emphasis in the original). According to these observers, people attending the march felt disappointed at not being able to take more radical actions (Ramos 2005; Saad Herrería 2005a). Nevertheless, the disappointment caused by the leadership of the demonstration did not

prevent an increasing level of unrest (Figures 1 and 2).⁹ However, during March and the first days of April marches and demonstrations were called mainly by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), universities, unions, and isolated social organizations.

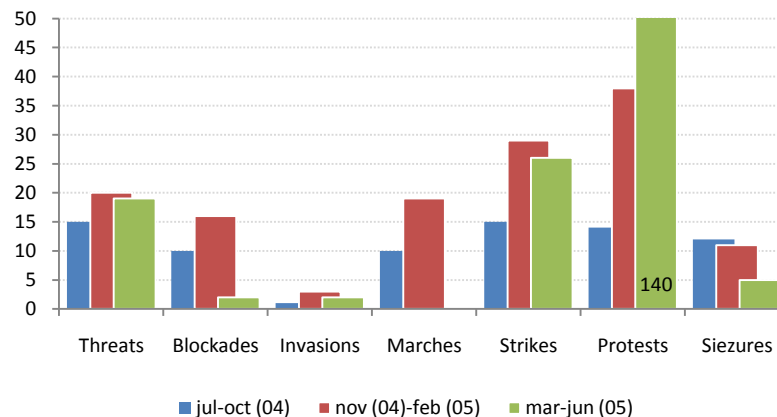


Figure 2. Ecuador. Type of conflict - Number of conflicts per type (Jul 2004 - Jun 2005)

Source: Centro Andino de Acción Popular (CAAP)

None of these demonstrations achieved February's participation, and only represented scattered efforts of protest usually centered on specific agendas (Ramos 2005). Despite the increasing number of demonstrations the government did not change any of its practices; instead it responded to protests with violence¹⁰ and an impressive campaign in the media, specially using radio and television to spread messages supporting its administration (Merino 2005; Saad Herrería 2005a).

⁹ Although the data in the figures refer to total number of national conflicts, the reader has to consider that most of them (approximately between 26% and 35% during the period January-June 2005) happened in Quito.

¹⁰ Actually violence and persecution of the leaders of the opposition was characteristic of Gutiérrez's administration and precedes the protest wave. An account of the best known cases can be found in Merino (2005), Ramos (2005) and Saad Herrería (2005a)

In this already troubled political environment an additional episode helped to increase people's dissatisfaction with the government. On March 31, 2005, the president of the new Supreme Court quashed the processes against Abdalá Bucaram, allowing him to return to Ecuador. He returned 2 days later on April 2. Bucaram's arrival coupled with a big show organized to receive him exacerbated hostility and indignation of important groups of the population against the government and the congress, particularly in Quito (Merino 2005; Saad Herrería 2005a). Confronted with a new situation, traditional political leaders reacted by launching a new wave of coordinated actions against president Gutiérrez.

Citizen assemblies were organized in the biggest cities (Quito, Guayaquil and Cuenca), usually led by their mayors or by traditional political leaders. All those assemblies demanded the dismissal of all the judges of the Supreme Court from their offices and the quashing of all their actions while in office (Merino 2005, Ramos 2005, Saad Herrería 2005a, 2005b). However, disagreements among assemblies were evident about specific actions to put in practice, where and how. Even among the leaders of Quito's Assembly these discrepancies were notorious.¹¹ Many participants in this assembly supported a radical position, and the idea of overthrowing Lucio Gutiérrez gained adherents.¹²

Quito's Assembly was composed of various social organizations that included NGOs, citizens' movements, political parties and leaders, students' movements, and organizations of

¹¹ Whereas Paco Moncayo (Quito's Mayor) sought the replacement of the judges of the Supreme Court, Ramiro González (Pichincha's Prefect) said to journalists: "we want the removal of all those responsible for this situation [...] the *de facto* judges, the conspirator deputies and *even the president*" (*El Comercio* April 5, 2005, p. A3. Emphasis added)

¹² Guayaquil's Assembly, led by the Social Christian Jaime Nebot, did not take an explicit side in this conflict, and in fact had no participation in the events that were about to happen in Quito. Therefore, in what follows I concentrate only on the events of Quito.

young people. All of them were gathered under the leadership of the *Izquierda Democrática* (ID). Although some well-known leaders of the indigenous movement also participated in the assembly, the *Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador (CONAIE)*, the most important indigenous organization, did not take part in the meetings. This organization considered that the conflict around the Supreme Court was basically a conflict among oligarchic groups struggling to take control of state institutions. This was in clear contrast with the situation in 2000 when the CONAIE, helped by some army colonels, was the main actor of the clash and was able to execute a *coup d'état*.

After several meetings, Quito's Assembly was able to mobilize around 5000 people on April 5 (*El Comercio* April 6, 2005), including many workers of the city hall that were required to join the demonstration. The march tried to go to the Congress, but it was violently dispersed by the police. A new mobilization was called for the next day by the leaders of the assembly, and the strategy was to make demonstrations as many times as needed until the state returned to democratic rule. The assembly successfully organized important mobilizations during the following two days (April 5 and 6). However, the third day it had to suspend the mobilization due to lack of participants (*El Comercio* April 8, 2005, p. A3). This in turn contributed to reducing the credibility of the leadership of the assembly.

Although leaders of the assemblies of Quito and Pichincha had called for radicalizing the protest and organizing a general strike on April 12, in reality they had not announced any official decision. Instead they considerably softened their rhetoric against the president, and in fact the removal of Gutierrez from his office was not considered a valid option anymore.

Nevertheless, the leaders of the assemblies tied the general strike to the dismissal of the judges of the Supreme Court: if the judges were dismissed from their offices, the strike would not go on. Just in case, those leaders started to coordinate actions with their counterparts in other cities around the country to organize a general strike.

As late as Tuesday, April 12, the general strike scheduled for the next day was not completely defined, and the leadership of the ID had split into two sides. Whereas one side expected congress to dismiss only the judges of the Supreme Court and thus avoid the general strike, the other side also wanted the dismissal of the members of the Constitutional and Electoral courts to trigger a strike. In addition this second faction considered the overthrowing of Lucio Gutiérrez as a viable possibility.

Besides the leadership of the strike, potential participants and supporters were also divided. For instance, Quito's Chamber of Commerce published a manifesto on April 12 requiring all its members to participate in the announced demonstrations. However, on April 8, Pichincha's Chamber of Industries also published a similar manifesto rejecting Gutiérrez's administration, but asking people not to participate in the strike since stop working implied "serious [economic] consequences for the country" (*El Comercio*, April 8, 2005, p. A8).

In the end, congress did not dismiss the judges of the Supreme Court so that, despite indecisions and divisions, the general strike took place on April 13. Nonetheless, the lack of clarity and coordination did have consequences in the number of participants that joined the mobilization: both the strike and the marches did not achieve the number of participants expected by their organizers, and the government interpreted this weakness as a triumph.

Traditional political leaders and Quito's elite had failed in organizing an important opposition on the streets.

2.2 THE ROLE OF PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

Although Quito's Assembly became the coordination center for massive mobilizations in Quito, smaller mobilizations were also organized independently of the decisions of the assembly. Marches and demonstrations happened on a daily basis in different parts of the city, called by diverse organizations. The most striking of all these efforts was the demonstration organized by the *Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador (PUCE)* and its students.¹³ On Wednesday, April 6, all the buildings of the university were covered with black fabrics as a symbol of mourning for the "death of democracy." That same day the students, wearing also black clothes, built a human chain that tried to reach the congress, but were suppressed by the police.

The involvement of the Catholic University was supported by authorities and faculty of the institution, and was not limited only to internal students' organizations. In fact, the university released the same day a manifesto endorsed by university officials, professors, students and workers rejecting Gutierrez's administration. This highlights two features of this wave of contention that started to appear evident to observers: the contribution of new actors and the originality in the repertoires used to protest.

¹³ The Pontifical Catholic University of Ecuador is an institution run by the Jesuit community on behalf of the Pope in Rome. In Ecuador it is considered a prestigious institution. Most of its students (but not all) are middle and upper class.

The participation of the university took the political environment of the city by surprise mainly for two reasons: (a) the students of the Catholic University and the university as institution had never participated in street protests during the last few decades. The social origin of its students and the prestige enjoyed by the university led them to participate in politics in other ways than mass protests. Quito's population knew this, and they were surprised to see students of the Catholic University demonstrating on the streets. (b) People in Quito were also surprised at the non-violent tone of the protest, a clear break with what was normally expected in street politics including the movements that had recently forced other presidents out. Ultimately the message sent to the city was that a non-violent protest was possible in Quito.

The Catholic University; however, was not the only university organizing demonstrations. During the followings days the *Escuela Politécnica Nacional (EPN)*, another institution separated from street politics, and the *Universidad Politécnica Salesiana (UPS)* organized marches and mobilizations against Gutiérrez's administration. These demonstrations were also predominantly peaceful and original.¹⁴ Although all the universities mentioned also participated in the mobilizations called by the Quito Assembly, they did not do it massively. Students from other universities also organized demonstrations, but they did not have the impact of the three universities just mentioned.

¹⁴ For lack of a better word, in the context of this study I use the word "original" as synonymous for "different". However, I want to emphasize the fact that many "ingredients" of the demonstrations were never seen before in the city, so in that sense too they were original.

2.3 THE MOMENT OF REBELLION

Under the direction of Francisco “Paco” Velasco, *La Luna* radio had been broadcasting all the events that were happening in Quito on April 13. *La Luna* had also broadcast the meetings and debates of Quito’s Assembly, and had maintained an overt opposition against Lucio Gutiérrez and the entire political system. In fact, Paco Velasco had been one of the many journalists persecuted by the government. One distinguishing feature of the radio, particularly important on April 13, was its policy of “open microphones” that implied that listeners could make a phone call to the radio and state their opinions *on air*, so that all the listeners of the radio were able to listen to them, share them or reject them.

As I have mentioned, the general strike and the marches called by the leaders of Quito’s Assembly failed, and the president and his ministers appeared on television to celebrate their victory with speeches and accusations against the organizers of the mobilizations. Nevertheless, *La Luna* radio had been receiving phone calls from people rejecting the attitude of the president. Among all those phone calls a proposal emerged to organize a demonstration that same night, after working hours, at a specific place in the city, and without the participation of political leaders. The proposal immediately gained support from people that kept calling the radio to make suggestions for alternative places or strategies. *El Comercio* on April 24, 2005 presented this account of the events:

At approximately 3 p.m. a middle-age woman –whose name unfortunately disappeared– expressed at the microphone her dissatisfaction with the official version: “I came to work, but not because I support the government. I want to propose a protest after office hours.” [...] More phone calls supported the idea immediately. Somebody suggested a place: “De los Shyris Avenue was important for Bucaram’s fall, why don’t

we go there?” Another one suggested the Villa Flora, a third one the neighborhoods ... At what time? It has to be after dinner, around 9 p.m. ... In that way, spontaneously, the strategy was born. (A22)

In the end, it was decided to do a *cacerolazo*¹⁵ at the *Tribuna de la Shyris*, in the commercial and financial center of the city. That first day the *cacerolazo* gathered around 5000 people (*El Comercio*, April 24, 2005) who protested peacefully singing and shouting slogans. The *Rebelión de los Forajidos* had started.

Participants marched that night towards the Supreme Court, and although they were protesting peacefully, the police confronted them violently. A small group of protesters went then to Lucio Gutierrez’s house in a nearby neighborhood. Once there, they banged on their pots and shouted slogans against the government. The next day in a press conference President Gutiérrez condemned those actions, and called protesters vandals and *forajidos* (outlaws) accusing them of jeopardizing his family’s safety. Discontented people in Quito joined with *La Luna* radio to claim the description given by the president and transformed it into the label that identified “any person that feels something against the government.” From Thursday, April 14, people that called the radio identified themselves as *forajidos*.

La Luna radio established a dynamic relationship with the discontents. Since the first day of mobilizations, the radio became the focal point where people met to express their rejection to the president, look for information about the events in Quito, and participate in the protests. People’s opinions against the government were broadcast with no restriction despite the “bad language” used in some cases (and sometimes even shared by Paco Velasco and the

¹⁵ Pot-banging

staff). People also called the radio to provide first-hand information concerning the political environment in the city. For example, when marches started, people called to alert protesters of the police strategies and movements to intercept them. When the demonstrations grew in size, this information was particularly useful and helped to coordinate appropriate reactions on the part of the *forajidos*.¹⁶ Another reason to call the radio was to denounce illegal or corrupt actions of the government, for example, use of public resources and employees to organize marches and demonstrations on behalf of the president, persecution of some public figures or excessive use of violence to disperse protests. Finally, people called the radio to propose strategies and coordinate actions or reactions.

All that information was processed, selected and broadcast in a very rapid fashion while trying to maintain accuracy. This centralized processing of information carried out by *La Luna* made it the most important and visible actor of the protests developed in Quito. The government as well as other media, especially radio, also recognized this fact. The former tried to close the radio down and the latter formed a sort of radio-chain to reproduce the signal of *La Luna* using their own frequencies. Although a few radios from other cities joined this radio-chain, the activity was specifically concentrated in Quito.

However, the radio and its staff were not only a “transmission belt” of people’s discontent. Paco Velasco undoubtedly established a radical and defiant tone. His comments, analyses, interviews and his general communication with people did not conceal his radical opposition to the president and the entire political system. During his programs he called

¹⁶ As I have mentioned before any person that rejected the government was considered a *forajido*; however, this definition is too imprecise for this study. In this paper I use the term *forajido* to refer to people protesting on the streets. When I use the term *people* I refer to the population of Quito in general.

people to join the mobilizations and also stirred people's spirit, appealing to feelings of patriotism, dignity, justice, and rage. In many of his interventions Velasco even pointed out explicitly who were the enemies of people at that moment (police, state officials, politicians). As director of the radio, he also omitted some information from the reports he received, broadcasting only the information that was relevant to the protest. For instance, when somebody called the radio to defend president Gutiérrez or to condemn the rebellion, Velasco immediately cut the call and stopped broadcasting that opinion. Under Velasco, the radio became the most important mobilizer, helped in part by the support of other radio stations and the apathy of other media (particularly television).

However, *La Luna* was not the only means of coordination and mobilization. The role of personal networks, communicated through emails, phone calls and text messages was also very important for achieving important levels of participation during the days of protest. Organizations of civil society, unions and universities also contributed to recruiting people for mobilizations. Nevertheless, all these individual efforts were arranged under the coordination and guidance of *La Luna*. It has to be considered that, as a radio station, *La Luna* could establish with no restriction a wider and richer network.

Helped by these additional mechanisms, the radio was able to organize and coordinate night mobilizations during the week from April 13 to April 20. Those mobilizations removed president Gutiérrez from his office. Following the recommendations of its listeners, *La Luna* proposed "themes" for each day of protest, and every demonstration performed a specific action that gave the protest a particular name. Thus the *cacerolazo* of April 13 was followed by

the *reventón*, the *tablazo*, the *rollazo*, the *frenazo*, and the *pitazo*,¹⁷ all of them aimed at emphasizing the peaceful character of the protests.

All those actions had distinctive ways to criticize, satirize and challenge the government. The *reventón*, for example, happened when protesters burst balloons at a specific moment of the protest. The balloons in turn were intended to make fun of the president's big cheeks.¹⁸ The *tablazo* and *pitazo* were aimed to produce noise, in the first case banging two pieces of wood and in the second using car horns. However, perhaps the most remarkable of all of those actions was the *rollazo*. It implied the use of toilet paper to cover houses, buildings, trees, cars and everything else in an attempt to clean the city of all the "shit" of Gutierrez's administration. Other symbols and resources were used during those days including animals, masks, t-shirts, eggs, flowers, posters, puppets, coffins and books. What is interesting is that all these resources were widely used by participants.

Another aspect worth mentioning is that the mobilizations that started on April 13 were in some ways different from the mobilizations that removed Gutiérrez from office on April 20. Although some differences can be established between these two points in time, in this paper I mention only two important: the social origin of participants, and the violence observed during demonstrations.

The social origin of participants has been one of the most emphasized characteristics of the rebellion due to the participation of new actors in the political scenario of the city. Despite

¹⁷ Table A3 in the Appendix shows a list of actions developed in the city during the week of protests considered in this study. Each action has a brief description and the date when it first took place.

¹⁸ References to the presidential cheeks abounded in public opinion since the beginning of Gutierrez's administration. Editorials, jokes, cartoons and even songs referred to this characteristic of the president.

the differences among analyses and analysts, there exists a consensus around the fact that the *Rebelión de los Forajidos* was composed mainly of middle and upper class citizens in Quito (Bustamante T. 2005; Jaramillo 2005; Merino 2005; Pachano 2005; Ramírez Gallegos 2005; Ramos 2005; Saad Herrería 2005a, 2005b). Several indicators lead to that conclusion: (a) the space where the marches first originated was surrounded by middle and upper class neighborhoods, (b) the students that actively participated on the demonstrations studied mainly in private universities, (c) a number of participants arrived at the demonstrations in their own cars, (d) some demonstrations were organized as convoys, and (f) even the appearance of the protesters.¹⁹ Those participants attended to mobilizations with children and seniors, and also the contribution of women during demonstrations was extremely important.

To see middle and upper class people protesting on the streets was a completely new experience for the city. In Quito, street protests are closely linked to economic grievances, and therefore their participants are considered as belonging to lower classes. Moreover, due to excessive use of this strategy, most people in the city reject protests and demonstrations because they interrupt the normal activity of the city. Since middle and upper class citizens presumably do not have economic demands and they also reject street politics, they never participate in this kind of demonstrations. To see those people protesting on the streets was really surprising for everyone. For instance, a former participant of the demonstrations remembers that: “when the [students of the] catholic university burned tires [to protest], wow! [We thought] the problem is really serious here, I mean the situation is frightening and you

¹⁹ Like most countries in Latin America, due to the Spanish conquest that established a white elite in the country, in Ecuador there exists the general belief that the more similar the appearance of people to the white ideal, the higher their social and economic status. See Hurtado (1997).

panic [...] the students of the catholic university are burning tires, in Quito, what is going on here?”

Gutierrez’s administration also recognized this feature and tried to take advantage of it. The government labeled protesters as “oligarchy” and accused them of conspirators against a people’s government. With this rhetoric supported by an impressive campaign on the media, the president tried to delegitimize the protests. However, people’s support for street demonstrations never diminished.

Nevertheless, the middle and upper classes were not the only participants of the rebellion. By April 20 the demonstrations had a very diverse social composition; those who participated in the marches agreed that there were “all kinds of people” on the streets. *La Luna* radio had reached a wide social spectrum difficult to classify under a single category. Because of the radio, participation was not limited only to demonstrations on the streets, but also included phone calls to the radio to provide information. As a former participant remembers: “[during those days] all of us were reporters for the radio” (Saad Herrería 2005a:17). Saad Herrería (2005a) identified two stages within the *Rebelión de los Forajidos*, one that starts on April 13 and goes until April 16, where participants belong mainly to middle and upper classes, and a second stage (from April 17 to April 20) where the social composition of participants is hard to determine. Therefore, even if the rebellion started as a middle and upper class movement, in the end, the protests showed a very diverse social composition.

Observed violence during protests is the second important difference. The main reason for the discredit of street protests in Quito is the excessive violence used during

demonstrations, from both protestors and police, that usually implies destruction of public and private property and violent confrontations. Unlike those “traditional” forms of protests, people were called from the beginning of the wave of contention to participate in a peaceful demonstration. In fact, earlier mobilizations organized by various organizations already had emphasized the need to protest peacefully, so that the *Rebelión de los Forajidos* only continued that trend. Government, on the other hand, replied with unusual violence.

Some observers (Merino 2005; Ramos 2005; Saad Herrería 2005a, 2005b) as well as the most important newspapers in Quito have emphasized the excessive violence used by the police to disperse mobilizations. Given their lack of experience, many of the participants could not handle such violence, and the mobilizations were dispersed easily, especially during the first days of the protests. However, violence did not intimidate protestors, and the demonstrations gathered more participants every night. Many of those other participants brought with them the *expertise* needed to confront police violence successfully. Those experienced protestors were prepared to act with violence against the police, so that during the last days of protest, and especially on April 19, confrontations with the police were extremely violent since people were prepared to face “anything” to achieve their objective.

Through the radio Paco Velasco sent sometimes contradictory messages to the people on the streets. He stimulated people’s spirit to continue struggling fiercely, but he demanded that people avoid violent confrontations. At times the radio seemed to lose control of the mobilizations, and protests turned into violent conflicts with no pre-established plan or logic.

Confrontations produced a lot of injured people and one fatality. Those events, in turn, aggravated people's discontent, and exacerbated their rage against the government. At that point, institutional movements and political forces (mainly politicians in congress and the army) felt pressured to look for a final solution to the political crisis. Ultimately, congress dismissed Lucio Gutiérrez from his office and appointed the vice president as the new "constitutionally" elected president of the country. The army withdrew its support from the president and immediately put into practice a plan to help Gutiérrez flee Quito.

This victory did not put an end to the mobilizations, although it considerably reduced the number of people on the streets. This happened mainly for two reasons: in the first place, since the beginning of the wave of contention, the most repeated slogan on the streets had been "*Que se vayan todos*" or "Everybody Out!" meaning that protesters wanted not only Gutiérrez out of his office, but all politicians in congress and in state appointments. Everybody Out! expressed people's will to clean the political system from corruption and reestablish a new government. After Gutiérrez's dismissal some considered that the objective had been only partially achieved, and that they had to continue struggling to get corrupt politicians out of their offices. A small march went to the congress to demand the dismissal of all the deputies, but they failed in their attempt.

A second reason to continue with the demonstrations had to do with previous experiences of presidential dismissals. In 1997 and 2000, when Presidents Abdala Bucaram and Jamil Mahuad were respectively overthrown people did nothing to prevent those presidents fleeing the country and avoid Ecuadorian law. In 2005 people on the streets did not want this to

happen again. Coordinated by Paco Velasco from *La Luna* radio, protesters organized mobilizations to impede Gutiérrez's escape from the city. The most striking action was the blockade of Quito's airport to prevent any airplane leaving. Despite those actions, during the next days Gutiérrez fled to Brazil, helped by the army and the police.

The next section will review some relevant theoretical insights about social movements, paying special attention to the role of leaders within them.

3.0 SOME THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 POLITICAL OPORTUNITIES, MOBILIZING STRUCTURES, AND FRAMING PROCESSES

The literature that explains the emergence and development of social movements has concentrated on the analysis of three main processes: the set of political opportunities (or restrictions) faced by the movement, the mobilizing structures available to the insurgents, and the framing processes²⁰ where collective action is embedded (McAdam et al. 2006). In this account the rise and development of a social movement is produced by the interaction of these three processes and by the influence that one exerts over the other. The absence of one of these elements prevents collective action.

The interactions established among these aspects put in motion various processes at the same time. For instance, the set of political opportunities gives incentives to mobilization not only for the objective changes observed in the political system, but also for the new processes of reinterpretation brought about by those changes. Similarly, mobilizing structures/organizations are not only means to channel people's grievances; affiliation to a specific organization determines how members analyze and interpret reality (McAdam et al. 2006). In both cases, the reinterpretation of reality determines the identification of specific

²⁰ McAdam et al. (2006) define framing processes as: the collective process of interpretation, attribution, and social construction that mediate between opportunity and action. (p. 2)

political opportunities, and the use of particular mobilizing structures. The reader will see later that the relationship of an important number of participants of the *Rebelión de los Forajidos* with private universities had important implications not only for the origin and development of the mobilizations, but for how those people understood their own actions during the week of demonstrations.

Once a movement has been set in motion, McAdam and his colleagues maintain, its own actions will change the environment where the movement is embedded, giving rise to new opportunities (or restrictions), new processes of interpretation and new mobilizing structures. During this development the movement and its needs change, and new forms of organization should emerge. In general “While movements often develop within established institutions or informal associational networks, it is rare that they remain embedded in these nonmovement settings. For the movement to survive, insurgents must be able to create a more enduring organizational structure to sustain collective action.” (McAdam et al. 2006: 13), in other words enduring collective action is impossible without an appropriate organizational structure.

This literature, however, is focused on episodes of collective action that have taken place for a considerable span of time, and pictures a social movement that grows in time gaining adherents, struggling for attention of third parties, and facing the reactions of organized opponents. In these cases, the need to act collectively produces complex social movements due to a conscious effort of activists and leaders to assert their presence in the political arena. To move beyond the stage of the initial mobilizations and affect the political system, activists and leaders of those movements have worked for a long time. In many of the episodes studied by

social movement scholars, mass demonstrations, mobilizations and collective action have been the product of years of hard work.

However, recent research on social movements has begun to study cases of collective action that have not moved beyond the initial mobilization-stage and therefore have not generated a permanent struggle or a “traditional” social movement²¹ (see for example Earl 2007; Gerhards and Rucht 1992; Opp and Gern 1993; Schussman and Earl 2004; Walgrave and Manssens 2000). In those cases, once the immediate goal of the mobilizations has been achieved the “movement” disappears almost completely.

If a mobilization does not turn into an enduring movement, it follows that insurgents do not need an enduring organizational structure to sustain collective action as the theory predicts. However, even a single mobilization needs a coordination mechanism and some form of leadership to transform a group of aggrieved people into collective action aimed to achieve a particular objective (Opp and Gern 1993; Walgrave and Manssens 2000). If these mechanisms exist, even if they are not institutionalized (for example, as a formal organization), they may help sustain the three processes mentioned before, and therefore they will produce collective action.

The case of the *Rebelión de los Forajidos* seems to match nicely the type of short-term collective action recently studied by social movements scholars. The rebellion was not the product of years of hard work by activists or movement leaders; instead, it developed in a few days, achieved its immediate goal and then disappeared almost completely. What were then

²¹ I have not found a clear distinction to differentiate conceptually a *social movement* from a *mobilization*. In fact, many authors use the terms as synonymous.

the mechanisms that allowed aggrieved people to quickly coordinate their actions and produce daily mobilizations on a large scale around one specific objective? Before trying to identify those mechanisms I need first to clarify the issue of leadership during the rebellion. In order to do that I will review in the next pages some basic concepts generally accepted in the literature about leadership in social movements, and then I will consider whether the organizers and forms of organization observed during the rebellion can be safely referred to as leadership.

3.2 SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND LEADERSHIP

Most studies of leadership assume as given the existence of some kind of organization that coordinates and organizes collective action (see for example Kretschmer and Meyer 2007; Morris and Staggenborg 2002; Nepstad and Bob 2006; Reger 2007; Staggenborg 1988). These investigations explain leadership within this organizational context, exploring either the way leaders influence organizations (Nepstad and Bob 2006) or how organizations shape their leaders (Staggenborg 1988). In any case, when scholars refer to leaders of social movements they are actually referring to leaders of organizations within those movements (the well-known social movement organizations or SMOs). Although there are some studies that explore leadership within informal, non-hierarchical (“leaderless”) movements, the majority of the literature explains leadership in an organizational context.

Morris and Staggenborg (2002), for example, define leaders of a SMO as “strategic decision-makers who inspire and organize others to participate in social movements.” Thus, leaders act in two different (but complementary) fronts: the emotional level, *inspiring* people to

participate, and the organizational level, *providing* people the frameworks to act collectively. In doing so, leaders help to transform grievances and plans into actions. The authors argue that: “the early stages of a movement are typically an ‘orgy of participation and of talk’ in which participants share stories, socially construct meaning, and explore new ideas [...] To mobilize movements out of these early interactions [and actually transform those interactions into a movement], leaders offer frames, tactics, and organizational vehicles that allow participants to actively construct a collective identity and participate in collective action at various levels.”

Some scholars (Gusfield 1966, Morris and Staggenborg 2002, Staggenborg 1998) have also implied that we can think of a leader as the “brains” behind the movement. Leaders are in charge of *processing* all the information available to the movement and offering effective strategies to achieve its goals; however, leaders do not remain simple advisors for activists. They usually have the authority within the movement to mobilize people and material resources according to their judgment. In fact, authority is probably the most common feature associated with leadership, although sources and kinds of authority vary tremendously in the literature (Freeman 1974, Nepstad and Bob 2006, Laclau 2007).

Authority establishes a hierarchy within the movement (Gusfield 1966; Kretschmer and Meyer 2007; Morris and Staggenborg 2002; Nepstad and Bob 2006, Staggenborg 1988), and a problem for the organization. Because leaders usually become alien to the rank and file, or do not maintain direct contact with the base of the organization, they get “disconnected” from the movement, and in the extreme, leaders can even use their organizations to achieve personal goals (Kretschmer and Meyer 2007). Nevertheless, hierarchy seems to be an unavoidable

constant in social movements: even within the so-called “leaderless” movements there still exists some form of “elite” in charge of making decisions for the whole movement.²²

If leaders want to maintain their support and legitimacy, the disconnection between them and their followers cannot last long, and they have to develop mechanisms to include in their decisions as many insights as possible from the rank and file, or at least pretend they are including them (Stokes 2001). Many organizations have established different levels of leadership and have developed mechanisms to improve member’s participation on the decision-making process. The evidence suggests that the effective exchange of information within the movement is key to the success of leadership (Morris and Staggenborg 2002).

The task of transforming scattered aggrieved people into an organic movement with well-defined objectives requires a work of coordination and organization at different levels, and social movements have developed different types of leadership or different teams of leaders to cope these multiple tasks (Earl 2007, Nepstad and Bob 2006, Freeman 1974, Gusfield 1966, Reger 2007, Morris and Staggenborg 2002). In general terms the number of tasks to be fulfilled by leaders depends on the size of the movement and on its development (Gusfield 1966; Staggenborg 1988): bigger and more complex movements have to constitute different levels of leadership in charge of specific tasks.

The literature has also highlighted the importance of leaders as the image of the movement. For their followers, leaders are “the soul and conscience of the movement” (Gusfield 1966:142) and their job is to communicate appropriately the message of the

²² Feminist movements in the U.S. during the 60’s tried to avoid this hierarchical organization, but their efforts most of the times did not work or caused additional problems to their organizations (Freeman 1973)

movement to the society they are trying to influence. If they are successful, their organizations will gain support from other participants and third parties, but they will also be targeted by authorities and organizations from the opposition. In their role as “images”, the relationship established between leaders and media is very important in determining how the message of the movement is released (Morris and Staggenborg 2002).

Unlike those traditional studies, recently some scholars have studied forms of leadership that emerge from particular mobilizations where formal organizations do not have a crucial influence (Earl 2007; Reger 2007; Schussman and Earl 2004). In these non-organizational settings²³ scholars identify people performing tasks related to leadership, but who do not fit the models of leadership in the earlier literature. In general, these works analyze specific tasks developed by “leaders” (Earl 2007) or the type of mobilization caused by the “leadership” (Reger 2007). This new research agenda questions the ideas established in the earlier literature, including the very concept of leadership, and propose new approaches for its study in cases where the roles of leaders and followers are not completely clear.

For the purpose of this study the work of Earl (2007) is of special interest within this new stream of research. This scholar proposes an approach “empirically closer to the phenomena” that guarantees “greater clarity and precision” (Earl 2007:1345) based on the specific tasks that “leaders” fulfill within the movement. After a thorough review of the existing literature, Earl (2007) sketches the main leadership tasks identified in previous studies and classifies them into a few categories to facilitate the analysis. I do not reproduce here her

²³ Earl (2007) studies the case of strategic vote in presidential elections, a form of collective action developed over an internet platform, whereas Reger (2007) studies the case of *emotional mobilization* in today’s feminism in the U.S.

complete classification, but list the broad categories. According to Earl (2007) leaders perform tasks aimed at accomplishing one or more of the following objectives: (a) articulating vision and ideology of the movement, (b) engaging the political environment, (c) framing the movement and its issues, (d) managing relations with non movement actors, (e) making strategic and tactical decisions, (f) organizing specific actions, (g) managing the internal life of the movement, (h) innovating and entrepreneurial activity, and (i) providing social capital (Earl 2007:1330-31). In this view people performing any of these tasks can be considered as leaders of the movement even if they do not match the ideal of a leader existing in the traditional literature.

3.3 LEADERSHIP DURING THE *REBELIÓN DE LOS FORAJIDOS*

In this section I have highlighted three specific issues concerning leadership in social movements: the concept of leader, the problem of authority and disconnection, and the specific tasks filled by leaders within a movement. With these theoretical insights in mind, in what follows I will verify if there were some people or organizational structures that can be treated as leadership during the *Rebelión de los Forajidos*. Although the problem of leadership in the rebellion is worth a new, independent research project, my purpose in this section is simply to highlight the existence of some kind of organizers that in fact can be considered as the leaders of the mobilizations. By doing so, I can concentrate my attention on the mechanisms established between “leaders” and “followers” that made the *Rebelión de los Forajidos* possible.

As I have already mentioned, after the mobilizations called by Quito's mayor on April 13 failed, people started calling the radio station demanding a response against the government's cynicism, and through the broadcasting of *La Luna* an "orgy of participation and of talk" took place in the city. In this process Paco Velasco played an extremely important role since he stimulated people's communication and active participation. He framed people's discontent, and certainly encouraged people to take the issue into their own hands and go to the streets to protest. However, this work occurred in a slightly different way from theoretical accounts about leaders.

In the ideal-typical process of organizing a demonstration, a team of social movement leaders plans strategically where, when and how to organize a demonstration that effectively disrupts the targeted political scenario. It is the leadership team of a social movement, acting on behalf of the discontented people and recognizing the set of political opportunities and risks, that leads the movement to the streets. The case of the *Rebelión de los Forajidos* was different in this respect, because there was no chance to plan strategically the mobilizations (at least at the beginning) and in fact there was not any team of leaders responsible for the organization of mobilizations. It was the people calling to the radio that put pressure on the broadcasters to do "something," and offered the organizers an ample range of alternatives for collective action. Broadcasters at *La Luna*, and specifically Paco Velasco, did not construct frames, tactics or organizational vehicles from scratch. Instead they helped to coordinate collective action by *selecting* strategies and actions from people's proposals.

This particular method used to organize the demonstrations avoided the problem of disconnection between organizers and the rank and file. On the contrary, by acting in this way broadcasters reinforced the feeling of democratic participation among discontented people in Quito, and gained legitimacy as the “leaders” of the mobilizations. People followed the radio station because the radio was advancing people’s wishes and objectives. In this way, it was the people who put pressure on broadcasters to become the leaders of the mobilizations, and granted them recognition as leaders and authority to act on their behalf.

It is safe to conclude (based on the evidence available for this research) that Paco Velasco and his staff acknowledged the privileges they had been given by people, but instead of assuming “officially” the leadership of the rebellion, they avoided any label of leader, and stressed the idea that they were only part of the common people. For example, in an interview he gave to a newspaper, when asked if he was the leader of the rebellion, Paco Velasco answered that: “Me? A leader? Are you nuts? In the *Revolución de las Alcabalas*, is there a memory of a leader? Is there such memory in the *Revolución de los Estancos*²⁴? No. The leader is people’s dignity. It is the people who take the streets and overwhelm us all”. By rejecting being considered *the* leader of the rebellion, Velasco eliminated the risk of a hierarchical movement, and maintained intact the legitimacy of his authority at the same time. During the final moments of the rebellion, even prominent figures such as political leaders, journalists, and authorities recognized the authority of Velasco and coordinate with him actions and strategies.

²⁴ The *Revolución de las Alcabalas* and the *Revolución de los Estancos* are episodes of the Ecuadorian history where the people protested against colonial authorities in Quito. Both episodes are important because they constitute the first attempts of Ecuadorians to obtain independence from the Spanish crown, although both were unstructured movements.

A “leader” that does not want to be considered as such within a movement that claims not to follow any particular leader raises the question about the possibility of a movement without leaders, and in fact the lack of formal organizations behind the mobilizations contributes to reinforce the image of a leaderless movement. Nevertheless, despite the resistance on the part of Velasco to accept the label of leader, it is an incontrovertible fact that he was actually performing some leadership tasks (Earl 2007) during the days of the rebellion. Given the importance and salience of these tasks I can safely conclude that Paco Velasco was in fact the leader of the *Rebelión de los Forajidos*.

Velasco was the most recognizable image of the movement. Pictures of him appeared constantly in newspapers, and he personally appeared many times in interviews and nationwide TV programs. For the mass media, Paco Velasco was the official spokesman of the rebellion. He also articulated the movement around one specific objective (Lucio Out!), although he did not elaborate the objective but took it from people’s proposals. He offered the frame for mobilization, processed all the information relevant to the movement and made strategic decisions in close relationship with discontented people. He and his staff at the radio helped to coordinate specific actions and mobilize people offering instructions and advice from the radio station. The role played by Velasco and the broadcasters of *La Luna* was so important for the mobilizations that, after years of the events, Paco Velasco and the radio station are still connected to the *Rebelión de los Forajidos* in people’s minds. For instance, Paco Velasco is frequently invited to talk in TV programs and interviews as a representative of the *espíritu forajido* (outlaw spirit) of those days.

I conclude that the *Rebelión de los Forajidos* was not a leaderless movement. There were people and institutions (mainly the radio station) performing leadership tasks that helped to coordinate actions and encouraged participation. “Leaders” of the movement rejected that label and organized the mobilizations through a method that strengthened a feeling of democratic non-hierarchical participation, giving the impression that the movement did not need organizers or leaders. The *Rebelión de los Forajidos* had leaders, but that leadership does not match the ideas commonly accepted in the literature.

Now that I have clarified some aspects about the leadership of the rebellion I can return to the task of answering the question: what were the mechanisms that allowed aggrieved people to quickly coordinate their actions and produce huge mobilizations around one specific objective?

4.0 DATA AND METHODOLOGY

My main body of information comes from 9 semi-structured interviews and 2 informal conversations with former participants in the demonstrations that took place in Quito during the week from April 13 to April 20, 2005. I have also used data from the two most important newspapers in Quito: *El Comercio* and *Hoy*, from *La Luna* radio, from the large body of academic and non-academic literature written about the issue in Ecuador, and from video reports made by independent producers. As a participant in the events, I also used my own memories of the episode as a source of information.

The interviews I am using here were made in May 2005 as part of the production of the short documentary “*Jóvenes Creando su Historia*” (Young people building their own history). This documentary was about the role of college students during the *Rebelión de los Forajidos*. The project as well as the interviews was conducted by two undergraduate students of Anthropology and one undergraduate student of Archeology of the *Universidad Politécnica Salesiana* in Quito, Ecuador. Each interview was video recorded, had one or two interviewees,²⁵ was about one hour long, and took place in the campuses of the universities where the interviewees studied at the time. I obtained non-written consent from the producers of the project to use their material.

²⁵ There was only one interview with three interviewees.

I watched the videos to select the interviews relevant to my interests. Out of 13 I chose to use 9 interviews, considering the quality of the video and sound, and the reliability of the information. In some cases the interviewees did not take seriously the interview and gave just short or unrelated answers to the questions. This lack of interest is evident in the gestures, attitudes and body movements of the interviewees. I eliminated all these cases from my sample. In summary, the information considered for this study was provided by 16 students: 7 females and 9 males in an age range between 19 and 23 years, with only one male 36-year-old student. Out of the total, 12 were students of private universities at the time, and the remaining 4 studied in public universities. Almost all the interviewees (15) were studying for careers related to social sciences²⁶ and only one for a technical career.

I did transcriptions of the interviews using numbers to identify them and codes to have references of the interviewees. Then I did inductive coding of these transcriptions looking for emergent themes or ideas. Two main topics emerged from this process: the role of *La Luna* radio, and the self understanding that participants had of their actions. Using these topics as a focal point I returned to the transcriptions looking for more detail and complementary data. In the process I also used information from newspapers and of the journalistic and scholarly literature to contextualize and clarify some of the statements of the interviewees. This work allowed me to elaborate analytical memos that ultimately constitute the basis for the discussion and interpretations that I present here.

²⁶ Social Communication (4), Sociology and Political Science (1), Anthropology (5), Archeology (1), Psychology (2), History (1), and Law (1)

As a strategy to support the information I obtained from the interviews, and refresh my memories about my participation in the demonstrations of April 2005 I had two informal conversations in March 2008 with friends who also are former participants. Both are women who studied Economics in private universities and one of them (the older) was not a student at the time of the *Rebelión de los Forajidos*. They were 26 and 34 years old at the moment of the conversation. These conversations were semi-structured, although the main point of them was to exchange memories of the political events that happened in 2004 and 2005: instead of collecting data only from one participant (the interviewee) my purpose with the conversation was to establish an interaction between the researcher and the participant. I recorded the conversations and took notes, but I did not code them. These conversations helped me to reconstruct and remember some of the facts that I had witnessed myself in 2004 and 2005.

I have also used daily editions of Quito newspapers: *El Comercio* and *Hoy*. Although I cannot provide data on the readership, it is widely recognized that both newspapers are the most important and reliable sources of information in Quito. I checked the complete daily editions of both newspapers for April 2005, but collected only the pages devoted to political events or news related to the political situation in Quito. For *El Comercio* usually the first six pages of the main section (Section A) are devoted to political and economic issues in Ecuador (including the editorial pages) and for *Hoy* mainly the first four pages of the main section. I have used the second edition of both newspapers: given that the demonstrations I am considering in this work took place mainly at night (starting around 9 p.m.) and that the first edition of the newspapers goes to press around 10 or 11 p.m. (which means that all the articles have to be

ready around 7 or 8 p.m.) sometimes the first edition of the newspapers did not include coverage of the events of the previous evening.²⁷

As I mentioned before, I used the information from the newspapers to contextualize the data I obtained from other sources. Therefore I did not do any coding of this information. Newspaper coverage, for instance, allowed me to see how the government reacted to the demonstrations, or how the insurgents reacted to specific governmental or congressional movements. Newspaper data also illustrate the way media framed the protest, and in this particular case the way the press helped legitimize and reinforce protests and demonstrations. One important contribution was the photographs that appeared illustrating the news. These photographs helped me to get an idea of the participants and the means they used during each day of protest. Newspapers also provided me with short interviews with participants and some key actors of the mobilization.

I have also used information from audio archives of *La Luna* radio. This radio station registered its broadcastings during 2005 in a .mp3 format, but keep only selected files in an audio library.²⁸ The archives contain a wide range of activities including speeches, phone calls, songs, jingles, interviews, testimonials, and news reports. They have been recorded completely at random, are in no specific order, and are undated. The only clue to establish their sequence was the date when the archive was first originated. But, in a few cases this date does not

²⁷ Both newspapers release two editions daily. The first is available early in the morning (around 6 a.m.) and the second one appears some hours later. During the week of protests it is remarkable how different were the first and second editions of *El Comercio*, mainly in the cover page where even the whole layout changed.

²⁸ When gathering these data, people at *La Luna* told me that they had a serious problem in the main computer of the radio and had to reset the hard drive a couple of years ago. According to them, due to this problem a lot of audio archives were missed and the remaining ones may have suffered some changes. They keep in the audio library the files they could recover and which are considered important.

correspond to the chronology of the events.²⁹ Almost all archives are named using ‘hints’ to recognize the event to which they refer. Only 8 audio files have no name and are listed as “Untitled.”

Based on the date of last modification of the archive (“Date Modified”) I classified the archives by year and month and saved them in new folders. For this study I drew on the files for March and April 2005. To “clean” the information, I listened to the audio files in order to verify the accuracy of their name and date, the existence of repeated or empty files and the quality of the sound. I eliminated files that did not correspond to the dates I was interested in, and also eliminated repeated, empty or damaged files. After this cleaning process I got 129 valid audio files or approximately 13 hours of broadcasts: 34 files or 3.5 hours for March, and 95 files or 9.5 hours for April.

I did not do transcripts of the information on the files, instead I employed tables to process the data. I made two tables, one for each month, to show the archives classified by date, duration, type, main actor in the file, relevance of the information for this study, and content of the file. These attributes of the information helped me to handle the data easily and find references quickly when needed. Since I used this information as backup to the interviews, this strategy was adequate.³⁰ In the type column I employed categories such as song, interview, commercial, declaration, denunciation, speech, news report, news program, phone call, comment, testimonial, or a combination of them. Under actor I put the names of the people whose voices can be recognized in the file. I also assigned codes to each file to signal its

²⁹ I used several sources of information in order to establish the chronology of the events, mainly newspapers and books about the topic.

³⁰ Of course a more analytical use of the information would require a different treatment.

relevance for this study on a scale from “not relevant” to “extremely relevant.” Finally, I included detailed notes about the content of each audio file pointing out some important features of the information such as the development of the events, specific words or phrases used by the actors, and tone of the speeches or declarations. The information provided by the audio files was also considered to produce the analytical memos I have already mentioned.

My last source of information was the large body of literature written by analysts, participants, and historians after the mobilizations. I chose books and articles that dealt with the role of the participants during the demonstrations, or offered a general context for the interpretation of the events. Some books and articles were not included as a source of information given their excessive bias to one of the sides of the dispute. However, most accounts used in this study are very sympathetic with the insurgents and *La Luna* radio. In general, I used the information provided by this literature for a broad picture of the historical environment where the mobilization took place.

The information I have used for this research sets some limitations to the findings I present in the next section. The most important limitation has to do with the kind of participants I am considering here: mainly college students of middle class universities located in downtown Quito. One of the main features of the *Rebelión de los Forajidos* was the surprising involvement of new participants during marches and demonstrations (including children, seniors, and women); however, my interview sample was composed entirely of college students. Since I used this information extensively throughout this research, my findings, interpretations and conclusions refer basically to college students.

I have two reasons to justify my use of this information: first, although I cannot offer quantitative data about the importance of student participation during the mobilizations of April 2005 in Quito, all accounts of the events agree that the most numerous and active group of participants was the college students (see for example Jaramillo 2005; Merino 2005; Ramos 2005; Saad Herrería 2005a, 2005b) Therefore, their participation was important and influential for the whole movement. Second, the information provided by the interviews was also extremely attractive given the short period of time between the events considered and the interviews. This information allowed me to analyze some details and nuances that could have disappeared from today's memories.

A different concern has to do with a sort of bias in the information provided by the students. Given their status as college students in the social sciences, most interviewees sometimes tend to mix their answers with their own analysis of the situation, so that their answers became a combination of the stories of their own experiences and their interpretations of what "the others" did. I tried to avoid this bias by paying more attention to the experiences of the interviewees (for example, when they speak in first person) and relating this information to that available from other sources, particularly the audio files of *La Luna* radio. However, the way students understand others' actions is also a source of interesting data.

With these concerns taken into consideration I approached my information looking for an explanation for how a mobilization that overthrew a democratically elected president could have been prepared without the visible participation of any organization or leadership. The

preliminary assessment of my data showed me that in fact there were some organizations participating and there was a visible, although special, leadership for the mobilizations. Nevertheless, most accounts of the *Rebelión de los Forajidos*, including news reports and even interviews, have strongly emphasized the “spontaneity” of the mobilizations, understood as the absence of formal organizations or leadership behind the rebellion. Why do people still think that the rebellion was spontaneous despite the participation of some organizations and the existence of a visible leadership? In the next section I point out some ideas that help to understand this particular phenomenon.

5.0 INTERPRETING THE REBELLION

5.1 TIME TO TAKE THE BULL BY THE HORNS

In recent work S. Mainwaring, A. M. Bejarano y E. Pizarro Leongómez (2006) called the current political environment in some countries of the Andean Region a *crisis of democratic representation*. These scholars argue that this crisis has become evident in indicators such as lack of confidence in democratic institutions of representation, high electoral volatility, collapse of the party system, political figures that appear as outsiders to the political system, and reduced interest in elections and voting (Mainwaring et al. 2006). All these features describe a situation in which “citizens do not believe they are well represented [by democratic institutions or politicians].” (Mainwaring et al. 2006:15) Therefore, the political environment can be appropriately described as a general distrust and rejection of all “professional” politicians and institutionalized politics.

In Quito this rejection was particularly evident against President Gutiérrez and the political parties that supported him. For instance, in October 2004 (before the dismissal of the judges of the Supreme Court) Ecuador had general elections to choose local and provincial officials. In those elections candidates supported by the government or connected to it achieved very poor results (Figures 3 and 4) which is an indicator of the reduced popular

support for Gutiérrez administration. After the dismissal of important state officials (November 2004), this support should have been reduced even more.

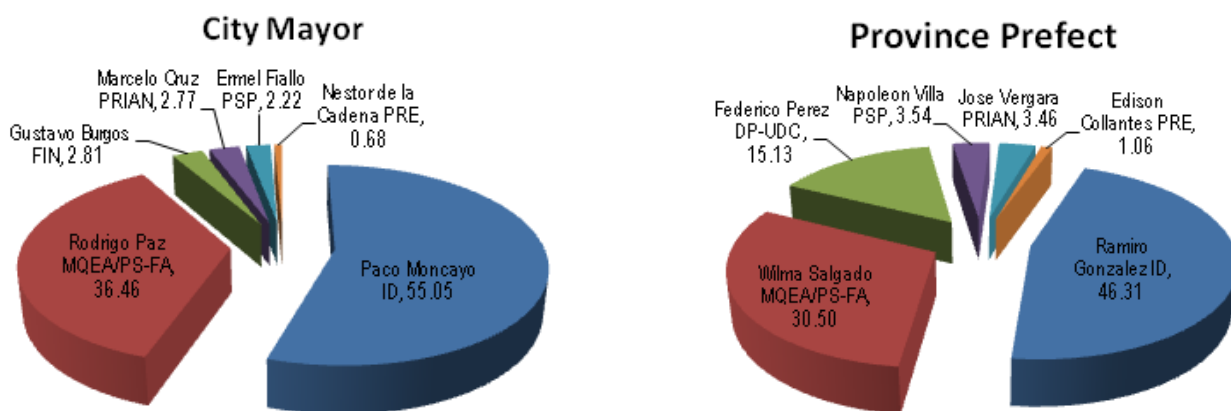


Figure 3. Quito. Electoral results of October 2004 elections (percentage)

Source: Tribunal Supremo Electoral³¹

As the reader can see, the candidates Napoleón Villa and Ermel Fiallo of the official party *Partido Sociedad Patriótica (PSP)* obtained in Quito only 3.54 percent of the votes for prefect and 2.22 percent of the votes for mayor of the city. In clear contrast, the candidates of the party *Izquierda Democrática (ID)* obtained 46.31 percent of the votes for prefect and 55.05 percent of the votes for mayor, which means that, at least in the ballots, Quito had rejected Gutiérrez administration. This important support obtained by the candidates of the ID made them confident of leading the opposition to the government, and encouraged them to organize marches and demonstrations in the city.

³¹ The abbreviations correspond to the following movements and parties: ID: Izquierda Democrática, MQEA/PS-FA: Movimiento Quito en Acción/Partidos Socialista-Frente Amplio, DP-UDC: Democracia Popular-Unión Demócrata Cristiana, PSP: Partido Sociedad Patriótica, PRIAN: Partido Renovador Institucional Acción Nacional, y PRE: Partido Roldosista Ecuatoriano

However, this electoral support did not mean that voters considered ID candidates as legitimate representatives of people's grievances or as genuine leaders of the demonstrations they organized. One of the interviewees and former participant of the demonstrations organized by the mayor remembers that "to be present at the call of these guys [talking about leaders of the ID] who are *also* responsible for the poverty, it made me mad to follow them" (emphasis added). Even if ID leaders provided the "resources" needed for protest, this protest was not legitimate for its participants, because it was still organized by the same people that population rejected: they were still the *same* politicians playing the *same* political game. Merino (2005) and Saad Herreria (2005a) also recognized this disconnection between leaders and followers when they noted that the leadership of Quito's Assembly had different interests from the people on the streets.

Despite the lack of legitimacy, people decided to participate in the demonstrations organized by ID leaders. In this decision the need to be rid of the Gutiérrez administration was more important than the dissatisfaction caused by the leadership of the mobilizations. Almost all interviewees agreed that finishing Gutiérrez's term was urgent, and the protests called by militants of the ID were seen as the only viable option to do that. Nevertheless, as I have mentioned before, smaller marches and demonstrations were taking place in the city at the same time as the other big demonstrations called by traditional politicians. The demonstrations organized by universities (usually absent from street politics) were the most relevant, particularly for their impact.

The participation of these universities was intended since the beginning to do something different from traditional strategies of protest, and thus send a new message to the city. For instance, when the Catholic University was covered with black cloth an observer on the street said to a newspaper: "I think this is an original form of protest. It is more *intelligent*, and will remain in our minds more than the confrontations on the streets with bombs and stones." (*El Comercio* April 7, 2005:A6. Emphasis added) Moreover, these demonstrations were supported by university officials and even the professors that worked there. Their involvement and participation validated the protest. For observers and public opinion the protest was not just a group of insurgents interested in provoking chaos, but a strategy of contention supported by the most prestigious scholars in the city. In this sense the involvement of these universities brought "logic and rationality" back to street protests, and that explains why universities tried to keep political parties and traditional social movements away from their demonstrations.

Universities and other smaller organizations contributed in this way to legitimize a common although discredited form of resistance: the street demonstration. In order to do that, they removed from this form of protest anything that could be condemned: violence, irrationality and party influence. Discontented students (and later other groups of people) judged that street politics was a *valid* form of expression. In a political environment where "there is no chance for people's expression" the streets offer a space for people to communicate their discontent. However, the legitimization of a discredited form of protest explains only partially why students decided to participate in protests this time.

All the interviewees mentioned that they were outraged with the political situation of the country and with Gutiérrez's administration; however, this feeling has a different origin in this particular episode. The interviewees remember that the economic situation in 2004 and 2005 was in general good³², so that their outrage was not due to economic reasons. Instead my evidence supports the idea that, at the time of the rebellion, college students were outraged because they considered that Gutiérrez and the other politicians offended their intelligence with their actions and maneuvers.³³ All the interviewees see themselves as citizens smart enough to analyze the political situation at the time, understand the real intentions of government and politicians, and realize that all of them were making fun of the people's will and taking advantage of the state for their own benefit. When Gutiérrez claimed that he was defending people's interest with his actions and policies, he actually was disrespecting students' intelligence, because they knew what was actually happening in the country.

Therefore students made decisions based on their own educated analysis and acted in accordance. In other words they logically identified reasons to participate in demonstrations and then joined mobilizations. For instance, a law student interviewed explains that he decided to join the demonstrations because (as a law student) he knew the "tricks" used by government and politicians to legally dismiss the judges of the Supreme Court. Another student of social communication remembers that she joined the demonstrations when the government tried to

³² According to the Central Bank of Ecuador, in 2004 the Ecuadorian GDP grew at a rate of 8%, the highest of the whole decade, and inflation was 2.8%. In 2005, GDP grew at 6% whereas inflation grew at 2.1%. These indicators in fact show a sound economy at the time.

³³ Nevertheless, Gutiérrez's actions did have economic consequences. For instance, the reorganization of state institutions implied the removal of hundreds of employees from their jobs, and thus threatened the economic safety of many middle class families. Therefore, governmental policies in fact did add economic concerns to people's grievances.

close *La Luna* radio down, because she felt that liberty of expression was threatened by politicians. In my conversations with economist colleagues we remembered that part of our outrage was due to the fact that Gutiérrez claimed that the good economic situation of the country at the time was the result of his administration, when we knew that macroeconomic stability was due to the new monetary system of the country that was imposed in 2000.³⁴ Therefore, in the case of college students there exists a carefully thought out reason that made them feel they should participate in street demonstrations.

Moreover, the appointment of people with no college education for important state offices was also considered as an insult to college students. People considered that not even the president had the skills required to govern a country like Ecuador. References to the president's incompetence are abundant in interviews and accounts of the rebellion of April. Interviewees, for instance, remember that: "this fellow [Gutiérrez] had no idea how to lead a country," or "I got tired that this dumb [Gutiérrez] did and undid things, and he did not have any plan." This lack of skills and planning in his administration supports the idea, very common among discontented students, that "[Gutiérrez is] playing with people's dignity," that "he is not taking his responsibilities seriously," and finally that he is making fun of the people who voted for him.

Although some other institutions or organizations, besides their own universities, could have influenced students' interpretations,³⁵ the important fact is that *everyone in my sample states that the decision to participate was personal and with no external influence of*

³⁴ The implementation of dollarization in Ecuador was one of the reasons for the dismissal of Jamil Mahuad as president.

³⁵ My data do not allow me to discard this possibility completely.

organizations or leaders. Some of the interviewed students even consider their participation as their responsibility towards those with no college education, and as a historical responsibility for being part of *Quito's people*.³⁶ My evidence allows me to realize that those students understand legitimate state power as something that comes from people, and that people must demand from their representatives actions and behaviors that fulfill their expectations. In a society long considered as paternalistic (Hurtado 1997), where people only expect *favours* from the state, this idea indicates a change in political attitudes. However, the discourse of “bringing back power to people” has been used in previous episodes of mobilizations, and has been present in the political environment of the country for some years.

Students then decided to *take the bull by the horns* and do not consent that others make decisions on their behalf. An interviewee summarizes this idea when she says: “[...] I think that it is important that we [young people] start to make the decisions for our life and for our future. We cannot blame others for our situation or for the country we are receiving in our hands.” To influence the political system they decided to protest on the streets, in many cases for the first time. Many students *discover* that street politics is a legitimate form of political participation. A former participant and activist summarizes what could have been the thought of many of the new protesters. She says: “you do not do politics at home, politics is done through occupation of symbolic spaces to protest against something you do not agree with, that creates injustice, that creates rifts, that creates nepotism, and that creates a lot of things that hurt the human being,” and later she also says: “these demonstrations reaffirmed our

³⁶ Given that, after independence, Quito became the center of political power in Ecuador, the city has been historically the setting of rebellions and revolutions. This fact has contributed to create the image of *Quito's people* as a group proud of themselves and rebellious.

values: we were able to believe again and have the hope that a different way to do politics is possible, using different means and from different places.”

To demonstrate on the streets is a new form of political participation for a number of students. They have joined demonstrations driven by their own consciousness. In fact many of them defined the experience as a “birth of their political conscience” and stated that one of the main goals of the demonstrations was the shock that caused in their inner conscience. However, until April 13, marches and demonstrations had been scattered and ineffective. The big marches that started on that day had an additional ingredient: the intervention of *La Luna* radio station.

5.2 LOOKING AT *LA LUNA* AND MAKING SENSE OF SPONTANEITY

Earl (2007) and Reger (2007) analyze episodes of collective action where the “leaders” provide participants with a space to find each other and express their feelings. In those spaces people establish contacts and identify shared interests, even though there is no leadership in charge of arranging the process. *La Luna* radio, with its policy of “open microphones”, provided insurgents with that space for meeting and identification. The radio became the means through which people expressed their feelings of frustration and anger, and established contact with other people who shared those feelings.

In a political environment where people’s opinions are barely taken into account, where the *disconnection* between citizens and political leader is chronic, the involvement of *La Luna*

changed the dynamic political participation in Quito. Being able to express opinions and suggest strategies *on air* produced the idea that this time people were organizing their own resistance without the intervention of traditional leaders or organizations. One of the students remembers that: “what was beautiful about this protest was that people contributed with their own ideas. The day of the *cacerolazo*, for instance, it was Paco Velasco’s idea, but after that, the *tablazo*, the *reventón*, the *bombazo*³⁷ were all people’s ideas. I mean, *nobody was leading, it was people that called to the radio and expressed their stuff.*” The instructions from the radio were regarded as legitimate, because people felt that they were organizing the movement on their own.

This back-and-forth relationship between people and the radio helped to increase the radio audience as well as the number of participants involved in resistance and demonstrations. The relationship occurred in two moments. During the first moment the radio received information from people through phone calls, and based on that information planned actions and strategies,³⁸ these strategies then were broadcast to the city. In a second moment people that received the information given by the radio communicated it to their close networks (family, friends or acquaintances), and advised these new participants to listen to *La Luna*. Thereafter more people established a direct contact with the radio station. Since each participant repeated the process with his or her own networks, they produce an expansive effect for the original call. An interviewee remembers that: “people called the radio to express

³⁷ Although the interviewee mentions this particular strategy, I could not find any reference in the literature or in newspapers.

³⁸ My data do not allow me to determine how decisions were made at the radio station. However, all the information I have reviewed suggests that people participated actively in the decision-making process particularly through phone calls.

their anger, and [the message] was spread little by little. ‘Hey, today we are going to do the *tablazo*, or today we are going to do the *cacerolazo*’ [first moment]. Then people that went to participate spread the message to their families or friends: ‘hey, tomorrow we are going to do the *tablazo*, it is not the *cacerolazo* anymore, and you must listen to *La Luna*’ [second moment]” And later in the interview “it was as if a middle class radio station like *La Luna*, that only some people used to listen to, suddenly reached a lot of people.”

In this way participants were recruited and night demonstrations were organized during an entire week. Nevertheless, I cannot consider the radio station as a mere *transmission belt* for people’s grievances and strategies. It is safe to assume that all the information chosen to be broadcast had to be compatible with the political principles that had oriented the work of the radio for years.³⁹ In fact not all the proposals that the radio received were treated in the same way, and some ideas were more supported than others. Under those conditions the radio made important decisions and offered a space relatively free of censorship for people to express their discontent. This mechanism allowed *La Luna* to mobilize many people while maintaining the idea that the call was made by people themselves. However, for this mechanism to work some special characteristics had to be fulfilled. Mainly, this strategy of recruitment was successful because in the city rejections of and dissatisfaction with the government were general.

Morris and Staggenborg (2002) point out that: “If there exists a mass base of people who share an institutional frame that is conducive to collective action, the difficulty of mobilizing large numbers of people for risky behavior can be reduced considerably.” This seems

³⁹ For a reference on the political principles of *La Luna* radio the reader can review the book of Dubravcic Alaiza (2002)

to be the case of the *Rebelion de los Forajidos*. During the previous months media had thoroughly informed the public about government's illegalities and acts of corruption. Although media did not support mobilizations explicitly or the dismissal of Gutiérrez as president, they contributed to create a frame of interpretation where the main problem of the system was the administration of Lucio Gutiérrez. When *La Luna* "assumed" the leadership of mobilizations, there was already a general dissatisfaction against Gutiérrez,⁴⁰ so that Paco Velasco and his broadcasters did not need to advance a particular frame of interpretations or look for support of outsiders and bystanders for a particular cause. The frame and the support for the protest were already there and the "leader" simply took advantage of them.

Obviously, different organizations and movements developed alternative frames and offered diverse strategies, but this variety of agendas made collective action difficult at the beginning since leaders of those movements and organizations were not able to reach a general consensus. This is the case of some organizations of college students. In his interview a leader of one of these organizations remembers that: "some fellows came here to tell us: 'come to the marches with us, because we want democracy to come back to the country, we want the dismissal of illegal judges' and so on, and when we asked them what they want [as a final goal], they said: 'we want the old supreme court back, because that is the only constitutional solution [to the crisis]' [...] we did not agree with that. Our goal was a rebellion to achieve a deep change in the system." These organizations could not reach an agreement and organized separate demonstrations.

⁴⁰ Data presented in Figures 3 and 4 are also evidence of this rejection.

La Luna's involvement solved this problem by offering a radical option that also was widely accepted: *¡Lucio Fuera! ¡Todos Fuera!* or Lucio out! Everybody out! Supporting these specific objectives had two important consequences for the protest: (a) it avoided a process of negotiation of different agendas, and (b) it offered aggrieved people the radical option they were looking for. Therefore, the objectives promoted by *La Luna* gained supporters from different sectors and organizations, even if they had different agendas. Nevertheless, there was a negative consequence for the future of mobilization: since demonstrations were not based on a programmatic plan, but on short-term objectives, after achieving these immediate goals, the movement was condemned to disappear, as actually happened.

On a related issue, one of the most difficult problems that social movement leaders face is to present appropriately the ideology and proposals of the movement to the general public, and gain support from media and outsiders. The struggle to get attention from the media can be a task that determines the success or failure of a particular campaign. During the *Rebelión de los Forajidos* this problem was avoided since the “leader” (Paco Velasco) was part of the media. Most accounts agreed that once *La Luna* got involved in the mobilizations, the radio devoted 24 hours a day to mobilizing people and put on the air information useful for insurgents. One of the interviewees pointed out that: “the day that the radio was closed down, I looked for another station and nobody [was informing about the demonstrations in Quito]. It was like nothing were happening in the city while you could hear people on the streets, making noise with the horns, shouting slogans [...] and television was the same, as if nothing were going on.”

Besides, unlike other cases presented in the literature, media coverage was not the main problem of “leaders” and insurgents. Contrasting with other episodes of collective action where social movements try to call people’s attention on a particular issue not widely recognized, in the case of the *Rebellión de los Forajidos* the issue at stake was at the center of public discussion and debate so that the task of gaining people’s attention was reduced considerably. Governmental issues are traditionally a center of media and public attention (Rohlinger 2006) and this specific episode of mobilization had to do mainly with governmental issues that affected the social welfare of the whole country. For the case of this rebellion media attention was not a problem, but a resource for the movement.

The radio encouraged mass mobilizations as *the* alternative for citizen’s participation, and used passionate and even dramatic discourse to mobilize people. Another interviewee mentions that: “I think that Paco Velasco and the radio magnified the facts with an inflammatory discourse, and mobilized people, and of course, since people were really angry for all the things that this guy [Gutierrez] did, it was the right moment to agitate to get a mobilization.” However, at that time discontented people felt represented by Velasco’s speeches. Listeners even valued the bravery of the radio for taking an openly confrontational attitude against the government.

Yet the radio station also offered a less expensive alternative to contribute to the insurgency: the phone call. *La Luna* radio coordinated a protest in a new *space* where the costs and risks of participation were reduced considerably while reinforcing a feeling of democratic participation. Everyone who wanted to take part in the protest only had to call the radio and

express their dissatisfaction. The radio made the protest an affordable activity for an important number of potential insurgents.

The direct interaction between the radio and the insurgents widened the space for the protest and increased the forms of participation. An episode frequently mentioned in the literature written about the rebellion may help to illustrate this point. One of the interviewees remembers that: “[when we were] downtown, we could listen to them (referring to *La Luna*’s broadcasters); people [in the houses on the sides of the streets] placed speakers on the windows and put on *La Luna* radio, then it was like a connection, because one block down protesters were singing the same thing as one block up, and another one up. This would not have been possible, if everyone had not been listening to the radio.” Besides the important work of coordination filled by the radio, the point here is that by placing speakers on the windows, people at their homes actually participated in street protests, while avoiding the risks of confrontation. Therefore, because of the radio the rebellion was composed of much more people than the observed participants on the streets.

An additional feature that helped to achieve important levels of participation was the idea of organizing night protests. Part of the discredit of street protests in Quito has to do with the high economic costs that daytime protests imply. To avoid this problem people, through the radio, organized night demonstrations, taking part of their free time to protest. In supporting this option, they introduced an element of novelty in the mobilizations. Night demonstrations, in turn, were attractive to bystanders and many of them ultimately decided to join the protest.

Finally, I have to emphasize the fact that Paco Velasco and his staff always rejected the adjective of “leaders”, instead they highlighted the direct participation of the people in the decision-making process. Nevertheless, as I have pointed out previously, the radio was not just a “transmission belt”, and actually influenced directly many decisions supporting some ideas instead of others. What is worth mentioning is that there was a direct channel of communication between the “leaders” of the mobilization and their followers. Paco Velasco received first-hand information from the very bases of the movement, and this reinforced the idea that people were organizing their own resistance without formal organizations or professional leaders. Paco Velasco was *at the least* an organizer and articulator of individual and dispersed efforts of protest. One of the interviewees mentions that: “I think that in the voice of this man of *La Luna* radio [referring to Paco Velasco] we found a link among what every one of us thought, because at the beginning nobody protested as a whole, and everybody has particular opinions, and everybody has different ideas, but this man could organize us.”

To conclude this section, I would like propose some ideas aimed to make sense of the issue of spontaneity. As I have mentioned, *La Luna* established a direct channel between aggrieved people and the “leaders” of the movement. This direct mechanism allowed decision-makers to take into account a lot of information provided by people, and propose actions and strategies for the mobilization. Therefore this mechanism eliminated the disconnection between “leaders” and followers while creating a feeling of real democratic participation. In the memories of former participants the *Rebelión de los Forajidos* was organized by people on their own, although Paco Velasco and *La Luna* radio shaped the “official” discourse.

On the other hand, college students believe that the decision to participate in the rebellion was the product of their rational analysis without the influence of any particular leader or organization. They feel that they acted in obedience of their own will, and that they did not need anybody to persuade them to act. For that reason students consider their participation in the demonstrations called by the mayor as illegitimate.

The involvement of *La Luna* in the conflict offered a valid alternative for college students. Now they can join demonstrations and still think that they are obeying their own will, because this time the demonstrations are organized by the people without any external influence. Then participants consider that the demonstrations are spontaneous because there is no external influence on them. However, many organizations and the media have contributed to creating the political environment for mobilizations and vindicate old forms of contention.

6.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Although during the *Rebelión de los Forajidos* there were leaders and organizations that contributed to creating the environment for mobilizations and to shaping the protest, former participants believe that the rebellion was spontaneous and completely organized by the people. This belief is based on the fact that there was a mechanism of direct communication between insurgents and organizers. In fact, this mechanism eliminated the disconnection between leaders and followers frequently observed in episodes of collective action. Moreover, among participants considered in this paper there is the conviction that they acted in obedience to their own will without any external influence. This mechanism of participation coupled with participants' conviction reinforces the idea that the mobilizations were spontaneous.

However, the rebellion was more the result of the integration of diffuse efforts of contention under the coordination of a radio station. To mobilize aggrieved people and gain support for demonstrations the organizers concentrated on radical short-term goals that were widely accepted in Quito. Nevertheless, the process of recruitment was successful because some organizations, particularly private universities, had prepared the environment for mobilizations. Most importantly, private universities contributed to vindicating old and discredited forms of protest. The vindication of these forms in turn legitimated street politics and attracted new participants to the demonstrations.

The rebellion could also be organized successfully with no formal organizations or professional leadership in part because of its short life and general objectives. A non-enduring struggle certainly avoided many tasks that are essential for other social movements such as fund-raising, getting media attention, coordination with similar movements, and strategic planning. The *Rebelión de los Forajidos* did not produce an important social movement or a permanent struggle; instead it practically disappeared after one of the goals was achieved. Despite this fact the rebellion was important because actually it established a new form of political participation independent of political parties or traditional movements that had been present in the institutional political system.

The rebellion taught us that in an environment where dissatisfaction is widely shared, it is possible to coordinate diffuse efforts of protest to reach big objectives. The evidence offered in this study suggests that, under these circumstances, the existence of a direct mechanism of communication among discontented people can enormously facilitate collective action and can replace the work of formal organizations and professional leadership. However, the mobilizations achieved in that way have an important emotional component and have been organized around widely shared feelings of anger and dissatisfaction. When these feelings have been eliminated due to the achievement of a particular goal (in this particular case the dismissal of a president) the movement disappears almost immediately.

Scholarship then needs to take more into account these particular episodes where mobilizations of the *initial stages* do not produce social movements. Leadership in this kind of episodes may be constructed and conceived in a different way, and simple mechanisms of

communication may cause a great impact on the possibility of achieving collective action. However, this collective action appears still unstructured and is condemned to disappear soon even if the mobilizations they produced could achieve important objectives, even the dismissal of a President.

APPENDIX

FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THE *REBELION DE LOS FORAJIDOS*

Table A 1: Social movements in recent episodes of presidential dismissal

President Overthrown	Abdalá Bucaram (02/06/1997)	Jamil Mahuad (01/21/2000)	Lucio Gutiérrez (04/20/2005)
Differences			
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Political parties Traditional social movements' leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confederacion de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador (CONAIE - <i>Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador</i>) Insurgent military colonels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No visible leadership
Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traditional social movements: students, workers, teachers, political parties' militants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indigenous people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Middle and upper class people from Quito, including women, children and old people
Repertoires	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mass confrontational mobilizations with the use of violence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indigenous mobilization with moderate use of violence and military strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peaceful mobilizations (at the beginning) with the use of innovative ways of protest making use of symbolism
Commonalities			
Political environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General discontent about governmental policies. The discontent was shared among important political and economic elites as well as among people in general 		
Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quito 		
Army	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As institution has been the most important actor. By removing its support from the president the army has determined the success of mobilizations. 		
Congress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It legalized the new president after the old one was removed from office 		

ECUADORIAN INSTITUTIONS

Table A 2: Spanish names used

Spanish name	Acr.	English translation
Governmental Institutions		
Tribunal Constitucional	TC	Constitutional Court
Tribunal Supremo Electoral	TSE	Supreme Electoral Court
Movements and Organizations		
Centro Andino de Acción Popular	CAAP	Andean Center for Popular Action
Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador	CONAIE	National Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities
Federación de Estudiantes Secundarios del Ecuador	FESE	Federation of High School Students of Ecuador
Federación de Estudiantes Universitarios del Ecuador	FEUE	Federation of University Students of Ecuador
Movimiento Quito en Acción	MQEA	Quito in Motion Movement
Unión Nacional de Educadores	UNE	National Union of Educators
Political Parties		
Coalición Democracia Popular - Unión Demócrata Cristiana	DP-UDC	Popular Democracy – Christian Democratic Movement Coalition
Coalición Partido Socialista - Frente Amplio	PS-FA	Socialist Party – Broad Front Coalition
Izquierda Democrática	ID	Democratic Left
Movimiento Popular Democrático	MPD	Popular Democratic Movement
Partido Renovador Institucional Acción Nacional	PRIAN	Party for Institutional Renovation and National Action
Partido Roldosista Ecuatoriano	PRE	Ecuadorian <i>Roldosista</i> Party
Partido Social Cristiano	PSC	Social Christian Party
Partido Sociedad Patriótica	PSP	Patriotic Society Party
Universities		
Escuela Politécnica Nacional	EPN	National Polytechnic School
Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador	PUCE	Pontifical Catholic University of Ecuador
Universidad Politécnica Salesiana	UPS	Salesian Polytechnic University

REPERTOIRES OF CONTENTION

Table A 3: Repertoires of the *Rebellion de los Forajidos*

Name of the action in Spanish	Action description	Date of the action ⁴¹
Cacerolazo	Pot-banging in public places	Wednesday, April 13
Reventón	Balloon-bursting at a specific moment of the protest. The balloons were intended to make fun of the president's big cheeks	Thursday, April 14
Tablazo	Noise made by banging two pieces of wood (<i>tablas</i>)	Friday, April 15
Rollazo	Use of toilet paper to cover houses, buildings, trees, cars and everything else in an attempt to clean the city of all the "shit" of Gutierrez's administration	Saturday, April 16
Golpe de Estadio	This is a pun in Spanish referring to <i>coup d'état</i> (<i>golpe de estado</i>). During the traditional soccer games of the national league on Sundays, people shouted against the government in the stadiums during the halftime and at the end of the games.	Sunday, April 17
Cuadernazo*	March organized by the students of the EPN carrying their notebooks (<i>cuadernos</i>) with them.	Monday, April 18
Apagón*	To turn off the lights during five minutes in the whole city in order to resemble the "political darkness" of the country.	Monday, April 18
Pitazo	Noise made with the horns (<i>pitos</i>) of the cars on the main streets and avenues of the city.	Tuesday, April 19
Mochilazo	On this day the Secretary of Education suspended classes when students were already in their schools. Instead of returning to their homes, students went to the <i>Tribuna de la Shyris</i> to demonstrate against the government. Since they were carrying their backpacks (<i>mochilas</i>) the demonstration was called <i>mochilazo</i> .	Wednesday, April 20
Frenazo*	To stop cars in streets and avenues.	N.A.

Actions signaled with an asterix (*) were not reported in newspapers, although they are mentioned in some testimonials.

⁴¹ Date when the action took place for the first time as reported by newspapers and testimonials. Some of these actions (the *cacerolazo* and the *pitazo*, for instance) took place during the whole week of demonstrations.

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