“Guatemala woke up”
A study about the social protests in Guatemala City 2015

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Abstract

In a country that has been characterized by its high level of violence and historically strong repression of social movements and mobilizations, people demonstrated peacefully during twenty weeks in Guatemala City 2015. The mobilizations started after the revelation of a corruption network described as The Line, which involved both the Guatemalan Government and the Guatemalan Superintendence of Tax Administration. Each Saturday from April – August, Guatemalans gathered at the main square in the Capital City, to protest against corruption and to demand the resignation of President Otto Pérez Molina and Vice President Roxana Baldetti. After intensive demonstrations calling for the Vice-Presidents resignation, Baldetti resigned on May 8. The President resigned on September 2, four days before the general elections and both Baldetti and Pérez Molina were sentenced to prison because of their involvement in the corruption network. This essay aims to give answer to why people mobilized during several weeks and to create a greater understanding for why the mobilizations occurred. The Political Process Model has been used to analyze the character of the protests. This qualitative study is based on 16 semi-structured interviews conducted in Guatemala during the period of October – December 2015. A targeted selection and a snowball sampling method were used to identify persons to interview. The research showed that people identified the situation in Guatemala as a political crisis, which encouraged a broad participation in the protests. The traditional dynamic of challengers and members changed during the weeks of demonstrations. Since traditional polity members turned into challengers, the mobilizations had a high political leverage which made state led repression less likely. Therefore the demonstrations were interpreted as safe and consequently the participation increased. Traditional movements put their specific demands aside in order to be part of the collective demands against corruption. In other words, persons participated rather as individuals than as representatives from their movements.

Key terms
Guatemala, corruption, demonstrations, mobilizations, civil society, “La Línea”, CICIG
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Abbreviations

CACIF  Coordinating Committee of Agricultural, Commercial, Industrial and Financial Associations

CICIG  International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala

CEUG  Student coordinator of Guatemalan Universities

NGO  Non-governmental organization

SAT  Superintendence of Tax Administration
1. Introduction and Background

In the year of the Guatemalan elections 2015, social protests developed throughout the country during twenty weeks, beginning on April 16 and ending on August 27. The demonstrations started on Saturday April 25, when 10,000 persons gathered at Plaza de la Constitución the main square in Guatemala City. After the revelation of a corruption network that involved the government and the Guatemalan Superintendence of Tax Administration (SAT), people protested against corruption and demanded the resignation of President Otto Pérez Molina and Vice-President Roxana Baldetti.

The Public Ministry and the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) that exists with the purpose of eradicating illegal groups and clandestine security structures in Guatemala presented the corruption network The Line on April 16, 2015. Through The Line, SAT accepted bribes from importers in order to reduce their duties.

When the case first was presented, Juan Carlos Monzón, the Private secretary of Vice-President Roxana Baldetti, was pointed out as the leader of the network (CICIG, Comunicado de prensa No. 11). Later it was revealed that the President and Vice-President were the heads of the network. The Vice-President resigned in May and three months later the President presented his resignation after a congress decision that revoked his immunity. Charges were made against both Baldetti and Pérez Molina because of their involvement in The Line and both were sentenced to prison. Several weeks of demonstration ended with a national strike on August 27 (Malkin & Ahmed 2015).

In the background presentation I aim to briefly present the demonstrations in a chronological order. Thereafter the reader is provided with a background of the Guatemalan context and a short summary of the Guatemalan Civil War that lasted during 36 years, 1960-1996. This will help to understand the character of social movements and mobilizations after the signing of the Guatemalan Peace Accords in 1996 and the creation of CICIG in 2006.

This essay will focus on participants’ experiences of the demonstrations and their interpretation on why Guatemala suddenly “woke up”. The investigation is based on a field study carried out in Guatemala during October – December 2015. Since the event is recent and books have yet to be written on the theme, articles from newspapers have been the fundamental source apart from the data collected through interviews. The articles have been accessed online. All interviews carried out during the field study were conducted in Spanish and the English translations were made by the author to this text.
1.1 Background demonstrations in Guatemala 2015 and The Line

In a country where people have been silenced by state-led repression for centuries (Brett 2008:11), suddenly thousands of Guatemalans went out on the streets to call for justice, after the revelation of the corruption network The Line. Immediately after the revelation of The Line, critics against the government, SAT and especially against the Vice-President and President started to spread on social media. An event called #ResignNow on Facebook called for a demonstration on Saturday April 25 2015 against corruption and to demand the resignation of the Vice-President and the President. Only a couple of hours after the creation of the event, thousands of Guatemalans had confirmed their participation in the demonstration (Arrazola 2015).

The last Saturday in April 10, 000 persons got together at the main square in the capital city, holding posters in their hands saying “Give us back our money”, “No more corruption” or “Resign now”. The urban middle-class was the largest present group on this day. At three o clock, the crowd at the square started to sing the National Anthem, something that turned into a tradition during the following demonstrations (Gutiérrez 2015).

The following Friday, on the International Workers day May 1 2015, the labor unions and peasant organizations that always demonstrates on May 1, were accompanied by university students from the public university San Carlos. The protesters decided to use this historically important day to once again take stand against corruption. The next day, on Saturday May 2, protesters filled the main square in Guatemala City again. Students from both the public university San Carlos and the private universities were present and after the first demonstration together, the students created a collective between the universities called the Student Coordinator of the Guatemalan Universities (CEUG). The purpose of CEUG is to create a platform for future generations of university students to take collective action (Pellecer, o.a., 2015:59-63).

On May 8 Vice-President Roxana Baldetti presented her resignation. The resignation was celebrated in one of the largest demonstration on May 16 where over 60,000 persons participated and expressed that “this is just the beginning” (Pellecer, o.a., 2015:47 & 48). In August, evidence presented by CICIG and the Public Ministry showed that the President was one of the leaders of the corruption network. A national strike to demand Pérez Molina’s resignation took place on August 27 (Escalón 2015).

On the national strike nearly 100, 000 Guatemalans gathered at the main square in Guatemala City. Several companies, pharmacies and stores were closed to support the national strike. At the square, people from all parts of the society were present; students, middle-class families from the capital city,
business people, HBTQ- organizations, Mayan and peasants organizations and people of all ages. The square was colored blue and white of all the persons waving the Guatemalan flag and the crowd sang the national anthem repeatedly (Pellecer, o.a., 2015:7-9).

The congress revoked the President’s immunity on September 1 and the following day, on September 2, Pérez Molina presented his resignation (Álvarez 2015). “Guatemala woke up” was a phrase found on countless of the posters that people carried during the demonstrations, and a way of explaining why people started to mobilize (EFE 2015).

1.1.2 The International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala

The International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala, that presented the corruption network *The Line*, was founded as a result of an agreement made between the Government of Guatemala and the United Nations in 2006. The contract that permits *CICIG* to work in the country is signed between the United Nations and the Guatemalan State and has to be renewed every second year. The commission is mainly financed by international cooperation and started its work in Guatemala in 2007 with the purpose of eradicating illegal groups and clandestine security structures in the country. The commission’s mission also consists of recommending public policies to the Guatemalan State. Since 2013, the Colombian lawyer Iván Velásquez has been the director of the commission (CICIG 2015).

The *CICIG* has investigated several highly political sensitive cases. For instance, in 2010 the commission solved the case of the famous Guatemalan lawyer Rodrigo Rosenberg who was murdered in 2009. In a video recording before Rosenberg’s death, he declared that if he were to be killed, it would be because of President Álvaro Colom. The “Rosenberg case” led to protests against the President in the capital city, however the investigations made by *CICIG* showed that Rosenberg had organized his own murder, in order to commit a political suicide (Arrazola 2015).

Moreover, *CICIG* was part of the investigation that led to the trial against the ex-President Alfonso Portillo in 2011. Portillo served as President during the period of 1999-2002 and was accused for money laundering. He was later extradited to the United States and sentences by the Federal District Court in Manhattan in 2014. In 2014, *CICIG* presented another sensitive case - a criminal network led from a prison by Byron Lima Oliva, a former army captain convicted for the murder of the Bishop Juan Jose Gerardi in 1998 (CICIG 2015).

Due to the character of these cases, there have been several attempts by Guatemalan officials to end *CICIG*’s mission in the country (Partlow 2015). In the beginning of 2015 Otto Pérez Molina declared that the contract that expired on September 3, 2015 would not be renewed. The President referred to *CICIG* as an “imposition”. The presence of international cooperation and international organs has
created a discussion about national sovereignty where international organs have been accused of intervention (Vásquez 2015). Nevertheless, after the presentation of *The Line*, Pérez Molina announced on April 23 that *CICIG* needed to continue its work and that the contract would be renewed. It has been discussed whether the presentation of the corruption case was strategical made by the *CICIG* in order to prolong its mandate (Arrazola 2015).

1.2 The Guatemalan context and the Civil War 1960-1996

Guatemala, with borders to Mexico, Honduras, Belize and El Salvador is considered a lower middle-income country, yet it has the largest economy in Central America. The distribution of resources is among the most unequal in the world. The level of mal-nutrition in children is one of the highest in the world and the majority, 59.3 percentage of the population lives in poverty and 23.4 percentage lives in a situation of extreme poverty. Nearly 80 % of the people living in poverty are indigenous. In proportion to its economy, Guatemala is the country that spends the least on infrastructure, health and education and has the lowest tax levels (World Bank 2015).

The total population in the country is approximately 15 million inhabitants and 40 % of the population is indigenous. There are 21 indigenous groups with different languages and cultures in the country, different Maya groups, Garifuna and Xinca peoples. The non-indigenous part of the population is called *ladinos*. Spanish is the only official language in the country. Within Guatemala there is a strong relation between ethnicity and socioeconomic position, where indigenous persons live in poorer conditions with a lower economic level, lower life expectancy and less access to education than non-indigenous persons (Varela-Garcia 2014:32 & 33).

The majority of the indigenous people live in rural areas whereas the majority of the ladinos live in urban areas of the county. The villages with a major Mayan population, as for instance Sololá, Quiché and Huehuetenango present high levels of social exclusion and high indices of land conflicts (Brett 2008:2). In other words, there exists a strong ethnical inequality in the country and the indigenous population suffers from discrimination and lacks opportunities. Mayan people have repeatedly been repressed by the ladino dominant Guatemalan state. The most extreme form of oppression was demonstrated during the Guatemalan Civil war when the Guatemalan State committed genocide of the Mayan population (Vogt 2015:30-33).

Guatemala has a history of authoritarian regimes; nevertheless, the country experienced ten democratic years during the period of 1944-1954 after the October Revolution in 1944. The revolution led to the fall of the dictator Jorge Ubico. The ten democratic years are also known as the *Guatemalan Spring.*
The democratically elected presidents Juan José Arévalo and Jacobo Árbenz Guzman who led the country during the ten democratic years, implemented reforms to make the county more equal and to improve the political participation. Árbenz implemented a massive agrarian reform in 1953 that in one year helped over 138 000 peasant families (Grandin 2011:106-108).

As a consequence of the reform, land by the US-owned company United Fruit Company was confiscated. The United Fruit Company controlled much of the rural economy in the country and when the agrarian reform was implemented, the company informed the US government about the “communist” tendencies by the Guatemalan government and asked for support from the US state (Rothenberg 2012:xxvi). Moreover Árbenz permitted the existence of The Communist Guatemalan Workers Party founded in 1949. The social reforms and the presence of a communist party were seen as enough proof that Guatemala was becoming a communist country, in the era of the Cold War. As a consequence, the United States, through the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) supported a coup d’etat in Guatemala that ended the ten democratic years (Chaasten 2008:29).

The coup generated an authoritarian project and the creations of a counter-insurgency state led by military regimes. The new political project supported by the United States was the beginning of the civil war that lasted during 36 years, 1960-1996. According to the Guatemalan Commission for Historical Clarification (CEH) also know as the Guatemalan Truth Commission, the confrontation was a consequence of the economic, social and cultural relations within Guatemala that are characterized by strong exclusion, racism and conflict as a reflection of its colonial past (CEH 1999:17). The foreign policy of the United States of America and the Cold War influenced and determined the war in Guatemala to a great degree (Rothenberg 2012:xx).

During this period, the Guatemalan State aspired to end the reformist project initiated during the democratic years. Furthermore, the principal focus was to defeat and erase the guerilla movement that emerged in 1962 (Sieder 1998:245). During the most violent period of the war (1978-1983), the Guatemalan Army started to consider the Mayan people as an ally to the guerilla and as a consequence the Mayan population in several parts of the country became seen as a collective enemy to the state (CEH 1999:23). According to the report presented in 1999 by the UN-supported CEH, the Guatemalan state committed a genocide of the country’s’ Mayan population. The political terror during the armed conflict in Guatemala included extrajudicial execution, torture, rape, forced disappearances and massacres. More than 200,000 persons were killed or disappeared during the war and the army was responsible for 86 percent of the extrajudicial executions. According to the CEH, 83 percent of the identified victims were Mayan and seventeen percent ladino (Rothenberg 2012:14).
1.3 Social movements in Guatemala after the signing of the Peace Accords 1996

The strong state-led repression of social movements during the civil war led to fragmented social movements and civil society organizations (Brett 2008:15). Hence, groups from the civil society had a participative role in the creation of the Guatemalan Peace Accords (Sieder 1998:80). During the peace process, different groups from the civil society created the Civil Society Assembly with the purpose of formulating key national goals related to the peace process. The Assembly was diverse and included groups from the left and right wing, business associations and Mayan organizations. The United Nations had a dominant role in the process and created the Groups of Friends in 1994 that linked Norway, Colombia, Mexico, Spain, the United States and Venezuela to the peace process. The first part of the peace agreements was signed in Oslo in 1994 and established the creation of the United Nations Verification in Guatemala that would control human rights issues in the country. In 1995, an agreement was signed between the government and the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG) that proved the states determination to defend indigenous rights and create a more equal and inclusive society (Rothenberg 2012:xxxiii).

The final part of the agreements was signed between the government of President Alvaro Arzú Irigoyen and URNG in 1996 and put a formal end to the conflict. The signing of the peace accords promised a commitment to the defense of human rights and thereby strengthened the social movements through including several of their demands and goals in the peace accords (Rothenberg 2012:xxxiv). After the peace accords it has been possible to identify a more participatory civil society and an emergence of diverse social movements. Since there exists a greater knowledge of human rights and a stronger constitutional protection, the collective action has been based on a human rights perspective where movements have focused on rights based on gender, diversity, culture and ethnicity (Bretter 2008:25). Two of the principal movements that have had and continue to have an important political influence in Guatemala will now be presented, The Mayan- and the Peasant movement.

1.3.1 The Mayan movement

As mentioned earlier, the Mayan movement was weakened in Guatemala because of the genocidal acts from the state during the civil war, which resulted in eliminated or disrupted organizations (Vogt 2015: 29 & 37). In the creation of the peace accords the Mayan organizations had a fundamental role and the peace process permitted a Mayan political participation. Different Mayan organizations were part of developing the Agreement on Identity and Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as part of the peace accords (Sieder 1998:81).

Since the signing of the peace accords the organizations have strengthened to some extent, even though the Mayan organizations still lack a united articulation (Vogt 2015:30). Nevertheless, the
Mayan organizations share one common goal: to change the power structures in the society and condemn the profound inequality caused by discrimination and racism (Murga 2010:3).

The Mayan movement is characterized by its plurality. According to the scholar Jorge Murga Armas, the movements can be divided into three different categories 1) the classist-intercultural 2) the ethnicity-multicultural and 3) the pan-Mayan movement. The first category emerged after the signing of the Guatemalan Peace Accords by people connected to the revolutionary movement. Consequently, the classist-intercultural movement parts from a class-perspective and aspires at eliminating the social division of classes. The ambition is to create an intercultural country where different identities are respected and people can co-exist in peace. The other movements do not part from a class analysis. The ethnicity – multicultural direction believes in the creation of a state where a Mayan nation and a Ladino nation co-exist (Murga 2010:4 & 5). The pan-Mayan movement emerged in the 1990s and seeks to create a Mayan nation based on ancestral traditions (Vogt 2015:33).

The division of the movement can be explained by the internal differences within the Mayan groups. Another possible explanation suggested by Murga is the broad segregation in the society and the lack of communication between the different segments. The colonial ideology of separation of the society in different segments is still present and is reflected in all social movements and organizations in Guatemala. The influence of churches, religious organizations and NGOs has also created a more fragmented movement. A clear example of the division among Mayan organizations was the lack of support from the organizations for the Mayan Quiché leader and 1992 Nobel Prize winner Rigoberta Menchú, when she was postulating to become the President of the Guatemalan republic in 2011 (Vogt 2015:39).

1.3.2 The Peasant movement

The peasant movement emerged during the Guatemalan Civil War, when the largest peasant organization, the Committee of the Peasant Union (CUC) was formed in 1978 (Granovsky-Larsen 2013:331). The organization suffered strong repression during the war and the military governments expressed a clear anti-peasant discourse (Murga 2010:6). Nevertheless the organization increased its number of members and its political influence in the 1990s. Other large peasant organizations are the National Indigenous and Campesino Coordinator (CONIC) and the umbrella organization National Coordination of Campesino Organizations (CNOC) (Granovsky-Larsen 2013:331).

Agrarian conflicts are the main issues for the movement that demands the peasants right to land and an integral rural development (Vogt 2015:35). The peasant movement also demands better conditions and salaries for the persons working in plantations. The community-based struggles for land as well as the
blockades and demonstrations used by peasants to demand their rights have been and continue to be criminalized in Guatemala (Murga 2010:6).

2. Aim and research question

I wish to study interpretations of people’s participation in the social protests in Guatemala City 2015 in order to understand the character of the demonstrations and why people mobilized. I also aim to identify the patterns that made the demonstrations occur at this specific time. This will be achieved through interviews with demonstration participants. The objective is to create an understanding of collective action by using the Political Process Model. In order to understand the evolution of the mobilizations it is also important to outline what was considered to be the major events throughout the period of demonstrations and identify who was present and absent.

My research question is:

• Why did people participate in social protests in Guatemala City 2015?

In order to understand the interpretations of the demonstrations and the course of events it is necessary to prior give answers to:

1. What were considered to be the major events during the demonstrations?
2. Who participated in the demonstrations and who was absent?
3. How were the protests maintained?

In other words, the purpose of the study is not to analyze a social movement but to create an understanding of collective action as expressed in the social protests in Guatemala City 2015.

2.1 Limitations

The case-study is narrow and focus only on the demonstrations held in the capital of Guatemala or close to the capital, even though protests occurred in nearly all departments of the country. For instance the Committee of the Peasant Union organized a strike during three days in over 30 parts of the country, which will not be presented further. The demonstration in the rural areas were never that massive or constants as the demonstrations in the capital city. The first and the largest mobilizations took place in the capital city and inspired the protests in other parts of the country.

Briefly the term democracy will be used in the essay however no further definition of democracy will be presented. No interview question mentioned the term; therefore each interviewed person has used her or his own definition wherefore it is impossible to part from a common definition.
This essay does not aspire to explain the political events occurred during the demonstrations or present them in a strictly chronological way. In contrast, this qualitative study is based on people’s interpretation of the situation and their perspectives and definitions on the important events.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Introduction Political Process Model

In this chapter the Political Process Model will be explained, as outlined by Dough McAdam in *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency 1930–1970* (1982). The model will be used to analyze the mobilizations in Guatemala as interpreted by participants. The perspective explains that Indigenous Organizational Strength, expanding Political Opportunities and Cognitive Liberation are fundamental factors for the emergence of a movement. When discussing indigenous organizational strength, the author does not refer to the term “indigenous” as related to ethnicity or culture. The term is used as a synonym for “original” or “basic”. In other words the indigenous organizational strength focuses on the strength of the original and already existing organizations within the society. An optional theory could have been New Social Movement Theory, however I choose to use the Political Process Model since it allows us to better understand how political opportunities are interpreted and results in collective action and how mobilizations are related to the social environment. In the end of the chapter the analytical tools that will be used for analyzing the results are presented.

3.2 The Political Process Model

3.2.1 A critique to classic social movement theory

The Political Process Model aims at creating a dynamic model that can explain collective action from elite actors as well as from challenging groups. Furthermore, the model explains insurgency as a result of factor both internal and external to the movement. The perspective offers an alternative framework for understanding social movements and collective action that varies from Classic Social Movement Theory and the Resource Mobilization Perspective (McAdam 1982:2). *In Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency 1930 – 1970* the author presents the classic social movement theory and its weaknesses, which is necessary to present in order to understand the Political Process Model.

Classic social movement theory explains collective action with three factors: political opportunities, mobilizing structures and framing process. The model is criticized for explaining the emergence of a
movement as a result of individual psychological experiences. The classic perspective explains that people respond to a disruption in the system strain with discontent, and a movement arises when the “water boils over”. In other words, classical social movement scholars as Snow (1986), Flacks (1998) and Tilly (1978) explain the movement participants to be driven by psychological tensions rather than political goals (McAdam 1982:9).

On the contrary, McAdam stresses that social movements have to be understood as collective rather than individual phenomena and proclaims that social movement theory fails to explain how individual discontent turns into organized collective action (McAdam 1982:14). Furthermore, a movement is considered to be a consequence of changes in the political opportunity structure and not a result of psychological causes within the aggrieved population. Another critic against the classical theory is that it fails to explain individuals’ motivation to participate in movements. According to McAdam, it is impossible to understand how the first persons are recruited to a movement if the major reason for participating is the fact that one is related to other persons who are part of the movement (McAdam 1982:36).

In classic theory, expanded political opportunities are understood at a national level and in relation to national development. On the other hand, McAdam argues that the international arena puts pressure for change and thereby political opportunity structures need to be understood in a broader geographic and institutional context (McAdam 1982:xiv). Political opportunities are seen as a result of broader social processes that challenge or undermine the assumptions that constitute the foundation of the political establishment (McAdam 1982: xviii). McAdam states that it is not the political opportunity itself that is relevant, what is crucial for the emergence of a movement is that a group large enough interprets a situation as an opportunity or threat and believes in collective action as an efficient way to address the issue. This change of consciousness is understood as the process of cognitive liberation. It is also important to take into account the meaning-making process in its cultural, political and historical context. According to the scholar, classic social movement theory fails to acknowledge the importance of these interpretative dynamics (McAdam 1982: xi).

3.2.2 Power and cognitive liberation

The Political Process Model is based on the assumption that it exists an unequal distribution of power that results in the major part of the population being excluded from decision making and thereby lacking important influence over their lives. Thereby social movements are explained as excluded groups or challengers efforts to stress collective interests. Power is interpreted in a similar way as in Marxist theory, where insurgency can arise from within the political structure. Excluded groups can influence the elite through the structural power inherited from their position in the system. Another shared notion between Marxist theory and the Political Process Model is the importance of a
transformation of consciousness that permits a mobilization to emerge. A mass political inability can be explained by a common perception of powerlessness or as a consequence of objective obstacles for mobilization. A subjective transformation of consciousness is crucial for the emergence of insurgency (McAdam 1982:36-38).

The transformation and sense-making process is described as *cognitive liberation* through which people interpret and give meaning to events. As mentioned earlier, a political shift does not become an opportunity until a sufficiently large group collectively defines it as such. In other words, objective structural changes as expanded political opportunities and indigenous organizational strength is not sufficient to explain the emergence of a movement, it is necessary to take into account the subjective process of cognitive liberation. Collective political action arises as a combination of existing structural factors (opportunities and organization), but is mediated by how people interpret it and what meanings people give to their situation. Political changes can be interpreted as a series of meaningful events that allows a successful collective action. The process of cognitive liberation can be divided into three parts. Firstly, a critique towards the system arises, where it becomes seen as illegitimate. Secondly, people start demanding rights and in parallel, the feeling of powerlessness is transformed into a notion of having capacity (McAdam 1982:48-51).

### 3.2.3 Members and challengers

In categorizing the main actors in a society, the Political Process Model shares the notion of the Elite Model that it is possible to distinguish between *members* and *challengers* in society, where the members are part of the polity and the challengers are outside of it. The challengers lack the decision making power, held by the members. The persons inside the polity consider the members’ interests to be legitimate and valid. Consequently, there exists conservatism within the polity, where the members resist changes that would threaten their interests. Likewise, the polity members are determined to remain in a power position and therefore oppose insurgency. Moreover, the model is based on the assumption that movements are not autonomous events that emerge in a sphere of their own, instead movements arises in a broader sociopolitical context and is determined by the interaction between different groups (McAdam 1982:38-40).

### 3.2.4 Level of organization and social processes

According to the Political Process Model, three main factors are perceived as crucial for the emergence of social movements. The generation of a movement is firstly determined by the organizational level within the aggrieved population and secondly by the expectations within the population of collective action to become successful. At last, the alignments between different groups in the political context are important for the generation of social insurgency. The alignments can either
favor or oppose the movement. In other words, the political context consists of a structure of political opportunities (McAdam 1982:40).

Since challengers are excluded from the process of decision-making, it is generally difficult for excluded groups to advance collective interests. However, political opportunities are changeable and protests proves that the opportunity structure is flexible and can be weakened. A shift in the political opportunity structure is caused by any event that debilitates the basis of the political establishment. The political process perspective stresses that social process as wars, industrialization, international political alignments, prolonged unemployment or demographic changes can break the political status quo indirectly as a consequence of the restructuring of power relations that follows social processes. Social insurgency arises as a result of social processes that have operated during a long period of time (McAdam 1982:40-41).

It is argued that two key factors can change the political opportunity structure. A political crisis or a general political instability in a country provokes collective action from all groups in society, with a certain degree of organization. Mobilization is also possible to emerge when social processes create expanded opportunities for a certain group of challengers. Social processes can strengthen the possibilities for challenging groups and thereby support collective action. When a process leads to a strengthening of the power leverage for challenging groups, it favors conditions for successful insurgency since it increases the bargaining position, which decreases the risks of repressing the movement. In general, powerless groups can be repressed with impunity, however challengers with and increased political leverage cannot be repressed without political reprisals. It is also likely that more persons participate in collective action when the participation no longer is associated with high risks (McAdam 1982:39-43).

3.2.5 Indigenous Organizational Strength

Furthermore, a significant aspect is the way in which the aggrieved population manages to turn the political opportunity into a structured social protest. The aggrieved population’s resources are fundamental for the likelihood to create successful collective action out of a political opportunity. Important organizational resources are members, established structure of solidary incentives, communication networks and leaders.

Members are recruited to the movement through having some sort of contact with it. It is likely that individuals become part of the movement because of their former participation in an organization out of which a new movement is created. Thereby movement participants are recruited in blocs consisting of already organized people. It permits people to participate in a movement even if they have no personal gain in participating. The established structure of solidary incentives refers to the
interpersonal rewards that encourage people to participate in a movement. This factor explains why it is beneficial to recruit people from already established organizations. Movement participation is then identified with organizational membership (McAdam 1982:45-46).

The success or failure of a movement is closely related to the existence or absence of a communication network or communication infrastructure, which is encouraged by established organizations. For a movement to emerge, it is necessary that people can be connected and linked together through a solid communication infrastructure. Even if conditions for a movement exist, the lack of infrastructure hinders its development. Another important resource within the aggrieved population is the existence of already acknowledged leaders. Leadership is necessary to organize the feeling of discontent and coordinate the movement. If the movement is based on already established organizations it is also likely that the leaders of the organizations can support the new movement. It is likely that an aggrieved population without leadership lacks the capacity of forming a successful collective action (McAdam, 1982:46-48).

### 3.2.6 The rise and fall of social insurgency

In order for a movement to develop, it is necessary that insurgents are capable of using the new political leverage to stress group interests and demands. It is probable that a movement starts to decline if it loses its bargaining position. The same internal and external factors that permitted a movement to emerge, are determining for its development. Throughout the development of insurgency, the movement itself turns into a fundamental actor that affects the political structure and existing alignments. The factors that are crucial for the generation of a movement are shifting political opportunities, broad socioeconomic processes and organizational strength. The same factors are determining for the development of insurgency, however one factor is added to the analysis the shifting control response of other groups to the insurgent challenge posed by the movement (McAdam 1982:52-53).

The factors that are determining for the organizational strength are assumed to shift during the movement’s development. The movement cannot depend on the organizations that were part of creating it since these organizations were not built up in order to function as channels of insurgency. Therefore it is vital that the insurgents create a new organizational structure. If not, it is probable that the movement declines as a consequence of loose structure and inactivity. Yet, the construction of formal movements’ organizations is related to some obstacles: oligarchization, co-optation, and the dissolution of indigenous support (McAdam 1982:54-55).

Oligarchization means that certain individuals start valuating the new organization itself as more important than the original goals and values of the movement. Secondly, the risk of co-optation occurs
when the movement’s base needs support from external sponsors. The external supporters thereby obtains a certain control and power over the insurgents. As a consequence it is possible that the challengers only demand goals that are encouraged by the sponsors. When the movement establish new alignments and linkages with external groups, it is possible that the indigenous support starts weakening. If the indigenous support dissolves, it increases the risks of oligarchization and co-optation, since the leader does not have the same indigenous pressure to remain loyal to the established goals. A declined indigenous support also increases the need for the movement to build external alignments, which consequently increases the risk of co-optation. Furthermore, lack of indigenous support weakens the established structures of solidary incentives. In conclusion, a movement can only be maintained if it is able to handle the risks of oligarchization, co-optation and the dissolution of indigenous support (McAdam 1982:52-56).

As stated earlier, the emergence and development of a movement is determined by its external environment and must be understood in its sociopolitical context. Therefore the response from other groups to insurgency is crucial for its development. External groups respond accordingly to their own interest and depending on how the insurgents are conceived. The social control response to insurgency depends on the strength of insurgent forces and whether it is conceived as a threat or opportunity. A week group is more likely to be repressed since there are fewer risks involved in repressing it. On the other hand, repressing a powerful opponent is associated with higher costs (McAdam 1982:56).

The elite response to insurgency depends on whether the insurgency is threatening or opportunistic to elite interests. How the movement is conceived depends on the insurgents’ goals and tactics. Non-institutionalized tactics are seen as more threatening than institutionalized tactics, since it indicates a rejection of the system and its established institutional mechanisms. The opposition is likely to be stronger when non-institutionalized tactics are used by the movement, but if the movement changes character and use institutionalized tactics the opposition will decrease (McAdam 1982:57-58)

In the same way, the character of the goals determines how elites conceive the insurgents. The perspective identifies two different classes of goals: revolutionary goals and reform goals. The revolutionary goals aim at changing political and economical structures and is therefore threatening to the elites whereas reform goals, only are perceived as negative for the groups who would be directly affected. It is even possible that reform goals gain support among the elite groups that would benefit from the suggested changes (McAdam 1982:58)

On the other hand, revolutionary goals will not receive elite support, since revolutionary goals are perceived as threatening towards the political system itself. As a consequence, revolutionary movements will confront a stronger opposition than reform movements. To summarize, the Political
Process Model is based on the assumption that the emergence of insurgency depends on expanded political opportunities, indigenous organizational strength and a collective interpretation within the aggrieved community that conceives the conditions as favorable for collective action. The same factors are fundamental for the movements’ development. In addition, the response from other groups and how the movement handles possible risks, will determine its development (McAdam 1982:57-59).

3.3 Analytical tools

In this chapter, the analytical tools that will be used in the analysis will be presented.

Expanding political opportunities
I aim to identify what social process that changed the political opportunity structure in Guatemala. I will analyze the dynamics of members and challengers in the mobilizations and identify who were the challengers and who were the members. I will also analyze the power disparity between challengers and members. It will be outlined whether the changed political opportunities were a response to a political crisis or to expanded opportunities for one certain group of challengers.

Indigenous organizational strength
When analyzing the mobilizations’ indigenous organizational strength I will focus on the existing resources. The analysis will focus on how people were recruited to the protests and if established structures of solidarity encouraged their participation. I will also analyze the existence or lack of communication networks and leaders within the insurgency.

Cognitive liberation
The theory of cognitive liberation is crucial to understand how people interpreted the participation in the demonstrations. Whether or not political opportunities and indigenous organizational strength permit collective action, depends on the processes of cognitive liberation. I will therefore outline how the process of cognitive liberation took form by looking at what factors made people understand the system as illegitimate and how the feeling of powerlessness was turned into a feeling of having the capacity to create a change.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Method
This case study is based on a qualitative approach and the empirical material consists of data from interviews carried out in Guatemala during October – December 2015. The material also consists of
secondary sources, mainly newspaper articles found online and reports. Several of the journals used, as *Nómada* and *Plaza Pública* are digital newspapers. Qualitative research parts from a constructivist perspective where the reality is understood as a social construction. A constructivist approach is based on the assumption that people, institutions and interactions are part of producing and constructing the realities in which they live (Flick 2007:15). Therefore, the perspective and interpretations of the participants to the theme one is studying is important to create an understanding for the issue. Phenomena are understood by how people interpret them and what meaning the phenomena is given. Consequently, semi-structured and narrative interviews are among the most used qualitative methods (Flick 2007:16). In contrast, a quantitative perspective approaches the world in a positivistic way where the reality can be explained in an objective way (Bryman 2009:39-41).

Since the study is case-specific the possibility to generalize its results is limited. However, the purpose of a case study is to explain and create an understanding for particular phenomena (Frejes & Thornberg 2009:232). On the other hand, the study may be used in a comparative way to understand mobilizations occurred in a similar context. For instance, the data collected could be relevant to use in order to make a comparative study between the different countries in Central America where demonstrations took place during the same period in 2015.

### 4.1.1 Field study in Guatemala

The fieldwork for this study was conducted in Guatemala during October-December 2015. I also stayed in Guatemala during June-September 2015, when the demonstrations took place. To be present in the country allowed me to get a deeper understanding for how people interpreted the ongoing political events.

When conducting an interview it is important to be aware of obstacles that can exist as a consequence of language or culture barriers. I believe that my earlier experience of staying in Guatemala and my fluency in Spanish made the communication easier and minimized the risk for misunderstandings or cultural chocks. Moreover, this experience provided an essential understanding of the social context in the country.

Through Internet I had been observing the start of the protests since the first demonstration in April. According to the scholar Tomomi Yamaguchi, the difference nowadays between the *field* and *home* is blurred, since the Internet permits one to follow social activism and be part of it from distance (Yamaguchi 2007:604). Internet made it possible for me to follow the protests, the debate and the activism from the beginning of April and onwards.
4.1.2 A targeted selection

Since the broad participation of different persons in the demonstrations was one main characteristic of the mobilizations, I found it important to interview people representing these different segments. Therefore I used an iterative approach where I outlined different categories of people that had a relevant role for the theme of investigation. The interviewed persons were academicians, university students, and representatives from youth collectives, the business sector, media and persons from the indigenous- and peasant movement.¹ My sub-supervisor Virgilio Álvarez Aragón who is a Guatemalan sociologist supported me in identifying relevant persons for the study and establish contact with them.

Thereafter, a snowball sampling method was used to identify important persons to interview, which means that the interviewees recommended me other persons or organizations to contact (Bryman 2008:434). In many cases the same persons were mentioned as important to talk to. I found that a negative consequence of the snowball method is that people often recommends persons from their own circle which creates a certain homogeneity and often makes one perspective dominant. Since the majority of the recommended persons were men, I found it necessary to actively search for women to interview and therefore contacted the feminist movement that also was present in the demonstrations.

4.1.3 Interviewing

Through interviews, one is able to obtain knowledge about people’s experiences and interpretations of the world (Kvale 2007:7). During my eight-week stay in Guatemala I conducted 16 semi-structured interviews that lasted between 45 and 90 minutes. In total I interviewed 15 men and 6 women between approximately 20-65 years old. The persons interviewed were the key representatives from the groups mentioned above. I based the interviews on a couple of pre-formulated question using a general interview guide approach.² The questions were used in a flexible way that allowed the interviewees to focus especially on the events and pattern the interviewees identified as important. In qualitative research it is crucial that both the questions and the interview itself are flexible (Bryman 2008:415-419).

The interviewees were treated as informants since they had key roles in the social protests. All of the interview participants had been present during the demonstrations except from one. One problem with treating interviewees as informants is that the information can be false, biased or tentative. Therefore it was important to get the same information from more than one person and verifying information from other sources. Two group interviews were conducted, the rest of the interviews were individual. The questions were re-formulated if necessary and I also used follow-up questions, which was useful since it allowed the persons to develop and explain their ideas further. To make sure I have understood

¹ See Appendix A
² See Appendix B
the participant correctly, I used *interpreting question* (Kvale 2007:61). A part from the basic questions that I asked everyone, I had specific questions related to the sector the person represented.

A *briefing*, where I introduced myself and explained the purpose of the interview, opened each interview (Kvale 2007:55). I also asked if it was possible to record the interview and explained that the recording would be only for my own use in order to transcribe the interviews. Recording can make the interviewed person feel uncomfortable and more self-aware since their words are “saved” (Bryman 2008:428). However, since I used my cellphone to record instead of more visible equipment it seemed as if the persons soon became unaware of the recording, since the presence of a cellphone on a table is not unusual. All of the interviewed persons agreed on being recorded, only two interviews were not recorded because of technical issues.

At the end of each interview made a *debriefing* where I asked the participants whether they believed that I had missed any important aspect that should be taken into account or if they wanted to ask me anything. This allowed the persons to freely ask me questions (Kvale 2007:55). I encouraged the participants to choose the interview setting to make sure they would feel comfortable in the environment (Bryman 2008:421). The majority of the interviews were conducted in the persons’ offices and three interviews took place in cafeterias.

### 4.1.4 Analyzing the material

All of the recorded interviews were transcribed. Transcriptions make it easier to analyze the material since one can go through the interview as a text. The recordings also allow one to understand not only *what* the person said but also *how* it was said. Thereafter I analyzed the material focusing on what the person identified as casual mechanism, important patterns and events during the period of demonstrations. I also compared the different interviews in order to find similarities and differences in the ways of conceiving and interpreting the participation in the protests. The analysis also allowed me to find the main themes in people’s interpretations (Bryman 2008:430-431).

## 5. Results

The collected data is here presented as answers to the research question developed in Chapter 2. The interviewed person’s interpretation of the demonstrations’ character and the course of events during the period of protests are central in the presentation of the material. The emergence of new organizations and of parallel protest was considered to be important events during the period of demonstrations. The presentation first outlines the important events during the mobilizations and thereafter recalls the demonstration’s character. Finally, the experiences prior to the protests that encouraged participation are outlined.
5.1 What were the major events during the demonstrations?

5.1.1 #ResignNow and #JusticeNow

There was a general view that the collective #JusticeNow had an important role during the demonstration, “The people from #JusticeNow was present from the beginning”\(^3\). After the resignation of the Vice-President, the people who had created the first event on Facebook called #ResignNow, formally created a social platform and changed name to #JusticeNow, in order to represent the greater demand for justice and the need of a new reform about elections, instead of only focusing on the resignation of corrupt governors. The change from #ResignNow to #JusticeNow was described by the interviewees as a change of the demands and conscious by the people participating in the protest. The resignation of the corrupt politicians was only one step towards creating a just system with accurate reforms “It went from ´Resign now´ to ´Justice now´ and then to ´Reforms now´”\(^4\).

During the weeks of mobilization different organizations and collectives called people to the demonstrations, however #JusticeNow was seen as the main group in collecting information and spreading it through its channels, “We became like the official page for the demonstrations” states one of the creators of the collective\(^5\). It was repeatedly mentioned in the interviews, that through #JusticeNow the information about the demonstration became accessibly to a broad group of people, especially urban people from the middle-class with no former experience of demonstrating and that use social media as a main source of information. The professional way in which the demonstration were promoted was also underlined as important to make the platform for demonstrations trustworthy “#JusticeNow turned in to a channel for the demonstrations, they had a big responsibility”\(^6\).

The creators of the platform are five university students with a well-developed communication strategy that permitted the mentioned promotion of the demonstrations, “The group behind #JusticeNow are experts on marketing”\(^7\). One of the founders of the group explained that “The strategy was based on three I:s; Inspiration, Information, Indignation” which meant that during the weeks of demonstration the goal was to publish three posts a day that would inform the readers and followers about the political situation, create indignation through information about the consequences of corruption and inspire people to demonstrate.

\(^1\) Interview with academician 13  
\(^2\) Interview with student 11  
\(^3\) Interview with academician 8  
\(^4\) Interview with academician 3
According to one of the founders\(^8\) of #JusticeNow, the group collaborated and held dialogs with human right organizations as Foundation Myrna Mack, youth collectives as CEUG and Another Guatemala Now and political organizations as the Seed-group and SOMOS. Before the demonstrations, #JusticeNow also published information about how to demonstrate, since the majority of the participants had no former experience of demonstrations. The publications focused on the importance of no-violence and on maintaining good manners, for instance by cleaning the square after the demonstration and respect each other.

In the creation of #JusticeNow, the founders had a clear idea about the importance of not promoting any leadership “We did not want to promote any political leadership because we wanted the demonstrations to be as pluralistic as possible”.\(^9\) One of the interviewed persons from the peasant movement criticized the lack of leadership in the demonstrations in general and wondered how the lack of organizational strength could be seen as positive. Moreover he was skeptical towards the description of #JusticeNow as organizers of the demonstrations, “To organize a demonstration in something very different from creating a Facebookgroup”.\(^10\)

### 5.1.2 #It’sNotHisTurn

In parallel with the demonstrations against corruption and the electoral campaigns, another movement saw the light – #NoLeToca or #It’sNotHisTurn. All of the interviewed persons mentioned the campaign, even though there was no specific question on the theme. The movement was directed against the presidential candidate Manuel Baldizón and his political party LIDER who was involved in corruption (CICIG, Financiamiento de la Política en Guatemala 2015). In the election of 2011 Baldizón came in the second place. Historically, the person who comes second in one year’s election becomes the winner in the next election. For instance, Otto Pérez Molina came second in the election 2004 and won the elections in 2008. Due to this “tradition”, LIDER’s electoral campaign stated that it was Balidzón’s turn saying “Le toca” – “It’s his turn”, making a historical reference to the results of the former elections, “I believe that people felt offended when he assumed that it was his turn”.\(^11\)

There was a general consensus by the interview participants that the rejection of Baldizón’s electoral campaign showed an important rejection to the traditional way of making politics, “He [Baldizón] said that it was his turn, and people answered by saying – no, it is not your turn!”\(^12\) The protests against Baldizón started in May in the city of Antigua, close to the capital of Guatemala. The presidential

\(^8\) Interview with student 11
\(^9\) Interview with student 11
\(^10\) Interview with representative from indigenous- and peasant movement 15
\(^11\) Interview with student 6
\(^12\) Interview with representative from media
candidate was supposed to hold a speech in the central park of Antigua. Before the day of the speech, an event on Facebook was created that called for a protest against the candidate, “A friend created the event on Facebook and we started to share it”. Several persons participated in the protest and it became so massive that Baldizón decided not to hold his speech. The first protest against the candidate inspired campaigns against him in other parts of the country and Baldizón had to cancel several speeches because of the protests “Saying ‘It'sNotHisTurn’ even became a ‘thing’ used in different parts of the country, people used the same rhetoric and started saying ‘It’s not your turn!’ to local politicians accused of corruption”. In July CICIG presented a report that concluded that LIDER had exceeded the allowed budget for electoral campaigns, which intensified the protests (CICIG, Financiamiento de la Política en Guatemala 2015:16).

In the demonstrations against corruption in the capital city, people started to write #It'sNotHisTurn on placards. According to some, the ones who protested against Baldizón took advantage of the demonstrations against corruption to highlight their specific demands. Others meant that it portrayed the plurality of the movement, “People said that a political party was taking advantage of the juncture to criticize Baldizón, I rather believe that it reflected the different ideas of the people, some focused on corruption and others criticized politicians or ideologies”.

The movement #It’sNotHisTurn was not supported by #JusticeNow since they did not want the political demands during the demonstrations to become too broad, “We did not want him [Baldizón] to become President either, but we did not like the campaign, it was not about changing the structure of corruption, just about taking away one person that represented it” said one of the persons behind #JusticeNow.

When discussing the outcomes of the demonstrations, the fact that Baldizón was not elected to become President of Guatemala was repeatedly mentioned as one of the most positive outcomes “We managed to stop Baldizón, the most corrupt of them all!”. It was interpreted as a rejection not only of corruption, but also as a rejection of the traditional way of making politics, “The fight against corruption was also a fight against the politicians of the establishment that personified corruption”.

13 Interview with student 6
14 Interview with student 7
15 Interview with academician 13
16 Interview with student 11
17 Interview with representative from media 12
18 Interview with academician 8
5.1.3 #UnderTheseCircumstancesWeDon’tWantElections

During the interviews, a third protest movement was brought up – a movement against the elections in September, “We did not want to support a bad system by voting”. Principally the National Platform for a Reformation of the State and the Seed-group led the rejection movement. The National Platform consisted of Universities and 100 different organizations from the civil society and the Seed-group is a social democratic collective that aspires to become a political party (Cabria 2015). Both groups proclaimed that it was necessary to cancel the elections in September if not important reform changes were made first. A transition government consisting of representatives from the civil society was suggested. The main goals of the groups were: a reformation of the law about political parties, a reformation about the elections and a new law on financing of political parties, “A great part of the society expressed that they were against the elections, but the conservatives wanted elections”. Some expressed that it was difficult to get a broad support for the movement, due to peoples’ “misinterpretation” of the concept of democracy, “People believe that democracy is to go and vote each fourth year” and “It was important to put focus on the issue of ‘playing democracy’ but cancelling the elections was too much to ask of a country that was just breaking the indifference”. In contrast, others claimed that the movement itself was un-democratic “They failed to create a democratic movement, the majority of the Guatemalans were in favor of the elections”. The failure of the movement to expand was also explained by its division and dis-articulation, “Some compañeros said, ‘don’t vote! But if you vote, vote for me!’”. The interviewed people that had participated in the movement against the elections interpreted the demonstrations partly as failed, since elections were held in September.

5.1.4 The National Strike on August 27 2015

After several weeks of demanding the President’s resignation, Pérez Molina still remained in his position. On August 21, CICIG and the Public Ministry pointed out Pérez Molina as one of the leaders of The Line and the day after the Coordinating Committee of Agricultural, Commercial, Industrial and Financial Associations (CACIF) revoked its support for the President (Herrera 2015). On August 23, the President responded to the accusations in a speech to the nation sent on national television. In the

19 Interview with academician 10
20 Interview with representative from media 12
21 Interview with academician 2
22 Interview with academician 14
23 Interview with academician 3
24 Interview with representative from indigenous- and peasant movement 15
speech, the President declared his innocence and stated that he would not resign from the presidency, “His strategy to defend himself didn’t work, and people were too well-informed to believe him”.25

In social media, people rejected the President with a new hashtag #IDon’tHaveAPresident (Redacción 2015). In parallel, CUC through The Peoples’ Assembly called for a three-day strike the 25, 26 and 27 of August as a way to intensify the demand, “It was important that CUC and other organizations helped to spread information about what was going on to the rural parts of the country”.26 On August 27, there were demonstrations and blockades all over the country and the leader of CUC explained “There were blockades in 30 strategically chosen points”.27

The main square in the capital city was crowded and 100,000 persons participated, “It was a truly historic day”.28 Companies as Tacobell, Pizza Hut and McDonalds supported the national strike “Companies started to send us posters saying that they were closing and asked us to publish it on our page #JusticeNow”.29 The publications inspired more companies to participate in the strike.

It was seen as surprising by several of the interviewed persons, that CACIF did not support the strike since the beginning, “CACIF declared their support in the afternoon when they realized that ‘everyone’ was participating”.30 One person explained that in a conversation with Jorge Briz, the director of CACIF, he asked “Hey Jorge, why don’t you call your alliances to participate in the strike?” and the response was that the small companies would suffer from the loss of money.31 A leading voice from CUC stated “CACIF was obligated to support the strike when it became obvious that its affiliated companies were participating”.32 The National Strike was recognized as a “proof of the peoples’ strength” and as crucial to make the President resign. The general view was that the participation was broad, “People from all sectors were there”33 and that the strike had a great impact “The National Strike surpassed all expectations”.34

25 Interview with academician 3
26 Interview with academician 13
27 Interview with representative from indigenous- and peasant movement 16
28 Interview with students 7
29 Interview with student 11
30 Interview with students 6
31 Interview with academician 13
32 Interview with representative from indigenous- and peasant movement 15
33 Interview with representative from media
34 Interview with academician 13
5.1.5 The President’s resignation

“People told us to stop demanding the President’s resignation, they said ‘it’s no idea, he will never resign’, but we didn’t give up and he resigned – it is possible to make a change!” The protests after CICIG’s revelation of Pérez Molina’s involvement in The Line, demanded the parliament to make a voting about the President’s immunity. In social media, people shared the hashtag #IWantMy105Votes, since 105 votes in the congress would be enough to revoke the immunity. On September 1, the congress voted in favor of revoking the President’s immunity and on September 2, Pérez Molina presented his resignation (Álvarez 2015). The resignation was seen as the event that put an end to the protests. Several groups saw the resignation as the final point, “According to some, the resignation was enough”. The demand for the President’s resignation had been unifying for the different sectors of society, so when the President resigned there was no longer a unifying demand, “People felt victorious after the resignation, the demand for justice and reformation was not important anymore”.

It was expressed that after the resignation, the class-division and ideology division in the demonstrations became clear. Only the left-wing groups, the groups against the elections and the ones who are directly affected by inequality and injustice, considered it important to continue to protest, the leader of CUC concluded “The middle-class felt satisfied with the resignation and stopped demonstrating, but we who are always there [demonstrating] stayed”. The resignation was seen as the end of the mobilizations, “After the resignation, nothing more happened, everything just went back to normal”.

5.2 Who participated in the demonstrations and who was absent?

The plurality and diversity of the demonstrations was commonly described as characteristic and a factor that made the mobilizations unique, “People from different socioeconomic backgrounds and with different ideologies were there”. In the interviews, the participants described that it was a mix of ‘un-organized’ people who had no former experience of demonstrating, people representing different organizations such as associations working for HBTQ-rights or indigenous rights, students and persons who formed new collectives during the period of demonstrations, which they represented. It was also mentioned that the character of the demonstration varied and changed throughout the weeks of mobilization. The first demonstrations were described as urban and with a major presence of

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35 Interview with student 11
36 Interview with academician 2
37 Interview with academician 13
38 Interview with representative from indigenous- and peasant movement 16
39 Interview with representative from media 4
persons from the middle-class. In contrast, the final demonstrations in August were viewed as broader with a larger presence from the rural areas and from the Mayan-and peasant organizations “The majority of the demonstrations consisted of middle-class people from the capital city, many saw it as ‘happening’ or as a fun Saturday excursion with the family”. 40

5.2.1 University students and youth groups

Young people, and especially university students were pointed out as the demonstrations’ nucleus. Initially, the largest student presence consisted of students from the public university San Carlos, however after the creation of CEUG, the presence of students from the private universities became notable “The demonstrations were not organized by political groups, but by students, which was so valuable”. 41 The platform #JusticeNow that also consisted of young students and CEUG were pointed out as important actors. Moreover the person from #JusticeNow explained that they collaborated closely with CEUG. The way of organizing collectively was also mentioned as crucial for their success “I believe that CEUG has its strength in its collectiveness”. 42

Several of the persons interviewed expressed a feeling of surprise by the union between the students from the public university and the private universities, “I could not believe my eyes when I saw the students from the private universities in the manifestations, since they have never participated before”. 43 Among several youth collectives that were created during the demonstrations, one that was mentioned in various interviews was La Batucada del Pueblo. Young musician gathered at the square, played instruments and turned political demands into music, “They were the center of the demonstrations”. 44

5.2.2 Middle Class

There was a general consensus among the participants, that the major presence was people from the middle-class, ”The protagonists were the urban and educated middle-class”. 45 Especially the first demonstrations were pointed out as rather homogenous. The fact that persons from the middle-class participated was highlighted as important for several reasons. According to some, the demonstrations would never have received the same media attention if it were not the urban middle-class who was demonstrating. Moreover it made it more difficult to repress the demonstrations, since people in the

40 Interview with academician 8
41 Interview with representative from media 5
42 Interview with academician 12
43 Interview with representative from indigenous- and peasant movement 15
44 Interview with student 11
45 Interview with academician 3
middle-class have important contacts and can create an international scandal if the government would try to silence them.46

5.2.3 Mayan and Peasant organizations
According to some, Mayan or peasant organizations were not present at all. One person concluded that the persons from the political-left were not present either. On the other hand, Daniel Pascual, the leader of the largest peasant organization CUC confirmed that the organization was present. Likewise, people from left-wing groups confirmed their presence. In other words it is notable that there were different interpretation among the interviewees on who was present and who was not. Nevertheless, it was clear that no political parties participated, “The left-wing parties did not know how to benefit from the political situations”.47 The leader of CUC explained that in the first demonstration, just a few persons from the organization were at the square in order to “get the pulse” of the demonstration and analyze whether CUC should participate or not. In three others of the demonstrations in the capital city the organization was present. The leader further explained that their analysis from the beginning was “This is not our protest, but we can benefit from it”.48

5.2.4 Business sector
The business sector was mentioned as an important and ‘surprising’ participant in the demonstrations. In the majority of the interviews, the role of the private sector was brought up, especially its importance during the National Strike on August 27. During the national strike, both national and international companies closed down. CACIF did not call for the President’s resignation until August when the investigation made by CICIG indicated that Pérez Molina was one of the leaders of the network, ”In April when the demonstrations started there were no proofs of the President’s participation, consequently we couldn’t demand him to resign” concluded the director of FUNDESA, a business association that collaborates with CACIF.49 However, according to the same person only businesses depending on one person closed down during the strike, “Companies that live on what they earn on a daily basis could impossible close down”.50 In contrast, a person from the village Quiché described how all the stores and even the local market closed down on the day of the strike.51

5.2.5 Religious groups
Both persons from the Evangelical and Catholic Church were present. A group was created called #PrayForGuatemala, and the group gathered at the main square in Guatemala City on Saturday

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46 Interview with academician 8
47 Interview with representative from indigenous- and peasant movement 15
48 Interview with representative from indigenous- and peasant movement 16
49 Interview with representative from the business sector 1
50 Interview with representative from the business sector 1
51 Interview with students 7
mornings in order to pray for the demonstrations. Only two participants mentioned the presence of religious groups though.52

5.2.6 Media
In the first demonstrations, only the closed cable-channels Guatevisión and Canal Antigua were present and not the channels from national television, “National TV-channels that are pro-government received strong critics from the middle class since they showed a football game or a series instead of showing the demonstrations. Later, when they arrived to the demonstrations, people started to attack their vehicles and accuse them of being corrupted”.53 The national open channels 3, 7, 11 and 13 are owned by the Mexican businessman Ángel Gómez and the major public is the popular sector (Cajas 2009:153). According to CICIGs report on the financing of politics in Guatemala (2015), television is the major source of information for the Guatemalans, followed by radio and written media. In other words, media has an important political influence. Medias oligarchical structure and political alignments is highlighted as a major issue for the Guatemalan democracy in the same report (CICIG, Financiamiento de la Política en Guatemala 2015:35).

The digital newspapers Nómada, Plaza Pública Soy502 and República.GT were present and informed daily about the demonstrations and The Line. Independent journalists writing at social media were also present, for instance the persons behind AnonymomousGT. It was stated, that as a contrast to the traditional dynamic between social media and traditional media, during the demonstrations the traditional media had to use social media as a source of information. According to some of the interviewed persons, Guatevisión and Canal Antigua made it possible for people to express their opinions and the channels became part of the protests. The director of Guatevisión stated that due to the channels presence, the demonstrations were maintained pacific and people felt their presences as a guarantee of safety.54

5.2.7 Military, political parties and labor unions
The military and the politicians were pointed out as absent during the demonstration. The absence of the military was interpreted as a statement from the President, that he had no intention in repressing the demonstrations. Other interpreted their absence as a consequence of their unconditional support for the ex-general Pérez Molina, concluding that the military would never ask for the President’s

52 Interviews 3 & 14
53 Interview with academician 13
54 Interview with representative from media 5
The Labor Unions were also pointed out as absent since the largest unions such as the teacher union were aligned with the government.56

5.3 How were the demonstrations maintained?
When discussing the different events during the demonstration, people often related them to the investigations presented by CICIG. The demonstrations continued, since new information was presented that strengthened the demand for justice and resignation.

5.3.1 The Vice-President’s resignation
In all of the interviews the Vice-President’s resignation was mentioned as fundamental for the maintenance of the demonstrations, “If she wouldn’t have resigned, I believe that people would have got tired of demonstrating. It [the resignation] made us feel powerful”.57 The resignation made people believe in their power. Another important factor for the maintenance of the demonstrations was the existence of a certain communication between CICIG and the civil society. The director of CICIG published supportive messages on his Twitter58 and one could see graffiti expressing “Thank you Iván!” and stickers on cars saying, “I love CICIG”.59

Whether or not it was the demonstrations that led to the resignation, people saw it as a pattern of cause and reaction that encouraged them to continue demonstrating. Most participants mentioned that the feeling of being part of a collective, increased self-confidence and the feeling of being able to make a change motivated people to demonstrate. These examples point to the important processes of meaning making.

5.3.2 Feeling of collectiveness
The interviewee’s underlined the feeling of collectiveness as crucial for the continuation of the demonstrations since it gave people a feeling of being united. In the interviews, Guatemala was described as an extremely individualistic country where the separation between people has been used as a political strategy to prevent insurgency.60 In that context, unity between different sectors becomes radical. People from different ideologies and situations met on the square and respected each other.61
A representative from CUC described “We agreed on putting other demand to the side, just for a while, to make the protest more unified”.

To illustrate how people united, various mentioned the manifestations on May 16 as an example of the collectiveness. Since it started to rain heavily, something that normally paralyzes the city, people were unsure whether anyone would turn up at the square in the city to demonstrate or not. Surprisingly, the square was crowded with people wearing umbrellas and helping each other to remain warm, “It was so beautiful, because we never let the square be empty. When the people who could not participate in the protest in the morning finished their jobs, they came to the square and the ones who had been standing in the rain since the morning could go home. It was like people said ‘hey, you can go home and put on dry clothes, and I’ll stay here’”.

5.4 Why did people participate in social protests in Guatemala City 2015?

When the participants were asked about what made people participate in the demonstrations, everyone mentioned the feeling of indignation. The general political crisis was mentioned as one factor that created indignation, however two specific political situations were used to illustrate and explain the feeling: the crisis in the public hospitals and the scandal related to the polluted Lake Amatitlán. The demonstrations were also understood as a rejection of the traditional politicians and the traditional political system.

5.4.1 A political system and a country in crisis

“The country isn’t working and they are stealing all the money - it was just too much”. It was expressed that the political system was in crisis long before the demonstrations started and the frustration among the citizens had already started to grow. The principal expression of the crisis was exemplified by the crisis in the public hospitals. The hospitals lack of finances and medicines has created a dysfunctional health system. The Hospital of the Social Security Institute (IGSS) was involved in a corruption scandal that was presented by CICIG on May 20. The boarder of IGSS had signed a contract with a pharmaceutical company that did not fulfil the basic standards, which eventually led to several patients’ death (Ochoa 2015). Five persons mentioned the deaths of 13 patients at IGSS Hospital as a factor that created indignation and frustration among the population.
The educational crisis, the level of malnutrition and the insecurity in the country were other examples to illustrate what accumulated the feeling of frustration among the citizens and concretized the country’s crisis. A student with origins outside of the capital city stated, “Indigenous persons, peasants, women and other oppressed group have always felt indignation – it wasn’t Guatemala that ‘woke up’, it was Guatemala City”.  

In four interviews, the situation with an increased youth migration to the United States was given as an example of Guatemala’s crisis. It was also mentioned in order to explain the relationship between the US and Guatemala. The prosperity plan, imposed by the US, has not been possible to implement in the country due to the level of corruption and in the beginning of 2015, the migratory situation was given a lot of attention (La Nacion 2015).  

Another scandal that was mentioned in the majority of the interviews was the situation related to the Lake Amatitlán. The lake is located close to the capital city and has been extremely polluted. In order to clean the lake, the government signed a contract with an Israeli company that was supposed to use a magical formula to clean the lake. Later it was revealed that the formula consisted of water and salt, consequently the level of pollution did not decrease (Partlow, 2015). The Vice-President Roxana Baldetti visited the lake together with a large group of journalist on March 23. The visit was criticized in social media due to several comments made by Baldettí that were considered inappropriate, “She wanted to make fun of the people”.66 The case was described as the “limit” and the “culmination” of people’s tolerance, “This [Amatitlán] was what made the people feel fed up”.67 One academician concluded that “People lost their patience, they felt as if the politicians were taking them for idiots. A certain part of the population felt that this was the limit, but they didn’t know how to canalize the frustration”.68  

**5.4.2 Scientific evidence – “They stole our money!”**

The problem of corruption is not new in Guatemala; in contrast it has been institutionalized since the colonisation. Due to the profound investigation made by CICIG, it was possible to base the accusations of corruption on actual facts. Earlier, corruption cases have often been based mainly on witness testimonies, however CICIG presented scientific evidence, hours of recordings and bank records (Partlow 2015). One student concluded, “Everyone knew that corruption existed before, but it was not possible to concretize it and understand its extent”.69

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65 Interview with students 7  
66 Interview with representative from business sector 1  
67 Interview with representative from media 5  
68 Interview with academician 13  
69 Interview with students 6
Furthermore the proportion of the corruption was stated to be another reason for the frustration, “The level of robbery was just too much”. The level of corruption had extended what was culturally acceptable. In two interviews, it was noted that the increased tax-level also created a frustration among the middle-class. A reformation by Pérez Molina in 2012 increased the level of taxes for the middle class, yet people could not see any results of the paid taxes, “People pay taxes and still they [the middle class] have to pay for quality education, health and security”.

The urban middle-class had voted for the Patriotic Party and Pérez Molina and therefore felt betrayed by the government they had put their trust in, “It was due to the urban middle class that Pérez Molina came to power, and then they felt betrayed by him”. One person stated that he had voted for Pérez Molina in 2011 and shared the feeling of being betrayed “A lot of people trusted in him but he fooled us”.

Yet, when discussing the feeling of indignation, several persons criticized the middle-class’ indignation, stating that it was related only to their personal interests and economy, “If indigenous persons are killed it does not matter, but people felt indignation because the government they voted for was stealing from them”. said one person from CUC. The same theme was underlined in another interview “People felt more indignation by the fact, that ‘they’ had stolen money from them, than indignation by the genocide in our country”.

5.4.3 The youth’s lack of fear and access to information

Some argued, that the youth was not afraid to demonstrate which was fundamental for the emergence of the demonstrations. The lack of fear was explained by the fact that the youth did not live during the civil war and therefore does not relate demonstrations to murders and disappearances. In other words, the memory of repression was not present, “Our parents and grandparents are afraid, we aren’t,” said one student and followed up by stating “The situation itself made the demonstrations possible, it’s not like during the war anymore.”

70 Interview with representative from media 5
71 Interview with academician 3
72 Interview with academician 8
73 Interview with representative from indigenous- and peasant movement 15
74 Interview with academician 14
75 Interview with students 6
The civil war was present in the majority of the interviews. It was argued that the fear caused by the civil war has created a “silence” among the citizens where “People doesn’t demand injustices”. The participants described that during the demonstrations, a lot of people held posters that mentioned that the silence had come to an end and that people were not afraid anymore, “They stole so much, that they even stole our fear”.

Several of the interviewed persons highlighted the increased access to information through the use of smartphones. Through smartphones, people can access to social media, which was the virtual room in which a great part of the mobilization took its form. Especially the interviewed students emphasized the importance of social media as an information channel.

5.5 Summary

The emergence of the mobilizations was explained as a reaction to the political crisis, illustrated by two specific situations: the hospital crisis and the catastrophic attempts by the government to solve the situation with the polluted Lake Amatitlán. The “arrogant” comments made by the Vice-President when she visited the lake made people feel as if the politicians were making fun of them, and when the corruption case The Line was presented the “water boiled over”.

The parallel protest movement and the creation of new organizations were highlighted as important events during the weeks of demonstrations. Different hashtags used in social media showed people’s response to the political situation. The hashtag #ResignNow and #JusticeNow responded to CICIG’s accusation of corruption within the government and SAT. As a response to the electoral campaigns, the hashtag #UnderTheseCircumstancesWeDon’tWantElections developed to criticize the undemocratic character of the political parties and the electoral system and to suggest reform changes. The protest movement #It’sNotHisTurn was directed against the presidential-candidate Manuel Baldizón and the protest was seen as a rejection not only towards the candidate but also towards the traditional political system itself which he represented.

Further, the national strike on August 27 was highlighted as an impressive proof of the people’s capacity to organize collectively. The President’s resignation was interpreted as the culmination of the mobilizations. When discussing the mobilizations’ character, the participants argued that it changed over time but that the nucleus consisted of students and youth collectives. A major urban middle-class participation and a minor rural Mayan participation was explained as characteristic for the protests. Yet, people put emphasize on the uniqueness in the pluralistic character of the demonstrations.

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76 Interview with academician 9
77 Quote from interview 9 and 10
The Vice-President’s resignation was seen as a crucial incitement for the continuation of the demonstration since it provided people with a sense of being powerful and capable of making a change. Moreover, the investigations presented by CICIG received responses by the society and encouraged the demonstrations.

6. Analysis

The analysis is based on the analytical tools presented in Chapter 3.3, which are developed from the Political Process Model. Central to the analysis are the themes of Indigenous Organizational Strength, expanding Political Opportunities and Cognitive Liberation. Through focusing on these three aspects, it will be possible to examine what factors led to the emergence and development of the mobilizations. Most importantly, since the research is based on how people interpreted the social protests, the process of cognitive liberation permits us to understand why people decided to participate in collective action.

6.1 Indigenous Organizational Strength

When examining the indigenous organizational strength of the mobilizations I will focus on the resources that existed within the population. As mentioned earlier, in the political process model “indigenous” does not refer to ethnicity or culture, it is rather a synonym for basic or original. The factors that will be taken into account are: members, structures of solidary incentives, communication network and leaders.

An indigenous (basic) infrastructure is necessary in order to create a successful movement. Principally, indigenous organizations allow a broad recruitment to the mobilizations through their established linkages. However, in the case of the protests in Guatemala, newly established networks and social media platforms as #JusticeNow had a more important role in recruiting people to the mobilizations than traditional groups. Nevertheless, people from traditional groups as the feminist movement or the Mayan movement were present but participated as individuals rather than as representatives from their movement. In other words, these groups put their traditional demands away in order to focus the demands on the theme of corruption. At the same time, these groups also recruited persons to the mobilization through their linkages.

According to the political process model, the success of recruiting through traditional groups is based on the structure of solidary incentives. That refers to the interpersonal benefits provided by movement or mobilization participation. In other words, participation in collective action is considered as a proof of organizational membership. If one expands the definition of organization to involve the informal organizations through the sense of group belonging, it is possible to explain how people were recruited
to the mobilizations through social media. In several of the interviews, people described that the demonstrations in the capital became “cool” or “trendy” and that people were eager to document their participation in the demonstrations through “selfies”. I would argue that through the sharing of these images, people identified the participation in the demonstrations as an action that could strengthen their “organizational membership” as for instance their “membership” and belonging to a certain social class, or belonging to a conscious and informed group. Persons may also have been recruited to the virtual part of the protests and participated through sharing articles, photos and memes on the Internet.

The communication channels created primarily through social media but also through traditional organizations created a communication infrastructure that linked people together. The example of the demonstration on May 1 where peasant-and indigenous groups demonstrated together with university students and youth collectives illustrates the success of the interaction between the communication networks. Social media created a network through which 1) former non-organized people were recruited to the demonstrations 2) traditional organizations as CUC could connect with new organizations as CEUG. Certainly, #JusticeNow can be understood as a fundamental part of the network infrastructure since it gathered information from different organizations and spread the information so it became accessible to a larger group. In other words, the traditional groups’ networks expanded through the new channels of the communication infrastructure. Nevertheless, I believe that the existing communication networks within the traditional organization also had an important function in creating a pluralistic and broad protest.

Finally, I will analyze the role of leaders in the demonstrations. According to McAdam, leadership is necessary to organize discontent and turn it into successful collective actions (McAdam, 1982:47). On the other hand, the lack of leadership in the demonstrations was mentioned as key to their success in several of the interviews, since a broad group of persons could feel included in the demonstrations. However, the very lack of recognized leadership can make it impossible for the mobilizations to turn into a social movement or create a fragile movement less likely to remain faithful to its original demands.

In conclusion, the indigenous organizational strength partly created opportunistic structures for the mobilizations but was not determining for the mobilizations. Members were recruited through traditional organization but more importantly, they were recruited through new collectives as #JusticeNow. Jointly, social media as a new way of linking people together and traditional networks existing within traditional organizations created platforms and linkages between people. The lack of leadership was characteristic for the demonstrations in Guatemala City 2015, which can make it impossible for the new collectives and organizations to create a social movement.
6.2 Expanding Political Opportunities

In the analysis of expanding political opportunities I will focus on the structure of political opportunities and the dynamics between challengers and polity members. A shift in the political opportunity structure, caused by social processes can expand the political opportunities and benefit collective action. A certain change may increase the political leverage of the challengers.

When analyzing the dynamics between challengers and members in the Guatemalan context, I found that the general structure and dynamic was changed during the demonstrations. The traditional challengers are specifically peasants- and Mayan organizations that trough collective action or community based action oppose the power structures in society and demand their rights. The polity members consist of the middle-class, the oligarchy and economical elites that have more political influence and possibility to affect their lives. The interesting aspect, in the studied demonstration, is that the traditional polity members turned into challengers in this specific context. I would argue that the established members became challengers when they united and protested against corruption. Since the nucleus of the protests consisted of the traditional polity members (that turned into challengers), it may be argued that the traditional challengers as Mayan- or peasant organizations accompanied these groups but were not key participants. At the specific time of the demonstrations, the traditional members and the traditional challengers jointly became challengers to the political system they were criticizing.

Since the challengers consisted of people with high political influence, the challengers’ power leverage was strengthened and thereby their bargaining position. As mentioned earlier, the traditional challenger as peasant or Mayan organizations have been repressed by the state and their mobilizations has been criminalized, including by the government of Pérez Molina. It has been difficult for challenging groups to advance collective action due to repression. Thus, since the mobilization subject for this investigation was an urban phenomenon with challengers that normally are part of the polity members – it became impossible to repress the demonstrations. Repression of the protests would not have been guaranteed impunity, rather it would have had political consequence. As McAdam argues, the expanded political opportunities have to be understood in an international context (McAdam 1982:xiv). In relation to that, I believe the presence of an international organ as CICIG to be fundamental for the development of the protests. The strong international presence may have had the function of a controlling “eye” that further prevented the Guatemalan State from repressing the mobilizations since it would have had political consequences.

78 Diario Libre 9 October 2012 “Muerte de ocho indígenas en Guatemala revive el recuerdo de la guerra interna” http://www.diariolibre.com/noticias/muerte-de-ocho-indigenas-en-guatemala-revive-recuerdo-de-la-guerra-interna-AODL354958
To summarize, I argue that the population responded to a situation of political crisis that encouraged all parts of the society to participate in the protests. Since the traditional polity members turned into challengers, the mobilizations held a strong political leverage and therefore the demonstrations were not repressed. The bargaining position held by the participants created a situation where the demands were taken into account and generated results. Yet, it is important to take into account the information shared by one of the leaders of the peasant movement, presented in Chapter 5. The mobilizations were not repressed in the capital city, but in regions outside of the capital the police responded violently to the protests. The repression was directed toward the traditional challengers. It is worth to underline that the series of repressions have not been part of the media image of the demonstrations and has somewhat seemed to been erased from the collective memory.

6.3 Cognitive Liberation
McAdam argues that indigenous organizational strength and the expanded political opportunities are crucial for an emergence of a movement, however cannot solely explain it. The bridge between opportunity and collective action is created through cognitive liberation (McAdam, 1982:36-38).

In the interviews, I found that people outlined a long process in which the system gradually became seen as illegitimate. The process was illustrated by the examples of the public hospital crisis and the scandal related to the polluted Lake Amatitlán. The scandal about the polluted lake itself was not what created frustration among the people though, the people’s tolerance or patience was lost first when the Vice-President made inappropriate commentaries when visiting the lake. The shared feeling that the politicians were “making fun of them” created a response from the population where it criticized and parodied the politicians, mainly through social media.

Therefore, I would suggest that the protests did not start at the square in Guatemala City on April 25, 2015. The protests had already started to take form in virtual arenas, however it had not been visible through collective actions on the ground. When the corruption case The Line was presented, it generated a shift in the political structure and made the “water boil over”. Since the first demonstration was suggested on an already established platform (the virtual room of the protests), I would argue that people felt trust for the initiative. Moreover the discourse was easy and direct, and it was just as easy to push the “attend” button on Facebook as it is easy to “attend” social events.

I would stress that the resignation of the Vice-President that took place in the beginning of the protests made people lose the sense of “powerlessness” and believe that collective action could generate political changes. People identified this process and change of mentality by saying “Guatemala woke up”. Since the demand about resignation received a response, it encouraged people to continue to
participate and to broaden the demands. I would argue that the fact that the demonstrations in Guatemala City had a high political leverage and was not likely to be repressed made people see the demonstration as safe, which therefore encouraged further participation from un-organized people.

7. Conclusions and discussion

The purpose of this study has been to create an understanding of the twenty weeks of social protests in Guatemala City in the electoral year of 2015 and give answer to why people participated in the mobilizations. I aimed to give answer to the following questions: Why did people participate in social protests in Guatemala City 2015? What were considered to be the major events during the demonstrations? Who participated in the demonstrations and who was absent? How were the protests maintained?

The protest participants described that the political system was in crisis. Consequently, the situation of crisis encouraged all parts of the society to participate in collective action and demand a change. The crisis was exemplified by two political scandals: the pollution of Lake Amatitlán and the public hospital crisis. When the corruption case The Line was presented on April 16 2015, people lost their patience and the breaking point was reached. The political opportunity structure changed and this made it possible for the demonstrations to take place. The urban middle-class who had voted for the Patriotic Party and the government of Otto Pérez Molina felt indignation since the government they had voted for stole from them. Therefore, this sector of un-organized people suddenly identified collective action as a tool to demand a necessary political change. Further, the sensation of “being made fun of” and being betrayed were used to explain how people interpreted the situation and what led them to break the political apathy.

The emergence of parallel protests as for instance the movement against the elections and against the presidential candidate Manuel Baldizón as well as the creation of new organizations and collectives as CEUG and #JusticeNow were seen as important events during the demonstrations. Moreover, the interviewees mentioned the resignation of the Vice President in May, the investigations presented by the Public Ministry and CICIG, the speech to the nation made by the President on August 23 2015 and the National Strike on August 27 as important events during the weeks of demonstrations. Different hashtags were used during the demonstrations to unify the people’s demands as for example #JusticeNow, #ResignNow, #IDon’tHaveAPresident and #IWantMy105Votes.
Due to the fact that the participants to a great degree consisted of traditional polity members as people from the middle-class and people with economical and political influence, the traditional dynamic of challengers and members was changed during the demonstrations. Polity members turned into challengers. The traditional challengers as Peasant- and Mayan organizations joined the demonstrations, however did not constitute the nucleus of the protests. Notwithstanding, organizations as CUC through the The Peoples’ Assembly organized blockades and protests in different regions in the country. Since the traditional members turned into challengers, the mobilizations had a high political leverage and a strong bargaining position which made state-led repression less likely due to the fact that the state could not be guaranteed impunity if repressing the demonstrations. In other words, participating in the protests was not related to any risks and the demonstrations were conceived as safe, which increased the participation, especially among un-organized people. The permanent presence of the Media and the present discourse against violence were also underlined as factors that made people conceive the demonstrations as safe. The military, political parties and labor unions were mentioned as absent during the protests.

The communication infrastructure consisted primarily of new networks created in a virtual space and through linkages among the collectives that emerged during the period of demonstrations. The platform #JusticeNow was highlighted as an important actor in calling for demonstrations and spreading information. However, traditional groups also used their linkages to recruit people to the mobilizations. Persons from the traditional movements participated as individuals rather than as representatives from their organizations though.

Finally, the demonstrations were maintained during a long period of time since people perceived a response to the collective action (illustrated by the resignation of the Vice President in the beginning of the demonstrations). The resignation exchanged the earlier experience of powerlessness with a sense of being able to make a change through collective political action. In the process of cognitive liberation, the political system became seen as illegitimate due to the current political crisis, which encouraged protest participation. The feeling of collectiveness among the citizens was also stated to be an important factor for the maintenance of the demonstrations. The mobilizations did not turn into a unified social movement, however it is possible that the organizations and collectives that emerged during the period of demonstrations may turn into a movement in the future, however a more visible leadership would be needed in order for that to occur.

As a recommendation for future research it could be interesting to conduct a comparative study and compare the mobilizations in Guatemala with the demonstrations that occurred at the same time in other Central American countries in order to analyze its similarities and differences. Another possibility would be to compare the mobilizations in Central American with the Arabic Spring in order
to analyze the role of social media and the factors that lead to failure or success of democracy processes. Furthermore, an investigation on the demonstrations´ influence on the elections the same year would be plausible as well as a study of the rise and fall of the candidate Manuel Baldizón and the protests #It’sNotHisTurn. Additionally, a profound research on what (if any) effect the demonstrations had on the democracy in Guatemala would be significant. It could also be valuable to make feminist research on how the Vice President Roxana Baldetti was represented in media in comparison to President Otto Pérez Molina.

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Appendix A

Interviews

Interview 1:
Juan Carlos Zapata, Director of Fundesa
26th October 2015, Fundesa office, Guatemala City.

Interview 2:
Jose Mauricio Chaulón, Researcher at University of San Carlos and History Teacher at University Rafael Landivar. Part of Plataforma Nacional para la Reforma del Estado. Recorded.
27th October 2015, University Rafael Landivar, Guatemala City.

Interview 3:
Ricardo Sáenz de Tejada, Anthropologist. Recorded.
27th October 2015, Elbert Foundation office, Guatemala City.

Interview 4:
Eric Rolando Salazar Monzón, Subdirector Guatevision. Recorded.
3 November 2015, Guatevision office, Guatemala City.

Interview 5:
Haroldo Sánchez, Director Guatevision. Recorded.
3 November 2015, Guatevision office, Guatemala City.

Interview 6:
Pedro Boche, Licel Cisneros, university students and representatives for Colectivo de Jóvenes de Guatemala. Recorded.
4th November 2015, Café Doña Luisa, Antigua Guatemala.

Interview 7:
Marco Antonio Juárez, Fredi Letavi, Silvia López Soliz, Brandon Saucedo, Charolina Vigalante. Youth coordinators for DEMOS. Recorded.
5th November 2015, DEMOS office, Guatemala City.

Interview 8:
Gustavo Berganza, sociologist, political analyst and journalist, part of el Mirador Electoral and founder of Doses. Recorded.
9th November 2015, Doses Office, Guatemala City.

Interview 9:
Carolina Escobar, writer, director of La Allianza and part of Grupo Semilla. Recorded.
9th November 2015, La Allianza office, Guatemala City.

Interview 10:
Ana Cofiño, Anthropologist and founder of the feminist journal La Cuerda.
9th November 2015, participant’s home in Antigua Guatemala.
Interview 11:
Alvaro Montenegro, law student, journalist and founder of #JusticiaYa. Recorded.
11th November 2015, Cafeteria in Guatemala City.

Interview 12:
Martin Rodriguez, journalist, founder and director of Nómada, recorded.
18th November 2015, Nómada office, Guatemala City.

Interview 13:
Edgar Gutierrez, foreign minister during the Portillo government, economist and researcher at University of San Carlos. Recorded.
18th November 2015, Hotel Intercontinenta, Guatemala City.

Interview 14:
Carmen Lucia Alvarado Benitez, writer and member of SOMOS. Recorded.
18th November 2015, Library and Cafeteria Sophos, Guatemala City.

Interview 15:
Carlos Barrientes, representative Comité Unidad Campesina. Recorded.
25th November 2015, CUC Office, Guatemala City.

Interview 16:
Daniel Pascual, leader of Comité Unidad Campesina. Recorded.
25th November 2015, CUC Office, Guatemala City.
Appendix B

The interview guide used during the interviews:

1) Did you participate in the demonstrations? Why/why not?
2) What do you believe made people participate in the demonstrations? What was the breaking point?
3) How did you get information about the demonstrations?
4) What do you consider to be the positive results of the mobilizations?
5) Was there anything negative about the demonstrations?
6) What different demands were visible except from the protest against corruption?
7) Why was there no violence during the demonstrations in the capital?
8) Do you believe the demonstration united people or changed the concept of *ciudania*?
9) What is the most important aspect of the demonstrations?