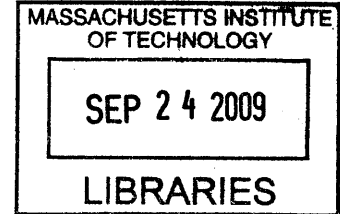


Participatory Media and Collaborative Facilitation:  
Developing Tools for Aligning Values to Practice in Organizations

by

Danielle Marie Martin  
B.A. Communications Studies  
University of Rhode Island, 1998



SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF URBAN STUDIES AND PLANNING IN  
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**Danielle Marie Martin**

Submitted to the Department of Urban Studies and Planning on August 13, 2009 in  
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master in City Planning

## **ABSTRACT**

The advantages of participation, collaboration, and iteration shape the functionality of media tools like blogs, social networks, and user-created media sharing sites. At first glance, these tools should easily align with the stated values of many community and youth development organizations perched on edge of the digital divide in both the U.S. and abroad. The most critical growing disparity, thus, is not only access to these tools but also their integration into local programs that aim to empower individuals and build collective power.

By adapting Edgar Schein's model of organizational culture, the author built a new methodology to investigate if facilitating the use of participatory media tools can also include a reflective realignment of program and curricular actions to core individual beliefs and organizational values.

Through reflective analysis of the author's own practice, this thesis documents the evolution of a facilitation strategy to use participatory media training as a point of entry into community organizations. It argues that through collaborative and iterative reflection, an outside facilitator can: (1) foster individual voice and participation, (2) create critical moments to articulate and decipher an organization's culture, and (3) challenge, and therefore transform, how an organization learns and adapts.

To develop this framework, this thesis relies on two core cases in Lawrence, MA and Bangalore, India, focusing on critical moments on a narrative timeline and analysis of like patterns of action. The outcome of this investigation is a discussion of how and why community practitioners should add this new dimension to their facilitation, to not only spark media storytelling and member activism but also to improve an organization's internal practices.

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## Biography

Danielle Martin is happily graduating in August 2009 as a Master in City Planning from MIT's Department of Urban Studies and Planning. As a leader in the student-led MIT@Lawrence university-community partnership, she collaboratively created models for integrating media and digital storytelling into community organizing and development projects with both youth and adults. She also spent the summer of 2008 in Bangalore, India, on an internship with the Srishti School of Art, Design, and Technology, facilitating the use of trans-media storytelling tools in an alternative education program for un-served youth. She was awarded the 2008 National Charles Abrams Scholarship from the American Planning Association.

Before starting her studies at MIT, she served for two years as an AmeriCorps Volunteer in Service to America at the Community Technology Centers VISTA Project at UMass Boston (now known as The Transmission Project). In her second year of service as program coordinator at massIMPACT, she designed and conducted train-the-trainer workshops for the Spreading the Stories digital storytelling program. She also led the development of two online collaborative social networks: for media and technology volunteers on CTCVISTA.org and for community digital storytelling facilitators on StoresforChange.net.

Previously, she spent four years directing the Charlestown Boys & Girls Club (MA) Computer Clubhouse and became a MIT Media Lab IDEAS Institute Fellow. In 2003, she was national recognized by the Boys & Girls Clubs of America Club Tech program for integrating arts & technology.

Martin graduated from the University of Rhode Island in 1998, with a B.A. in Communication Studies.

More at <http://VerdeSmoke.com>



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Finally, this thesis is dedicated in dear remembrance to Paul Hansen [1969-2007], who taught me how to professionally support community technology and still laugh at myself, based on the hope that the digital divide can be bridged with hard work, ASCII art, and plastic red balls.



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## Chapter 1 – Prologue – Origins of My Question

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### Introduction

I value self-expression and collective gain. I create media not only to express my voice, but also to participate in communities. The participatory media tools I use, such as online social networks and make-your-own video games, are fueled by values of collaboration, personal creation, accessibility, and sustainability through deliberate trial-and-error or iteration. When I'm asked to teach others how to use these tools, I first try to understand the local organizational culture by looking for alignment between stated or espoused values and chosen tools and behaviors. As a facilitator, I then aim to form collaborative spaces where participants shape their own learning environment through shared understanding. I venture to build both individual and organizational capacity.

### How my journey began in Charlestown

When I started the reflective journey that is this thesis in 2005, I was a youth digital media facilitator in flux. I had been the Technology Director and [Computer Clubhouse](#) Coordinator at the [Charlestown Boys & Girls Club](#) for four years, but was frustrated. My choice to work in a non-profit after-school program with some of Boston's most disadvantaged youth was fueled by my personal values of service and activism. These values were rooted in a family and Catholic religion that framed service as a choice that can benefit others and your own development as a human.

As I grew into a professional adult who loved communicating through new media and technology, one of the most perplexing paradoxes became how to tie creativity

with participation in my work and in my life (M@L internal blog post, October 15, 2008). I facilitated youth and adults to create their own digital media creation, using exciting “web 2.0” participatory tools like blogs or collaborative video. Yet, I was still struggling to translate this individual creative energy into a lasting spirit for community-based change in others.

### **The Computer Clubhouse philosophy**

I felt bolstered in my work by our partnership with the [MIT Media Lab Lifelong Kindergarten](#) group, who designed the original methodology and curriculum of the Computer Clubhouse. At first, I supported these staff and students as regular mentors, so they could bring their research and tools to the young members of my program. I soon realized that the partnership also offered a tremendous opportunity to expose my youth to a new kind of approach to learning.

Mitch Resnick, MIT Professor of Learning Research and head of the Media Lab’s Lifelong Kindergarten Group, and others modeled through the behavior of improving an idea through explicit and collaborative persistence. I say “explicit” because the faculty and students not only asked the youth how they created an animation or a game but also why they choose a certain story, character, or tool. The researchers engaged the youth as participants in the software development process through repeated and building cycles of input, focusing on their motivations for learning and creating.

This and many other principles of the Clubhouse philosophy resonated with my own personal values as a creator and a facilitator. The Computer Clubhouse started in

1993 as a small after-school program at The Computer Museum in Boston. It formed with the stated goal to construct a creative learning environment completely opposite of that the leader-led approach of most schools. The Clubhouse philosophy was formed through the combination of four values:

1. "Constructivist"<sup>1</sup> activities, with the youth as "designers, inventors, and creators"
2. Personally interesting projects, versus adult devised assignments.
3. A sense of community, with an equal balance of peer and adult mentor based support.
4. A learning space built on respect and trust.

(<http://www.computerclubhouse.org/content/learning-model>, 2009)

The value of collective intelligence in the now international Clubhouse network also influences how the educational approach plays out in each location. At the grassroots level, the strength of the community is built on one-on-one mentoring relationships. The actualized Clubhouse philosophy assumes that learning through relationships is more personally significant, and thus more lasting.

Although I connected with the Clubhouse network approach, I still grappled with other tensions in my daily practice. In my dual role as both the Clubhouse

---

<sup>1</sup> "This emphasis on design activities is part of a broader educational philosophy known as *constructionism* (Papert, 1993). Constructionism is based on two types of "construction." First, it asserts that learning is an active process, in which people actively construct knowledge from their experiences in the world. People don't *get* ideas; they *make* them. (This idea is based on the *constructivist* theories of Jean Piaget.) To this, constructionism adds the idea that people construct new knowledge with particular effectiveness when they are engaged in constructing personally-meaningful products." (Resnick, Rusk, Cooke, 1998, p 5)

Coordinator and the Technology Director for the whole Boys & Girls Club (BGC), I struggled orderly and stable environment that also was open enough to foster youth leadership and creativity. The technology curriculum that filtered down from the national BGC offices prescribed order through a classic educational hierarchy of instruction. Sponsored by Microsoft, Club Tech, is written as a call-and-response technology skills lesson plan that leaves little space for imagination.

While funding required that I provide access to these lessons, it always felt incongruous<sup>2</sup>. These computer-based tutorials lack space for peer or group collaboration and didn't appeal to a youth's motivation for learning beyond a superficial interest in any thing new or technological<sup>3</sup>. The youth learned the technical skills of digital photography and graphic design, but floundered outside of the software to use these skills beyond short-term enjoyment.

### **Young Activists Network strategy**

To align my program activities with both the Clubhouse values of learning and my own value of service, I started to experiment with ways to expand the technology curriculum into the realms of civic engagement and community organizing. One very tall Brazilian PhD student sparked this expansion. Although he came from the tool-focused MIT environment, Leo Burd was unique because he approached technology projects as opportunities to empower youth. Leo believed that media technology could be one of many tools for social change, not just an end product:

“...through the development of their projects, young people might realize that

---

<sup>2</sup> Upon reflection, the Club Tech curriculum also felt misaligned with the espoused values of the Boys & Girls Club, as noted by Kim in her case study on my work in 2003. She wrote: “YAN aligns with BGCB's values...the youth driven aspect...fits with BGCB's value of being “child-inspired (Kim 62).”

<sup>3</sup> “In schools of education, the focus is usually on methods of teaching, not motivations for learning.” (Resnick, Rusk, Cooke, 1998, p 8)

they do not necessarily need digital tools to better their communities. However, they might also realize that the wise use of those tools could greatly enhance the development of their ideas (Burd PhD thesis, 2003).”

Together, Leo and I ran two years of experimental programs with both teens and younger members in Charlestown, which became the seed of his larger, international project soon dubbed the Young Activist Network (YAN). Burd identified the core values of the Young Activists Network as:

- **Youth participation** throughout the entire program process, including ownership and leadership
- **Concrete local action** in their own neighborhoods
- **Human connectivity**, including mentorship, teamwork, and horizontal networks
- **Contextualized uses of technology**, to learn new digital skills couched in decisions about suitability and sustainability
- **Story-telling** as a tool for documentation and reflection
- **Recognition** and celebration (Burd PhD thesis, 2003, 71-3)

As part of his participatory action research strategy, Leo tried to operationalize these values in the facilitation techniques we developed together. We framed youth activism as a gradual process of youth-led explorations of and reflections on their local community. In the fall of 2003, we started using project-based activities with still and video cameras to hook the youth. Then we helped the youth create maps that pinpointed the most violent, safe, and interesting spots in their own neighborhoods.

Using these maps as a jumping off point, we then facilitated a process where youth identified local challenges themselves. The youth were hesitant at first, because they were used to community service as an adult identified and led activity such as a trip to the soup kitchen or a BGCA challenge to make a commercial to prevent youth violence.

We recruited the youth into weekly sessions with the lure of photography field trips or chances to create video public service announcements, but we used these hooks to engage the youth in organizing skills-building activities, such as a group discussion about UNICEF's declaration of children's rights. We then challenged them to create and distribute print posters and video commercials to teach other youth (see poster in Appendix 1.1).

When they learned the basics of brainstorming ideas and communicating issues, we then challenged them to focus on issues in their own backyards. They identified litter in the streets as a major



(Figure 1.1 YAN participant interviews local resident about littering (YAN digital story [video](#), May 2004)

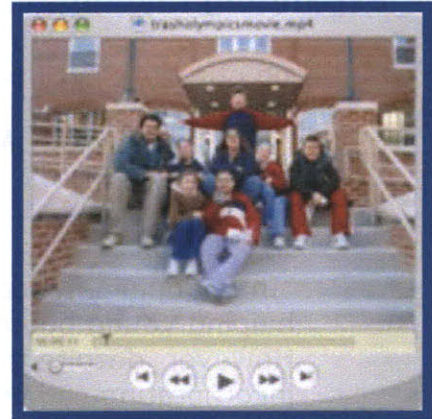
problem. Armed with video cameras and microphones, the youth surveyed residents to find out if others perceived littering as a problem. Once they'd established that most people viewed it as a problem, they started to ask why it continued when residents were aware it was happening:

[YAN participant]: Why do you think people litter, even when there are trash cans around?

[Youth resident]: Because they think no one will care...People should pick it up but I don't want to pick it up.

(YAN digital story [video](#), May 2004)

After reviewing the responses, they devised a creative solution, the Trash Olympics, to inform and activate their peers through a series of games and challenge to document and gather litter one Saturday. To reflect and celebrate, these young leaders then created a [digital story video](#) about the entire process and presented it at the local Club Advisory Board meeting.



(Figure 1.2 Trash Olympics digital story video, 2004)

In her survey of youth media programs, fellow MIT Masters in City Planning student Linda Kim highlighted YAN's impact through measures such as the youth's regular attendance, the likelihood to bring friends as new participants, and their ability to communicate with adults and use them as resources for information and distribution (Kim 2004, 68-9). But she also noted our challenges, which included replicating this experience in other Clubs or youth programs or sustaining beyond a semester-long project.

In the same way I felt constrained by the rigid, top-down nature of the Club Tech curriculum, the Club-wide schedule didn't allow for a flexible space for youth to lead their own long-term projects. Because YAN programs were so adult resource intensive, we also struggled to find consistent allies within local staff to partner in these activities or to recreate YAN in other Clubs in the Boston area. While the Clubs all espoused the value community service as part of the overall organization, youth-led service required more flexibility, iteration and adult support than the demands of a typical Club's daily rotations would allow.

## Expanding my impact

Based on our work in Charlestown, Leo expanded his work to include less structured youth organizational pilots, most of which were not in the U.S. He also noted:

“In my opinion, local community organizations can play an important role in helping young people connect better with the places where they live. However, despite the increasing number of youth organizations that started incorporating cameras, mapping tools and media production software as part of their activities, there seems to exist a **distance** between what those tools can offer and what the youth organizations require in order to doing their work. (Burd PhD thesis, 2003, 44)”

I, too, started to focus on the gap I saw between access and genuine adoption. Through YAN’s small-scale successes at using media technology as a tool for social change, I developed a core belief that these tools could foster youth ownership and empowerment for action.

A weeklong fellowship at the Media Lab<sup>4</sup> helped me reflect on my influence as one facilitator of a small program within a larger organization that prioritized consistency over youth leadership or new technologies. I began to question if I could have deeper impact by intervening with organizations as an outside facilitator. Could the framework Leo and I had developed work on the organizational scale, instead of just on the project or program level?

I started to search for new spaces to test and reflect upon my values. Leo’s introduced me to faculty in urban studies and planning at MIT, specifically those

---

<sup>4</sup> The MIT Media Lab’s IDEAS Institute was an “innovative leadership program for people dedicated to helping youth from low-income communities learn to express themselves creatively with new technology.” Sponsored by the Media Lab’s Lifelong Kindergarten group in the summer of 2005, the Institute gathered twenty after-school professionals from all over the world to share strategies and learn about new tools such as Scratch software or LEGO Mindstorms robotics.

involved with the MIT@Lawrence city-campus partnership where he was doing his final stages of dissertation research. I saw an opportunity to hone my observation and communication skills by learning to articulate my own values and position them within the macro-level forces that form my urban battlegrounds like Charlestown.

I knew I couldn't focus my investigation on only media as a tool and product. I instead wanted to explore if more collaborative and values-based interventions could build capacity in grassroots organizations to support participant activism and leadership. My primary question is:

How can participatory media tools be used to build the capacity of community organizations to support member activism and collaboration?

In my journey as a learner and facilitator, I've purposely sought out experiences where I could examine my own motivations, beliefs and actions the company of peers and mentors. Using Donald Schön and other's techniques of reflective practice<sup>5</sup>, I hope to do more than technically describe how to be a better facilitator (The Reflective Practitioner, 1983).

I decided the output of my actions wouldn't just be media content or new youth social networks. Instead, this thesis became a non-linear narrative that begins with new media tools and ends with a facilitation strategy useful for negotiating an organization's tensions and collaboratively aligning actions to shared values.

---

<sup>5</sup> "Reflective practice is an approach that enables professionals to understand how they use their knowledge in practical situations and how they combine action and learning in a more effective way. Through greater awareness and reflection, professionals are able to identify the knowledge that is embedded in the experience of their work so that they can improve their actions in a timely way, and achieve greater flexibility and conceptual innovation." (McDowell & Ferreria, [MIT Open Courseware](#) 2007)





In this chapter, I'll start with a glossary defining the key concepts from these disciplines that resonated with my own values<sup>6</sup> and experience:

- Organizational culture and learning
- Capacity building and participation
- Constructionist learning approach
- Youth development and/or organizing
- Participatory media
- 

My personal quest is to facilitate new media technology adoption as a means for building both organizational capacity and individual empowerment. By reviewing these fields, I became better able to define my two core assumptions:

1. Alignment between espoused or stated values and chosen actions and tools can lead to shared understanding, individual empowerment, and participation.
2. Learning and practice can be improved through cyclical iterations of critical reflection.

This thesis is my response to both the opportunity afforded by connecting these concepts to the growing urgency of the gap between access and use of new technologies in disadvantaged communities. By integrating these concepts, I will link organizational culture analysis and media facilitation technique to develop my own reflective practice methodology.

---

<sup>6</sup> Values are defined here as constructs that identify those objects, conditions or characteristics that a group considers important or good, and the group uses this assessment as guide for choosing actions.

## **Glossary of the Key Concepts**

### ***Organizational Culture and Learning***

I take action as a facilitator in response to uncertainty and a need for stability in urban neighborhoods. Community organizations often form in response to the same circumstances and needs. The difference is that these organizations have the potential for wider and more sustained impact than one individual. While my interventions and actions are easy to observe and adapt, I became more interested in their potential affect within a larger effort or organization. Edgar Schein, in his efforts to support organizational efficiency and growth as part of MIT Sloan School of Business, developed a set of theories that I found useful to explain the structure and behavior of organizations (Schein 1992, 10).

Schein described the conditions in the everyday environment that can catalyze both individuals and community organizations into action. For instance, anti-poverty organizations, and arguably most non-profit or non-governmental organizations (NGOs), form to assist individuals but also to build collective strength (Eade 1997, 109). The organization develops strategies to act on shared values, such as advocating, documenting injustice, and/or creating forums for mutual support.

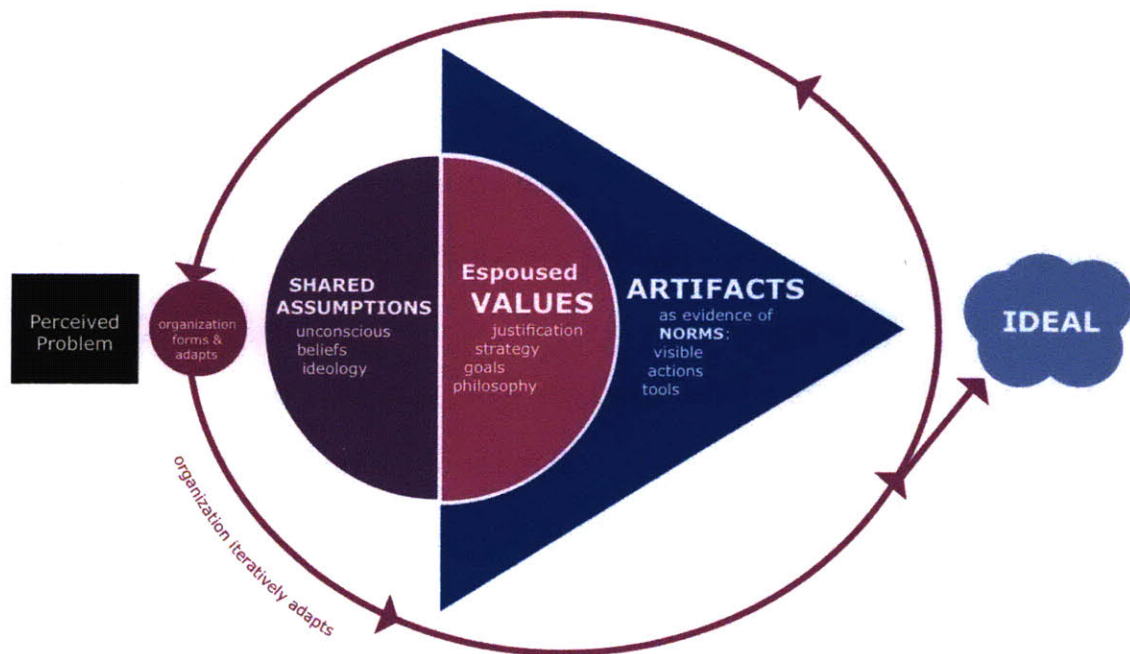
These patterns of behaviors become persistent because they produce repeated success and are then embraced by a critical mass of members of the organization (Kotter & Heskett 1992, 5). When these leaders begin to define internal structures and endorse regular behaviors, they establish an **organizational culture**, or "a set of shared, taken for granted implicit assumptions that a group holds and that

determines how it perceives, thinks about, and reacts to its various environments” (Schein 1996, 236).

An organizational culture can be described as “one giant pattern or meaning within which there are many small patterns swirling around” (Whitely 2007, 179). Since it so complicated, we cannot understand it by only reading published doctrines or observing overt behaviors. This key process in organizational culture is the way it translates abstract ideas into more concrete concepts. The “rational social building blocks,” of the culture are (1) the “ends”, or the ideal terminal state the organization hopes to reach, as well as (2) the “means” or instrumental modes of conduct they’ve developed over time to try and reach their goals (Spates 1983, 42; Whitely 2007, 191).

### 3 Levels of Organizational Culture in process of cognitive transformation

*Adaptation of Edgar Schein’s Cognitive Transformation model  
for analyzing organizational cultures (1992)*



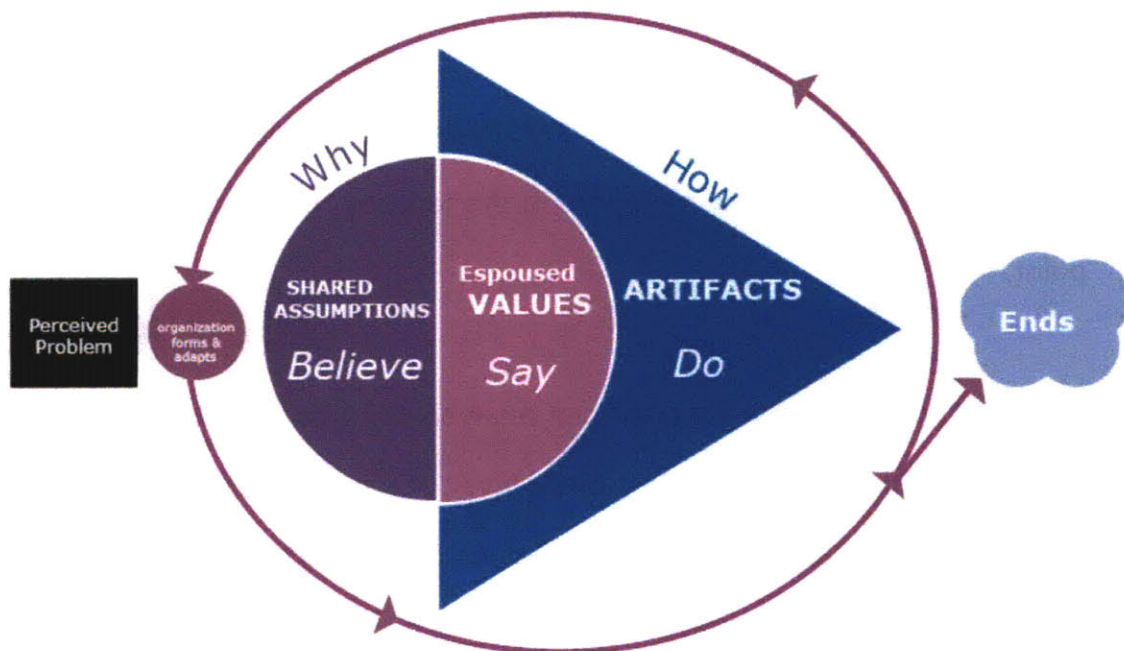
(Figure 2.2)

As sketched in Schein developed a model based on three levels of culture to explain how an organization cognitively aims to transform “means” into “ends”:

1. **Artifacts** are the most visible norms like policies and programs, but also the most challenging to interpret because they are outgrowths of deeper values.
2. **Espoused values** are the articulated philosophy and referent for action, including the mission that defines the ends in terms of behavior and the strategy that describes the available choices for the means.
3. **Shared assumptions** are the underlying, tacit mindset that is the source of values, sometimes evident in expressed ideology or beliefs but is usually unconscious.

(Schein 1992, 22; Spates 1983, 32; Whitely 2007 191; Kotter & Heskett 1992, 5)

### 3 Levels of Organizational Culture



2.4

*Adaptation of Edgar Schein's Cognitive Transformation model for analyzing organizational cultures (1992)*

(Figure 2.3)

This simplified diagram (Figure 2.3) summarizes how an organization builds a culture to define what the group believes, says, and does:

- At first, the organization forms and adapts in response to a perceived problem or need.
- A set of individuals form a group based on similar assumptions or **beliefs** around how this problem could be solved.
- ◐ As they get organized and recruit new members, they develop a set of stated or espoused values that "**say**" these values in terms of concrete goals or strategy.
- ▶ Later, the organization develops regular behaviors, in short, what they "**do**." Combined with a common language and tools, these actions can serve as evidence or artifacts for a new member or an outside observer of now implicit shared values.
- ☀ If organization has any hope of responding as the environment changes, it also usually develops process to iteratively adapt by aligning values to actions and orienting new members in the journey toward the "ideal" end point.

Values are both a useful and slippery unit of analysis for a community practitioner, especially a non-local one. At the most basic level, stated or espoused values of the organization are not always the implicit values of the staff and participants. An outside facilitator must make a clear distinction which type of value is fueling actions when deciphering the organization's real culture.

In turn, values govern choice of actions, they are formed without explicit awareness and are tied to identity (Argyris & Schön 1996, 13). In terms of personal comfort, the best kinds of values are the ones that are least likely to change, because they are the most stable and dependable. As part of defense mechanisms against anxiety, people usually shy away from interactions that don't align or aim to break mental maps (Schein 1992, 22). Consequently, an individual member often feels most satisfied when their personal values align with the core values of the organization (Whitely 2007, 175).

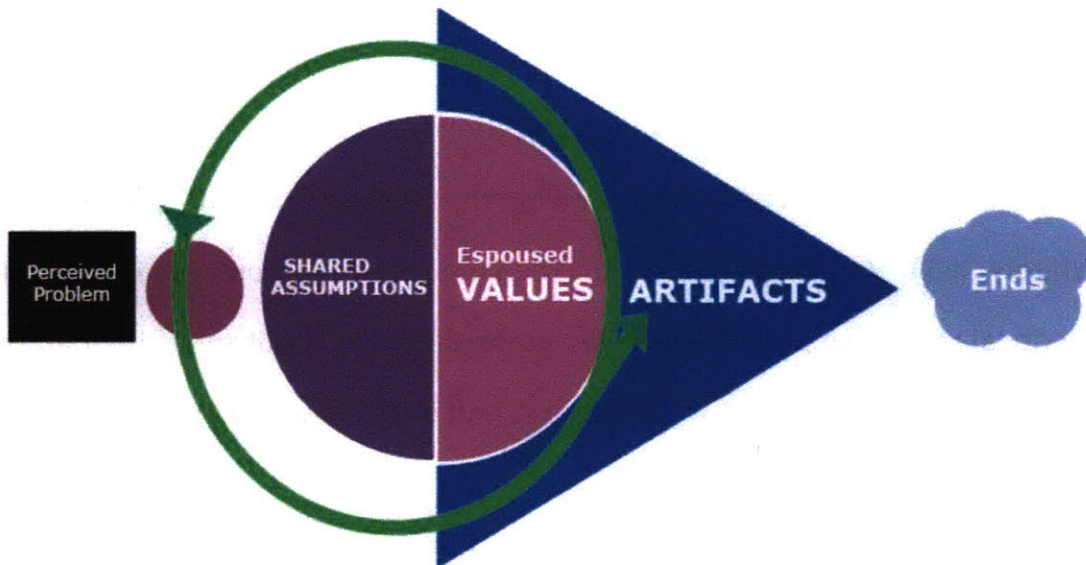
All this implicit push and pull for efficiency and consistency make values stable but difficult to change. The paradox is that an effective organization needs to be both stable and able to adapt. An adaptive organization becomes aware that the strategy might need to change when the environment changes or new members bring a new mindset. In essence, an organization has to do more than "anchor abstract concepts in observed reality" or align the "walk to the talk" (Schein 1996, 232; Whitely 163). As Whitely advises: "The culture building process is dependent upon a critical re-examination of underlying assumptions about the 'true' nature of work and worker in relations to management and customers (193)."

This "critical re-examination" and adaptation can be better defined as **organizational learning**, where the organization moves beyond maintenance to transformation. In 1996, Schein defined a healthy organization as one that adjusts in reaction to changes both internal and external. This organization "perceives and tests reality" through evaluation and feedback loops (Schein, White Paper 1996, 4). In turn, Argyris and Schön defined "the learning organization" as one that focuses

on human development, has a decentralized organizational structure, and develops a cyclical mechanism for feedback and experimental inquiry about the right means and ends (1996, 180 and 187).

These “loops” of learning become more productive depending how deeply the adaptation connects to the organization’s core assumptions. Single loop learning involves adapting strategies in the short-term but leaves the core values unchanged (Figure 2.4). For example, a youth development organization may change strategy to recruit new members by adopting online techniques but not change the age or requirements for membership.

### Single Loop Organizational Learning

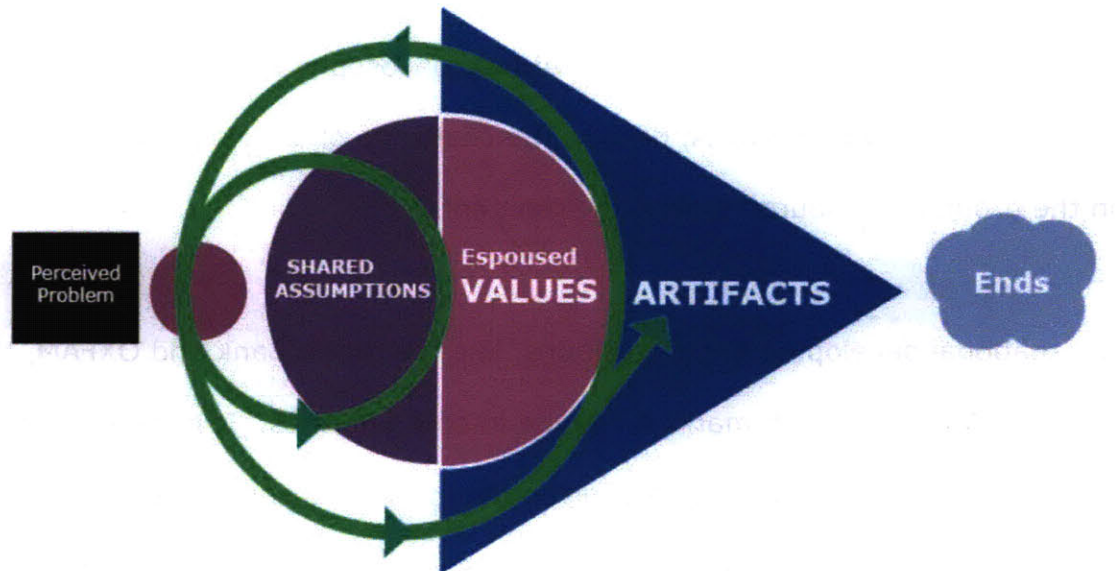


(Figure 2.4)

In contrast, double loop learning goes deeper into changing values, or at least verbalizes and explicitly harkens to the core values as part of developing new strategies (Figure 2.5). In this case, an organization might radically change the

make-up or power of a member board of advisors, as a manifestation of becoming more member-led (Argyris & Schön 1996, 20-1).

## Double Loop Organizational Learning



(Figure 2.5)

Most facilitators aim to spark change in behavior or introduce new tools in a respectful and sustainable way. Based on this brief dip into organizational behavior theory, we can sketch how an organization is structured, decides on actions, and learns to transform. As a facilitator who values both ingenuity and sustainability, I take these words of Schein to heart: "One can understand a system best by trying to change it (1996, 29)."

### **Capacity Building, Participation, & Constructionism**

"Capacity building is defined as the "process of developing and strengthening the skills, instincts, abilities, processes and resources that organizations and communities need to survive, adapt, and thrive in the fast-changing world."

Ann Philbin  
*Capacity Building in Social Justice Organizations*, Ford Foundation, 1996  
(CTC\*VISTA Program Guideline 2009-2010)

In my two years of serving as an AmeriCorps VISTA<sup>7</sup>, I constantly had to evaluate if my actions helped my host organization to become more efficient or effective. I had to do more than “fight fires” or directly serve in the community. The organization needed to be able to keep using new tools or strategies after my departure. I’ve carried this **capacity building** philosophy into my facilitation techniques and research efforts, despite the challenge of defining and implementing it on the ground in resource-scarce environments.

For international development organizations, like the World Bank and OXFAM, this capacity building approach marks a change in core priorities. It assumes people on the ground can solve their problems, given they have individual health and economic support and using their own social capital and network power (Fawcett et al 2008, 266). In her organizational guide for Oxfam UK & Ireland, Deborah Eade explains:

“OXFAM’s definition of capacity building is marked by its own fundamental beliefs that all people have the right to an equitable share in the world’s resources and to be the authors of their own development...strengthening people’s capacity to define their own values and priorities, and to act on these, is the basis of development” (1997, 2-3).

However, since this approach values ownership and involvement of community members<sup>8</sup>, we also need to define how we determine genuine or adequate involvement in these actions. In the U.K. Dept. of Children, Schools and Families

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<sup>7</sup> “AmeriCorps\*VISTA is a U.S. federal service program begun in 1964 to build capacity of local communities to combat poverty. Each year about 6,500 VISTA members--of all ages and walks of life--join more than 1,200 projects working to improve conditions in low-income communities...VISTA members should be building the capacity of organizations by assessing needs, creating strategies, and developing knowledge, people, and infrastructure...(CTC\*VISTA Program Guideline 2009-2010)”

<sup>8</sup> One of the most difficult terms to decide upon is the appropriate description of the people who are the focus of development’s actions. Both academics and practitioners use terms like client, customer, user, member, student, attendee, recipient, citizen, or under-served. Because of my own values and strategy of capacity building, I’ve chosen to use the term “participant” for the purposes of this thesis.

guide to *Building a Culture of Participation*, the authors defined **participation** as not just passive attendance or presence but also as active behaviors, “having some influence over decisions and action (Kirby et al 2003, 5).”

This definition of participation is not a zero-sum game. Organizations, especially when working with youth, may chose to involve participants with different levels of control and decision making power (Kirby et al 2003, 16 and 59). Both the work of Gary Bessette and Roger Hart ground this incrementalism in development practice, when they describe skills building and levels of decision making power as steps toward appropriate participation and ownership of community endeavors (Hart 1997; Bessette 2006).

For organizations, an explicitly stated value of participation will guide the development of behaviors, structures and policies that are focused less on needs-based but rather on capacity-focused goals (Turner and Pinkett 2000, 200).

Capacity building programs often assume that local knowledge is equally as important than technical expertise. In turn, many in the education field also believe that knowledge should be collaboratively produced, instead of just received by participants (Giroux 2005).

Collaborative production of knowledge is a core strategy for organizations focused on building participation through learning. For instance, the critical pedagogy of Paolo Freire connected the “moral commit to a set of democratic practices that engages all citizens in common governance” directly to educational strategies for empowerment, dialogue and voice (Freire 1970, 123). In turn, Seymour Papert

built on the active and iterative learning theories of Jean Piaget<sup>9</sup> to create a **constructionist** educational theory, where the first-hand learning benefits from external sharing and feedback in a social setting (Shaw & Shaw, 318-9).

By combining the critical pedagogy of Paolo Freire and the constructionism of Papert, the Computer Clubhouse philosophy is a prime example of how values of local creativity and collective intelligence are operationalized into daily programming. The project-based and user-guided Clubhouse activities help young people become creators instead of just consumers of media content. The programs connect individual learning to a collaborative community. In the face of rapid urban change, a youth's ability to combine his/her own expertise with others becomes a critical capacity for civic participation and collective action (Shaw 1995, 110).

### ***Youth Development to Community Organizing***

In the capacity building literature's definition of participation, adult and youth community members are "change agents," not problems or victims (Checkoway and Gutierrez 2006, 1). While this seems natural because it stems from the values of equity and justice, it is relatively new philosophy for youth organizations. **Youth development** strategy is focused on proactively bolstering an individual youth's growth, by providing sustained safe spaces for education and play. It rejected the traditional social service paradigm that defined youth as clients needing treatment (HoSang 2003, 4-10).

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<sup>9</sup> Jean Piaget's educational theory of **constructivism** focused on the internal learning processes of actively building knowledge iteratively with each new experience. The teacher is viewed as a facilitator of learning not a supplier of knowledge (Shaw & Shaw, 318-9).

Starting in the mid-1980's, some youth serving organizations began to articulate a new philosophy of "positive youth development," focused on holistic and youth-led prevention efforts and proactive strategies that included collective empowerment (HoSang 2003, 6-7). These organizations' move to tie action in self-interest to the common good and collective strength aligns directly with grassroots **community organizing**.

Community organizers like Saul Alinsky, Cesar Chavez, and most recently Marshall Ganz working for Obama presidential campaign, define participation and capacity building in light of citizen-led direct action for claims making and collaborative power-building (Ganz 2006, 83)<sup>10</sup>. Their core assumptions are that people have the right to act, and given the power to, will make the "right" decisions. In the environment of both local communities and nation-wide campaigns, community organizers assume that any change will naturally result in friction or conflict, and the best strategy to build power is through relationships and common interest (Alinsky 1989).

In his course on community organizing theory and technique at Harvard University Kennedy School of Government, Marshall Ganz lays out a framework for community organizing based on three instrumental components:

1. Actors, including those with formal and informal power, and allies and opponents

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<sup>10</sup> Saul Alinsky first articulated community organizing philosophy in the U.S. in the 1930's Chicago worker strikes. Others like Cesar Chavez expanded it further in the 1960's farm worker rights campaigns. Most recently, Marshall Ganz, now a professor at Harvard University Kennedy School of Government, incorporated this as part of the 2008 Barack Obama presidential campaign.

2. Processes, such as relationship building, storytelling, strategizing, acting and reflecting
3. Structures, including campaigns based on a time dimension and organizations based on space (Ganz 2006, 7)

While most of the course focuses on applied strategy, Ganz also ties these artifacts to motivational catalysts of social needs, values and interests. He defines values as needs translated into interests that come from personal identity and group membership. These interests become the goals and articulated outcomes of both the participant and the group, based on the available resources (13-14).

In terms of organizational culture, these community organizing values evolve into cyclical group behaviors of meeting, acting, and celebrating. No matter the size or success of these actions, Ganz's does admit that the organizations also have to continuously deal with a set of tensions between competing values and strategies: inclusion/exclusion, stability/change, unity/diversity, and part/whole (103).

For youth organizing institutions, the tension of stability versus change is particularly challenging when creating consistent and safe spaces. While Ganz advises organizers to manage this tension by "pushing responsibility down" and broadening participation and collaborative work practice, this may unduly assume existing capacity or time or space to develop this capacity (108).

In 2003, the Funder's Collaborative on Youth Organizing (FCYO) published a set of papers aimed at facilitating the connection between youth development and youth

organizing. One paper in particular, *Youth and Community Organizing Today*, offered advice to youth organizing groups hoping to sustain work in the face of these organizational tensions and natural staff turn-over. The author suggested that organizations first form for community organizing goals also create a youth development infrastructure to support individual capacity. This sustainability strategy was also linked to building collaborative networks with like-minded organizations as well building internal *organizational capacity* (Hosang 2003, 19-20).

In a later FCYO paper, Shawn Ginwright (Professor and co-founder of Leadership Excellence Inc) elaborated:

“Youth organizing groups need to document, share, network, and learn about each others challenges and successes...Such lessons would deepen the quality of existing youth organizing work and could be translated into new curriculum models, staff training, and improved infrastructure management (2003, 14).”

Both youth development and community organizing institutions espouse similar values about participation and capacity building to those from which I base my own approach to facilitation. I was able to align the values and stated philosophy of youth development and community organizing by comparing these publications and Ganz’s course materials. However, I found that both fields were lacking in concrete advice or examples of how I could adapt the organizing framework to adapting media tools locally. Thus, my focus on Ganz’s community organizing technique moving forward is not a critique, but rather an attempt to expand on this approach as a point of entry for my own particular interventions.

## ***Participatory Media***

From my perch as both a facilitator and a media producer, I've been excited by the explosion of new media creation and distribution tools. Sites like Facebook and tools like digital video offer lowering barriers to entry and speedy cycles of iteration that customize tools to behavior. These social or **participatory media** tools have one functionality in common: as users add media and interact, the aggregated content or application gains popularity and value (Jenkins et al 2007).

The most exciting difference between these new tools and the ones of traditional broadcast media is grounded in a new philosophy that assumes participation is more than just consumption. These tools change the flow of information from one-to-many to many-to-many. To do this, these tools allow anyone to create and publish content, while also providing opportunities to comment, create collaborative content, and build networks.

Axel Bruns throws out the business focused Web 2.0 moniker and defines this philosophy through the hybridization of production and usage, or "**produsage**" (Bruns 2006). The actions of produsage are characterized by:

- collaborative and/or user-led content production,
- iterative and evolutionary development where media are unfinished artifacts,
- and heterarchical (combining both hierarchal and horizontal) community structures with fluid roles (Bruns 2006).

I often compare the espoused values of non-profit organizations to those of these new media tools and see obvious alignment. Community organizations can provide

a secure space to learn skills to create participatory media based on these aligned core values (Jenkins 2007). Participatory media activities and tools offer an opportunity to play out these values in the context of authorship and civic engagement, in three ways:

1. Technical/structural, where content is shared through many-to-many distribution channels instead of traditional broadcast's one-to-many,
2. Psychological/social, where value is built up audience size and number of connections to others, and
3. Economic/political, because social networks are broader, faster, less costly to coordinate (Rheingold 2008).

While it seems new tools, functionalities, and content are posted every second on the Internet, Table 2.1 offers a snapshot of some participatory media tools, their application, and some examples.

<b>Participatory Media Tools</b>		
<b>Blog and Podcasting</b>	Online text or photo journal or broadcast of audio or video, where the latest content appears first	Blogger, Wordpress, iTunes
<b>Social Media</b>	Online space where "content that is created by site users rather than by a central person or group"; changes are tracked and the most active contributors often act as editors	Flickr, Creative Commons CCMixer, Wikipedia, Wikispaces, Google Docs
<b>Online Music/Photo/Video Sharing</b>	Users post their original media creations or mashups (reworking of existing content) then embed this content on other sites, while viewers can comment and vote	YouTube, OurMedia.org, Blip.tv, Vimeo
<b>RSS</b>	A feed that alerts users when new content is available. Users plug the feed into an aggregator or reader, to organize their chosen pools of content	Feedburner, GCast, Soup.io, Bloglines, Google Reader
<b>Social Networking</b>	Online communities that connect friends, colleagues, or shared interest groups, where they can message and form groups (many accessible now on cell phones)	Facebook, MySpace, BlackPlanet, Orkut, MiGente, Ning, Twitter
<b>Gaming</b>	Virtual worlds online or software tools where users create their own interaction spaces or games	Second Life, Scratch

([Delany 2006](#), [Mayfield & Rheingold 2009](#), [TechSoup.org 2009](#))

## **Justification**

### ***Why Now + Collaborative Facilitation + Organizational Culture?***

I've watched many non-governmental organizations (NGOs), particularly youth development focused programs, jump eagerly into using new media and technology tools, like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Google Maps and more, hoping it will be a panacea for languishing participation. But when organizations only superficially use these media pieces, they sometimes only create "power for" constituents instead of creating "power with" them (Freire 1970). By misusing these tools, organizations

can leave participants feeling un-empowered and staff dubious about the value of user-created media into already challenging development efforts.

My knowledge of participatory media is often the hook that helps me connect initially with community organizations. Yet, this thesis is not focused on describing and lauding these media tools. Organizations need to pair community building and organizing strategies with the adoption of these participatory media tools. While these tools are exciting because of their flash, I'm more interested in their potential for organizational learning and adaptation to build sustainable participant and organizational capacity.

Schein highlighted technology introduction and adoption as a critical moment for observing and realigning organizational culture (1996, 277). Because many organizations are moving toward a focus on knowledge and information flows, they need to explicitly discuss assumptions about information, people, learning and management (289). As a facilitator, I can use the catalyst of integrating new technical tools to create a space where staff and participants explicitly reflect on assumptions and actions (284).

### ***Why Now? Digital Divide or Participation Gap?***

So does the growth of new participatory media mean that the digital divide is narrowing? In a recent MacArthur Foundation white paper *"Confronting the challenges of participatory culture: Media education for the 21st century"*, Henry

Jenkins and others insist that the new media literacy<sup>11</sup> skills are critical for any youth development program today. These programs emphasize the need for skills such as:

- play, where youth learn to experiment and problem solve,
- performance, where they use alternative identities to role play, and
- collective intelligence, where they share knowledge across multiple “experts” to expand the combined potential for the common good (Jenkins et al 2007).

If facilitating these new skills sounds challenging, imagine the place from which most youth participants in places like Charlestown, Lawrence, and Bangalore start. These youth are not only on the other side of the “digital divide”<sup>12</sup> because of their complete lack of physical access, but as Mark Warschauer points out, they also lack “meaningful access to technology” (*Technology and social inclusion: Rethinking the Digital Divide*, 2004). Henry Jenkins warns of a new peril, the “participation gap” where disparity is not only defined by access to physical equipment and connections, but also to “opportunities, experiences, skills and knowledge that will prepare youth for full participation in the world of tomorrow (Jenkins et al 2007).”

Researchers in the community technology field in the U.S. have also noted that the problem is not just access and suitable rollout of Internet infrastructure. These researchers have identified a lack of local skills to leverage the tools “as active

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<sup>11</sup> “Media Literacy is a 21st century approach to education. It provides a framework to access, analyze, evaluate and create messages in a variety of forms — from print to video to the Internet. Media literacy builds an understanding of the role of media in society as well as essential skills of inquiry and self-expression necessary for citizens of a democracy ([Center for Media Literacy](#), 2007).”

<sup>12</sup> The digital divide can be defined as “unequal access by some members of society to information and communication technology, and the unequal acquisition of related skills... needed to effectively participate as a digital citizen (Wikipedia 2009).”

agents rather than passive beneficiaries or clients" (Krentzman and McKnight 1993, 1). While the digital divide argument focused on access to technology, the participation gap focuses on the capacity to use the tools beyond the entertainment value for educational and civic engagement as "citizen-producers" (Wilhelm 2004, 113-116).

Low-income communities are the nexus of the digital divide and the participation gap. In this environment, resource-starved organizations adoption of new media and social networking tools could either empower or further marginalize growing segments of our cities' populations. I contend that organizations should first focus on the gap between values at the core of existing or new programs and current actions, before choosing new tools.

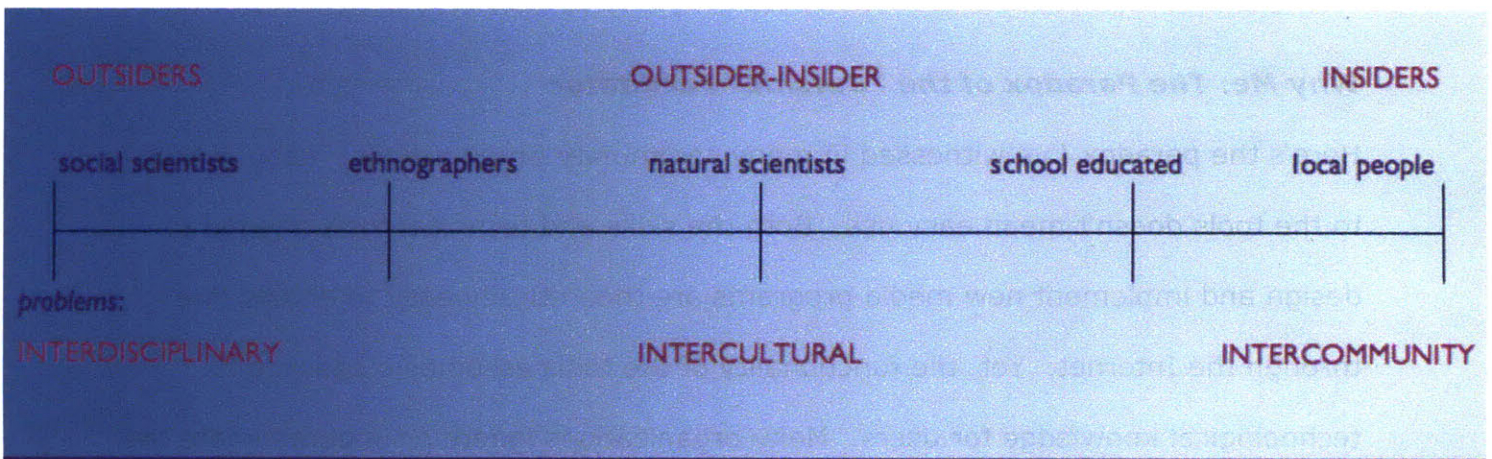
### ***Why Me: The Paradox of the "Outside" Facilitator***

Here's the paradox I've witnessed in many community organizations: easy access to the tools doesn't mean easy use. Both the skills and technical tools needed to design and implement new media programs are theoretically easy to access due through the Internet. Yet, the functionality of the tools assumes a baseline technological knowledge for users. Many organizations ignore or underestimate the time it will take staff and youth and/or to acquire these literacies.

In response, many of these organizations turn to outside experts to enter the organization for a short time and implement a training course. Typically, these experts are not from within the local community. This circumstance creates a new investigation of an ongoing paradox for community development: combining local

knowledge with technical expertise while building capacity. Consequently, a non-native facilitator needs to be able to quickly understand the organizational context, form relationships and negotiate power and roles.

By examining this paradox through the lens of organizational culture, we can begin to see where the value of the intervention of an outside expert goes beyond bringing new technical know-how. Some development literature describes this role as a listener and “connector” that leaves no room for ego or a negotiator of knowledge as defined by the relationship between citizens and planners (Bruns 2007; Listerborn 2008). One group of researchers tried to devise a multidimensional diagram to describe the knowledge continuum between local insiders and global outsiders, based on education and origin (Sillitoe et al 2002).



(Figure 2.6, First dimension of the knowledge continuum, Sillitoe et al 2002)

As a facilitator, I look for the most appropriate point I can position myself on this continuum that puts control in the hands participant while still leaving room for me introduce participatory media creation skills. In both these international development and the youth development programs like the Intel Computer

Clubhouse, collaborative facilitation focuses less on media outputs and more on guiding creation processes and participant ownership of the learning space.

This facilitation technique also aligns with the constructionist values of horizontal power-relationships and hands on learning. By sharing control of the learning space, collaborative facilitation actualizes these values in strategies such as:

- tapping participants prior knowledge
- actively listening, paired with guided questioning and reflection
- explicit modeling, especially through working through technical problem solving with the participants in real time
- cooperative or peer learning, in pairs or small groups
- mapping or organizing ideas graphically, such as brainstorming, storyboards, or timelines
- creating alternative and context specific assessment tools to document and gauge learning for future adaptation of learning experiences

(adapted from Intel Education's Teach with Technology [website](#), 2003)

### ***Why Focus on Organizational Culture and Learning?***

In an organizational context, the core values behind collaborative facilitation demand that outside academics and consultants work hand-in-hand with local staff and participants. As active "process consultants," collaborative facilitators can use the point of entry of sharing new technical expertise to also play a vital role in nurturing participation and capacity through peer mentoring, networking, and participant leadership (Agryris and Schön 1996, 36; Schein 1996).

At this point in my journey, I've tried to understand and tackle the problem of the digital divide and participation gap from both below, as a youth development staff, and from above, as a facilitator and academic researcher. From both perspectives, the pervasiveness of new media & technology seems to lead to idealism around citizen journalism<sup>13</sup> and new forms of civic engagement. While participatory media often revels in the potential for individual participants to create content, it also benefits from the aggregated capacity of a community of participants sharing and networking around this content.

When I reflect on how the new media programs and projects succeed in communities, I usually come back to one common factor: not the tools used but the space where the media was made, usually a supportive organization. In his book documenting his own revelations about implementing information and communication technologies (ICT) projects in disadvantaged communities, Jonathan Peizer makes a good point:

"It is not about choosing the right technology but also about understanding the organizational psychology behind the institutions facilitating it and the needs of the constituents who are benefiting from it" (*The Dynamics of Technology for Social Change*, 2006, xv).

As technological advancement seems to speed up with every cycle, there is more demand for not only efficiency but also replicability and broad impact, especially for the public sector (Schein, 1996). As both Peizer and others like Anthony G. Wilhelm<sup>14</sup> point out, seeding the use of new media technologies as a tool for civic

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<sup>13</sup> **Citizen journalism** is the idea any person can "play an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analyzing and disseminating news and information" and is usually associated with personal blogs or group participatory news sites ([Wikipedia](#) 2009).

<sup>14</sup> Wilhelm is the former Director of the Technology Opportunities Program (TOP) of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

participation has to be about more than just Al Gore's Internet ABC's: access, basic training, and content (*Digital Nation* 2004, 90). The pervasiveness of these technologies creates a chance to improve and strengthen existing public service institutions and organizations, helping them "rethink their architecture" and "create avenues for deeper participation and accountability (33, 134)."

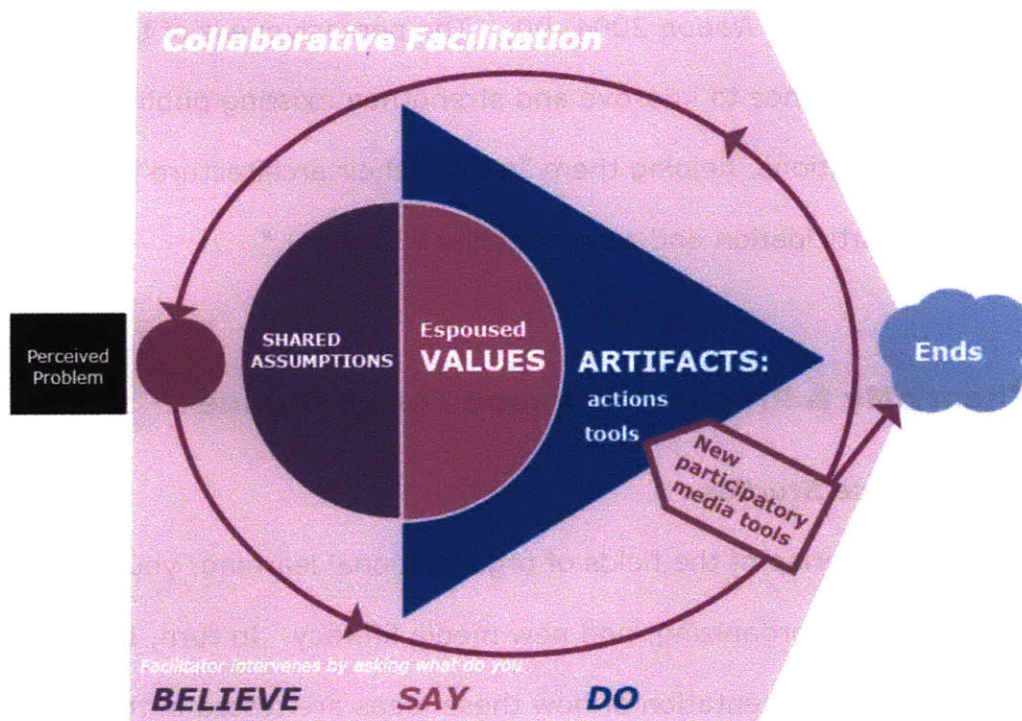
## **Mapping Theory My & Practice: A Unique Thesis Outline**

### ***How to Read the Case Studies***

I see potential in the overlap of the fields of organizational learning, youth development, community organizing, and new media literacy. In turn, I also believe we need more documentation of how these ideas are tested in the reality of most disadvantaged communities, in the U.S. and beyond. As a graduate student at MIT in 2008, my reality became the neighborhoods and community organizations of Lawrence, Massachusetts and Bangalore, India.

By the mandate of academics and practitioners in the fields I've explored in this chapter, I have developed my own analytical framework to document my facilitation actions and the context in which they occurred. My many organizations, including the two in these cases, invite me to enter as an outside facilitator to spark the adoption of a particular participatory media tool (Figure 2.7).

**Collaborative Facilitation of Participatory Media Projects**  
*as a opportunity for organizational capacity building*



(Figure 2.7)

Upon reflection, however, I realized that I use this point of entry to create moments with local participants and staff to collaboratively reflect and transform the culture of the program itself as an artifact of the larger organizational culture. Thus, these case studies are framed to reflect on my ability to adopt Schein's organizational culture strategies of cognitive transformation and learning.

Each case is structured in four parts:

1. Brief summary of the local context and details of the case including a description of the city, the organization, the program, and the perceived problem and desired "ends"

2. Reflective encapsulation of my point of entry as an outside facilitator, including the media tool or my skill-set that served as a “hook” to initially spark the project or recruit the participants
3. A post-action sketch of the organization’s culture, based on it’s published artifacts (mission statement, published curriculum, public relations materials, internal training guides), my first person observation, and post-project individual interviews; serves as starter evidence for values alignment or misalignment
4. Detailed documentation of the case’s key facilitation events, coded by their depth of organizational cultural reflection or transformation (Table 2.2)

	<b>Level of Organizational Culture</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Event represented a moment when staff and/or participants:</b>
◐	<b>Shared Assumptions</b>	<b>Believe</b>	Discussed individual and/or group core assumptions, connecting them to speech or actions; sometimes rippling down to fundamental changes in other levels of culture (double loop learning)
◑	<b>Espoused Values</b>	<b>Say</b>	Developed their own strategy, by adapting or at least acknowledging the organization’s established cultural norms or values (single loop learning)
▶	<b>Artifacts</b>	<b>Do</b>	Acted on the organization’s stated values, usually without explicitly identifying or discussing the values

(Table 2.2)

### ***Where’s the Methodology?***

By iteratively developing my own methodology to describe and study these cases, I aim to meld the concepts from the fields where I find inspiration into new kind of analytical lens. In the same manner that similar challenges link youth citizens of these cities, my framework for comparative analysis aims to fashion a bridge between two virtual and real-world fields, new media and organizational learning.

This analytical connection is founded on the fields' shared values of participation, learning through cyclical reflection, and flexible adaptation.

My personal resonance with these values is reflected in the unusual structure and methodology of this thesis. My ultimate goal with this thesis is to produce a tangible meditation of my own actions that could be applicable to other contexts and other facilitators. Thus, the story needs to start with two case studies that offer concrete examples of my attempts to intervene as a collaborative facilitator.

I will then document the new methodology I iteratively developed over the course of acting, reflecting, and writing this thesis; and apply this methodology to cumulatively analyze the cases. After I summarize the analysis embedded in each case narrative, I will identify some interesting patterns and delineate key takeaways in the evolution of my facilitation technique.

## Chapter 3 - (Case 1) Keep Lawrence Clean campaign at YouthBuild (Lawrence, MA)

### Context

#### Place

At first glance, Lawrence, Massachusetts presents a narrative of decline like any other “forgotten city”<sup>15</sup>: a slow exodus of a once historic manufacturing legacy, and now a decreased population, plagued by unemployment (14% in April 2009), housing foreclosures (47.1 per 1000 residential properties) and a soaring high school drop out rate (60%) (The Warren Group, US Census Bureau 2007). However, Lawrence has seen other forms of growth, including a rise in the proportion of the population under 24 years old (42% in 2007) and a 76.1 percent increase in the immigrant population since 1990, primarily Latinos from Puerto Rico and Dominican Republic, along with Asian groups as well (FAIR 2008).<sup>16</sup>.

#### Profile: Lawrence, MA



Forgotten city

#### Decrease in overall population:

72,043 (2000) to  
69,942 (2006)

**Migration changes:** 76.1 % increase in the immigrant population since 1990; compared with a 7.5 percent increase in the native-born population over the same period

#### reasons for migration:

agricultural and manufacturing

#### who's a “native”?

**(ethnicity and languages):** Irish/Italian vs. Puerto Rican/Dominican

**literacy/education:** 60% public high school dropout rate

#### Low income factors:

25% live below the poverty level

**Employment:** 60% of population over age of 16 in labor force (2007)

(Figure 3.1)

<sup>15</sup> A “forgotten city” is defined in the Policy Link report, *Voices from Forgotten Cities* as “old (more than 5,000 inhabitants by 1880), small (between 15,000 and 150,000 residents as of the 2000 Census), and poor (median household income of less than \$35,000) (Hoyt and Leroux 2007, 8).

<sup>16</sup> I spent the fall 2007 semester immersed in exploring the identities and interests of the key actors [in Lawrence], such as public sector and community organization employees, youth workers, and youth themselves. Many of the accepted community leaders are concentrated on expanding business opportunities in the city, while the many of the citizens are working for their existence needs. But the youth, who I always seem to come back to, have the most fascinating interests. Many of them want their community to offer more opportunities for growth and empowerment but many of them just dream of “getting out.” They see corruption, poverty, and stagnancy in their parents, teacher, leaders, and peers and see their only mode of agency as escape (Martin, MIT@Lawrence internal blog 2008).

## Organization

Enter YouthBuild, a national network of local programs that help “low-income young people ages 16–24 work toward their GED or high school diploma while learning job skills through building affordable housing (*YouthBuild USA*).” YouthBuild describes itself as an organization that performs a direct service to its members by providing opportunities for personal development, primarily through academic advancement, technical skills training in carpentry, and community service. For 20-30 members per year, “school” is a daily structure being split into two large teams, half day on construction site, half day in academic or personal growth class, with lunch and a small AmeriCorps stipend provided.

Community service is embedded in a wider holistic approach to youth empowerment, grounded in leadership development as an element of community-wide transformation: “In YouthBuild, “leadership means taking responsibility for making things go right” in one’s personal life, one’s family, in the YB program and in the community (Ferguson et al 1996, 246).”

### Profile: YouthBuild, Lawrence



18-24 year olds  
20-30 members per year at  
each local site;  
Lunch and AmeriCorps stipend  
provided

- school as academic advancement (high school equivalency exam) and technical skills training in carpentry
- youth members split into two large teams, half day on construction site, half day in academic or personal growth class
- civic engagement in the form of community service projects

(Figure 3.2)

## ***Program***

My project with YouthBuild in Lawrence had two goals: (1) to teach community organizing through a multi-prong awareness and hands-on engagement approach, and (2) to experiment using new media tools to



(Figure 3. 3 YouthBuild Lawrence Leadership Team: Richie, Eguardo, Anthony, Yudian, and Danielle, May 2008)

raise their voices and call for change in their community. A small leadership

team worked with me in special bi-weekly 1-2 hour sessions embedded inside a day of normal YB programming. The youth decided to devise a campaign to stop local pollution of community spaces. The outputs of their actions were a citizen signed petition calling for more city support for clean-ups, a photomap of especially littered alleyways, and a video commercial.

## **Point of Entry**

### ***Personal Context & Hook***

The real story of this case started when I finally got the chance to take the class Leo Burd attributed much of his unique approach to youth activism, Marshall Ganz's Harvard course on community organizing. As part of its active learning pedagogy, the course required all students to do an internship with a local organization or start their own organizing campaign.

I immediately decided that my project would be in Lawrence. I had already made a personal commitment to root as much of my class projects in graduate school in

Lawrence, because of my involvement with the MIT@Lawrence partnership<sup>17</sup> and my own personal interests. It is a city that holds both challenges and opportunities, including economic inequality, established and new immigrant groups, and deep unspoken narratives around failure, escape and ownership (personal journal, 2/20/08).

I had spent the fall failing to connect with the youth organizations I was already familiar with, like the Boys & Girls Club or Movement City, the local arts and media afterschool program. In the spring, I was hoping to use Ganz's class as a way to connect with a new kind of organization. YouthBuild USA stuck out on the class' list of possible organizations for internships, because of its affiliation with AmeriCorps.

Because of my family's strong Catholic value of service, I had connected easily with the philosophy of AmeriCorps, serving as a Volunteer in Service to America (VISTA) member and eventually a leader. I made this connection initially without consciously realizing it. However, I still often struggled with the program's structure in that it seemed to benefit the participant more than the community he/she serves and restricts members' activities so that service can't immediately evolve into activism<sup>18</sup>.

At first, YouthBuild Lawrence answered because I was calling from MIT. My years of working in youth development then serving in AmeriCorps also gave me instant

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<sup>17</sup> As a growing network of faculty, students, staff, civic leaders, residents, and community-based organizations, M@L supports local generation of knowledge through relationships, research, and ongoing action projects in the areas of collective asset-building, affordable housing, youth education, and most recently equitable "green" economic development. (MITatLawrence.net).

<sup>18</sup> Because it is federally funded, AmeriCorps members are restricted from direct service, electoral duties, lobbying, labor and anti-labor activities ([CTCVISTA.org](http://CTCVISTA.org) and [AmeriCorps.gov](http://AmeriCorps.gov)).

credibility with the instructors and program coordinators. But I credit 99% of my entrance pass into YouthBuild to “showing up.” After a few weeks of phone tag, one hour-long meeting and a free lunch, I was standing up in front of all thirty-five of their members pitching my project and myself.

On the fly, I showed them a [video piece](#)<sup>19</sup> I’d mixed with my own photographic observations of the City and some audio interviews of local middle school students. While on the surface these videos appeared to be the hook that ultimately secured my internship, my motivation for working with YouthBuild wasn’t to teach video production.



(Figure 3.4 *Lawrence: Past, Present, Vision*, video by Danielle Martin, 2007)

In the first weeks of informally getting oriented and planning my approach, several of the local staff at YouthBuild expressed an interest in moving toward their participants more towards activism. They hoped to engage their youth members in deeper community service than one-time park clean-ups or trees planting. This expanded definition of service came from staff desires and external pressures to grow from funders and local youth development public sector partners. The program coordinator explained in our first phone conversation that he wished

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<sup>19</sup> The videos I played at that first meeting were digital stories I’d created from photos I’d taken in the fall of 2008 as part of Anne Spirn’s MIT course on landscape photography and audio interviews I’d done with visiting middle school students from the Lawrence Family Development Charter School. See video at <http://techtv.mit.edu/collections/daniellemartin/videos/3591-lawrence-present>

service could be viewed as less of a punishment, and more as self-directed leadership and participation that fostered the members' voice and leadership.

The stated organizational values seemed to be closely aligned to my own. Both values were based assumptions that the youth would be interested in creating and using media for social change, given the right space, access to tools, and skills training. I had hoped to intern at a program unique and curious enough to allow me to continue the explorations I'd started with Leo Burd in Charlestown, using media as both a catalyst and tool for activism. I wanted to start with an established youth organization that valued service and individual empowerment, but also wanted to take it a step further into activism.

### **Mapping YouthBuild's Organizational Culture**

Once I felt the alignment in our values, I jumped into the project, feeling the pressure of the single semester timeframe. My original analysis of the organizational culture involved a quick read of the YouthBuild USA website and skimming newsletters, brochures, and their voter engagement curriculum. But as I'll describe later, I also immersed myself in the daily program schedule in order to quickly ascertain the artifacts of the organization's culture.

As part of post-action reflective analysis of this case, I felt it important to delve deeper into the levels of the YouthBuild organizational culture by comparing more written artifacts such as published papers, online staff training, and historical accounts in order to compare my own real-time observations and evaluative

interviews. By placing these written artifacts beside my own reflections, I was able to flesh out an organizational snapshot of YouthBuild useful later in my analysis of my new program facilitation.

### ***Perceived Problem***

“I had decided that the most important immediate thing I could do in the world was mobilize teenagers to become a positive force in their communities. The presence of hundreds of thousands of teenagers, who were dropping out of school, dying or wasting their lives on the streets, appeared to me as a sin of society, a waste of a most precious resource. ”

- Dorothy Stoneman, YouthBuild founder, *Story of Thanks*, 1999

YouthBuild isn't your typical federal-funded<sup>20</sup> job training or affordable housing development program. Both internally and externally, the national organization describes itself as a youth-led leadership development program. At their root, the organization is sparked by a perceived need for alternative youth education and civic engagement mechanisms to build capacity of low-income communities through individual empowerment.

The personal accounts by founder Dorothy Stoneham often describe the instability that first provoked her work to form the organization. The organization started as a response to the challenges of urban education and neighborhood improvement in East Harlem in the late 1970's. Many of these founders and the current staff are alumni of the programs. Consequently, many of the organizational leaders have often experienced first hand the uncertainty that older school drop-outs can

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<sup>20</sup> YouthBuild USA funded by U.S. Department of Labor or Housing & Urban Development, the Corporation for National and Community Service and the Gates Foundation, among other smaller donors.

succeed in obtaining the necessary education and resources to become active citizens and leaders.

The ideal “ends” the organization strives to reach is youth-led change by altering the larger societal conditions. One phrase that encapsulates this ideal appears on the external website, internal training and documentation, and even in morning program affirmations:

“YouthBuild is leadership development and civic education that provides a vision of how youth can play an important role in the neighborhood and society by changing the conditions that have harmed them and the people they love, and that give them the skills to do so (Stoneman 2007).”

The perception that these problems persist and that conditions could be different are certainly not unique to YouthBuild. It is the way they were defined that makes YouthBuild noteworthy. Stoneham started forming the precursors to this organization by asking teenagers in East Harlem directly how they’d change the neighborhood, if they had the support of adults like herself. This organizational strategy to define the problem from the below, is a direct reaction to the public school system reliance on top-down service and evaluation paradigms.

### ***Shared Assumptions (Core Values)***

In both the past environment of Harlem and Lawrence today, YouthBuild operates from a broad set of shared assumptions. Youth leaders articulated these core beliefs in a written declaration in 1999 as:

- All people are created equal and have a natural desire to fulfill their potential and take responsibility for the well being of themselves and the people they love.

- Communities that have a rich set of opportunities, caring relationships, high expectations, and that are organized to meet the needs of their members and the children within them, are the foundation of a healthy society.
- Leadership development is at the heart of community development.
- Youth can be these leaders, given support such as food and shelter, a loving family and positive peer group, opportunities for learning, an organized community, protection from violence, and something to believe in.

(Declaration of Inter-Dependence 1999 and YouthBuild USA website 2009)

Based on my own observations, I'd summarize this vision in two simple values: (1) empowering a responsible individual, and (2) the power and interconnected nature of individuals in a cooperative network.

YouthBuild assumes both of these values are equally important, so they are often in competition to be the priority. Unfortunately, I've often witnessed in my own experience that it is a challenge for most youth organizations to advance their mission towards collective social action (from just service provision) in the face of overwhelming unorganized individualized need (Ganz 2006). YouthBuild, Lawrence, for instance, gets hundreds of applications each year for their twenty available slots. Also, larger forces such as local politics or funders force YouthBuild to compete with other local youth and community development organizations for potential build sites, new programs, and increased funding.

These core assumptions became shared and institutionalized as YouthBuild grew from a small experiment in Harlem to a nation-wide network of local sites. In a 1996 analysis of ten YouthBuild sites, researchers including MIT's Phillip Clay noted

that one condition for success at local sites was a “strong commitment to maintaining fidelity to the [national] YouthBuild model and philosophy (Ferguson et al, 370).”

### ***Espoused Values***

The mission statement of YouthBuild USA exemplifies the duality of their values of individual growth and collective gain:

The mission of YouthBuild USA is to unleash the intelligence and positive energy of low-income youth to rebuild their communities and their lives. YouthBuild USA seeks to join with others to help build a movement toward a more just society in which respect, love, responsibility, and cooperation are the dominant unifying values, and sufficient opportunities are available for all people in all communities to fulfill their own potential and contribute to the well-being of others. (YouthBuild 2009)

YouthBuild’s holistic approach progresses from the core assumption that youth should feel responsibility to both self-improvement and the common good. This approach starts with the individual as the core and then builds out that opportunity and power into a larger network.

These dual values also were manifested in their national philosophy and expansion strategy encapsulated in the handbook produced after a 1996 demonstration project. Coupled with an influx of federal funding in 1993, the new strategy focused on replicating the small local site structure in a projected hundred new cities. Each local site follows a generalized but comprehensive strategy with five components for expanding opportunities for individuals:

1. Education
2. Construction
3. Leadership Development

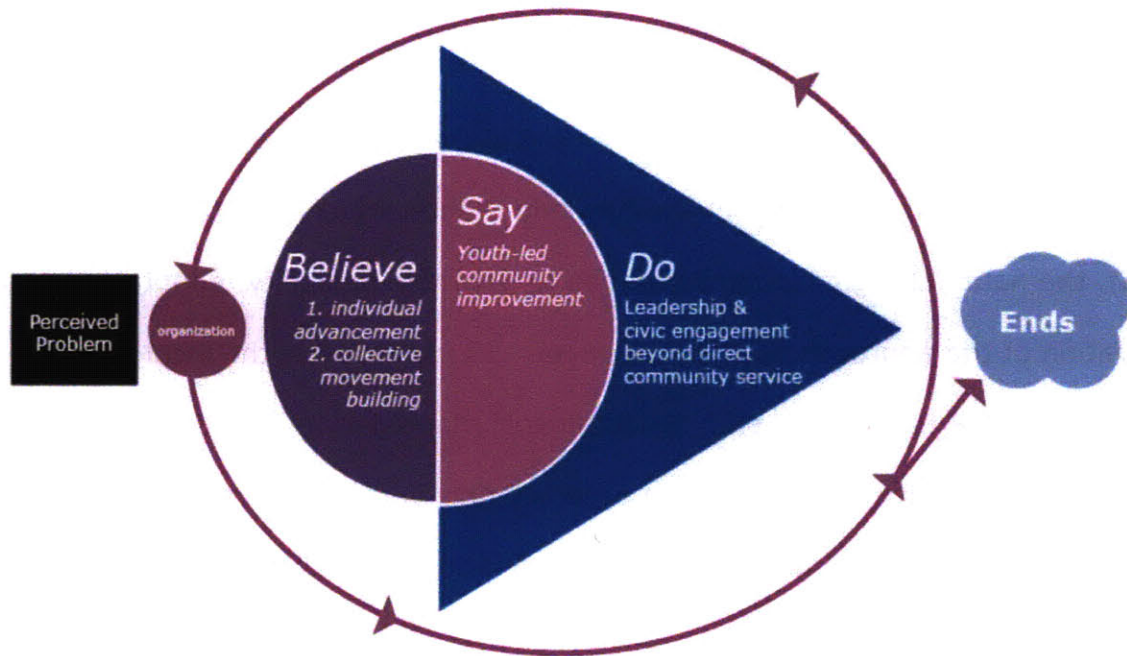
4. Counseling
5. Career Development & Graduate Resources

While YouthBuild USA recommends that local sites use this strategy, they don't comprehensively document or evaluate how it is implemented on the ground. In the face of criticism by outside evaluators and federal watchdogs ([ExpectMore.gov](http://ExpectMore.gov) 2006), the national organization continues to prioritize flexibility, adaptability and innovation of the approach on the local level. In my study at the local level, I focused on the area of leadership development, mandated in the approach as the goal to "attract, inspire, develop, and organize new young leaders and sophisticated adult leaders within low-income communities" (YouthBuild USA, *Mission Statement*, 2009).

### ***Artifacts***

To review, artifacts are visible evidence of values materialized into norms of behavior, usually through regular programs. In some of their written doctrines and my in-person observations, the YouthBuild Lawrence program defines community service through the action of "providing a valuable and visible commodity" such as building affordable housing or cleaning up public spaces (YouthBuild USA, *YouthBuild Viewbook*, 2008). Confusingly, in other publications, leadership development is vaguely defined as civic engagement skills building, usually focused on creating simulations for practicing the "life skills" needed for advocacy or "youth-centered decision making" (YouthBuild USA 2009).

## YouthBuild Organizational Culture

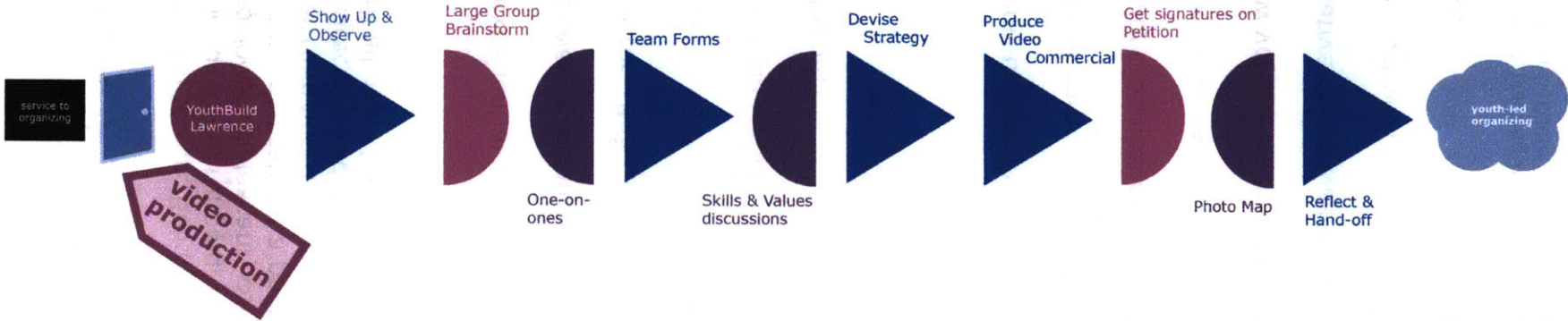
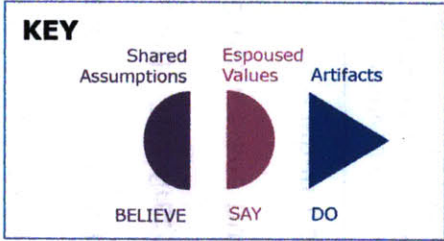


(Figure 3.5)

In my initial inquiries, both the staff and youth members at YouthBuild Lawrence seemed excited about the idea of creating a collaborative media piece aimed at changing a condition in the community. In this nexus of YouthBuild's confusing artifacts of leadership, civic engagement, and community service that my core question emerged for my intervention at YouthBuild Lawrence:

**Can the process of creating civically minded media align the organization's dual values of individual advancement and network building while it connects daily program actions to youth-led community change strategies?**

# Case 1: YouthBuild Lawrence Spring 2008



(Figure 3.6)

## Case 1 Key Events:

### **Event 1: "Show up" and observe** ▶

"YouthBuild is not an easy program to run. Building housing with inexperienced young people as the primary labor force, running an effective school for students whose past experience in school was unpleasant, counseling young people who face tremendous obstacles to success, maintaining a philosophy of leadership development that runs counter to mainstream practice: these are hard things to do simultaneously. Yet talented directors and staff were and are gravitating toward YouthBuild and making it work all over the country."

Dorothy Stoneman  
(YouthBuild USA, *Story of Thanks* 1999)

My challenge, as part of the experiential learning component of Marshall Ganz's community organizing course, was to organize a campaign with a culminating point by the end of one spring semester. Before I even walked in the doors of YouthBuild, I admired the strong program culture, the dedication level of the staff, and the teamwork style of the organization<sup>21</sup> through their AmeriCorps and workforce development reputation.

Even though I hadn't received firm confirmation that I'd be accepted with the organization, I decided to "show up" for my first meeting and see what progressed. I've found that new facilitators or community practitioners feel too shy or don't want to bother busy community organizational staff by showing up at programs or offices without confirmed appointments. In my experience, these staff usually appreciate persistence by new volunteers and will push back respectfully if help isn't needed. This first facilitative action was a risk, but one that paid off by breaking the ice and building trust with the local staff who in turn took extra time to speak with me when I arrived.

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<sup>21</sup> In my later analysis of YouthBuild USA training materials, I found a reference in an introductory course that advises new sites to focus on building a strong program culture, by ensuring the program design reflects the core program values, because research showed that a strong culture leads to higher attendance/retention. (YouthBuild [Online Course](#), accessed 5/27/09).

I knew I wanted to start organizing around an issue that the youth identified themselves. When the program coordinator offered me a chance to immediately pitch myself to the whole group of members, I started by introducing myself but also facilitating an initial brainstorming discussion around about the aspects they like and dislike about their community.

Many of the youth members' frustrations with the local political and social service system immediately bubbled to the surface. I had to constantly ask them for clarification of whom they perceived to hold power in the community. For instance, many of the youth cited personal instances where they felt unduly targeted by local police based on their appearance and ethnicity. I also used this initial discussion to get a quick read on the groups' collaboration skills, as well as their written and technology literacy.

I pitched a few ideas, such as videos about voter engagement or educational access, to the staff by email during that week. However, I also asked if I could come by for a day and just observe the members in their construction work and GED study sessions. I knew I'd be better prepared to customize the organizing curriculum and choose the right media tools if I understood the program as a whole daily experience.

After studying Schein's cultural deciphering process, I know I instinctually played on my "permissible innocence" to unobtrusively observe espoused values put to action in the regular program schedule. As Saul Alinsky wrote in *Reveille for*

*Radicals*: “The organizer who has a grasp and understanding of local traditions is able to organize with a rapidity and stability which is astounding to observers (83).”

By “showing up” early, eating lunch with the crew, accepting my new nickname (“MIT”) and volunteering some time at the worksite, I was able to build up a surface literacy of the organization’s culture and get a clear idea of the staff and youth’s



(Figure 3.7 Danielle volunteers at YB worksite, 0220/2008)

common behaviors and interests. When I donned the safety goggles and had a member show me how to use the power saw, I also gained some respect from the members that I literally wasn’t afraid to get my hands dirty to figure something out. I was able to leverage this literacy into respect and trust with the staff and leadership team, who invited me to return for a longer session with the whole group a week later.

### ***Event 2: Large group political brainstorm***

Back in the classroom, I focused the member reactions from the previous week into a larger group conversation about the major challenges and opportunities in their city<sup>22</sup>. I quickly tried to integrate into their strong group norms by starting from similar interaction structures, such as their Friday end of week shout-outs and

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<sup>22</sup> The group was noticeably more cohesive this time around, partly in reaction to unfortunate experience of having one member shoot another at local weekend party. Even for a team of mostly young men who had dropped out of school because of criminal involvement, I got the sense that inter-team member violence felt like a very personal attack. In retrospect, I attribute their enthusiasm that second meeting to an appreciation of the opportunity to approach the question of their own community participation and voice as a possibility and not a crime statistic. This ties back to one of the core values that fueled the formation of YouthBuild in the first place.

frustrations shared as a group during a pluses and deltas evaluation exercise. The group was used to calling out inputs to the discussion in a loose pluses and deltas format, but this method often mean the loudest voice became the most dominant.



(Figure 3.8 YouthBuild member stumps for pollution as a community issue, 02/27/08)

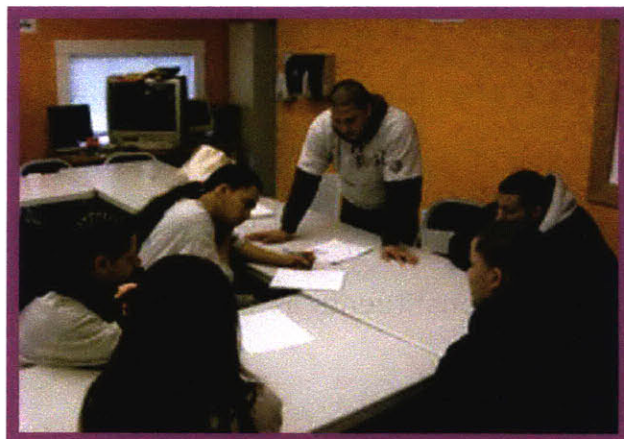
I then challenged them instead to work in self-organized smaller groups to hone in on one idea and present one soapbox speech back to the whole group. Two-thirds of the group clustered around the loudest males and chose police corruption. A smaller group formed around a more soft-spoken but very articulate member and chose pollution.

And one lone, older male member stood alone and wrote his own treatise on Section 8 housing selection procedures. (see video at

<http://techtv.mit.edu/videos/c5faf80c25783047555028fc2dcf8d0aec6d3a23>

[/private](#))

Looking back, these subgroups illustrated almost all of the common “process losses” in group decision making, including: competition to “win” overpowering collective goals, loud & dogmatic voices, ideas judged two quickly after their birth, and



(Figure 3.9 YouthBuild members brainstorm community challenges, 02/27/08)

eventually polarized voting (Leadership Development Project, 2007). But the value of collaborative activity such as brainstorming still seemed to fuel most of the members to participate.

The impromptu representative leaders modeled for me how leaders evolve naturally within the organization. I then knew that to begin to support authentic, meaningful leaders from within this group. I had to not only attract the obvious leaders but also create a program to foster new ones.

I also started to realize that we'd first need to come to some shared understandings of the issues in a smaller group to attempt to narrow the focus. The "one-for-all, all-for-one" strategy wouldn't work in such a large group for the level of intimacy and comfort we'd need to get at the root of the values that could fuel an organizing effort. Since the staff like the idea of a video project, I'd need a much smaller group given the limited local media and computer technology resources.

After this session, the staff offered to help me form a core leadership team who'd meet weekly to further investigate the ideas, pick a problem, and design a short-term campaign that could eventually involve all of the members voluntarily. The leadership of this group would have to work more on building networks based not only on good rhetoric but also relationships in order to energize both the immediate YouthBuild constituents as well as other youth in Lawrence.

### **Event 3: One-on-ones**

I allowed the local staff members to identify the small youth leadership team, because they had more intimate knowledge of the youth participants. These staff, all alumni of the program, chose youth who expressed interest and had capacity to participate in a program that was outside the regular “school” day schedule. Prompted by the steps suggested in Ganz’s organizing strategy I was learning about class and the espoused values I’d witnessed the week before, I decided to focus on doing some one-on-ones first this week as a new relationship building strategy.

The one-on-one technique made me feel uncomfortable at first. Ganz trains organizers to use this individual meeting format to build personal relationships with potential campaign members and obtain a first commitment (Ganz 2006, 44). For me, it felt like job interviews, awkward in the formality that the staff created in setting them up. Upon reflection, I realize that I needed to try this approach in order to grow as a facilitator. In the large group discussion format, I easily leaned on the crutch of a familiar role as an instructor, at a comfortable distance and staying pretty shallow.

Sitting down to have a two-way conversation with each member of this core group of youth challenged me to build more horizontal relationships with each member, and allowed me to ask personal questions that gave me my first glimpse at the personal values of each YouthBuild member. At one point, I described one particularly significant interview:

“He hesitated, then asked me why I was there. After thirty straight minutes of almost continuous talking about himself, in my last one-on-one of the day, this 22 year old lifelong Lawrence resident, father, and jack-of-all-trades, looked straight in my eyes and turned the tables on me completely...I’d definitely grabbed his interest and attention and explored some topics around the state of the Lawrence community. But when I moved to more of an exchange, and asked if he had any questions for me, the interaction got much deeper. He wanted to know why I didn’t choose to make money or do work that was more for myself. Although he self identified as a person that wanted to give back and help others, he said doing organizing and community development as a job was “way too hard.” He asked me what I did for myself and why I was there. And because I stumbled, not knowing how to answer, my vulnerability changed the relationship from teacher/student to comrades in the quest to figure out our place in the world. We committed to keep thinking about this and one thing we can focus on to change the environment of Lawrence before the [next] meeting on Friday”

(Danielle Martin, Verdesmoke.com, blog entry 2008).

After surviving teenage pregnancies, failures at school, discrimination in the workplace, and run-ins with the law, each one of these youth expressed that they had made a conscious decision to better themselves by applying to and sticking with YouthBuild. The youth amazed me with their seemingly unrehearsed personal stories that gave a face to the organization’s core assumptions about individual responsibility and motivation. Disappointingly, many of them also described community leadership only through direct service and didn’t necessarily take it deeper into civic participation or ownership.

#### ***Event 4: Team forms and chooses issue*** ►

I had hoped to jump in with Ganz’s community building and strategizing techniques for each meeting, including discussing values, actors mapping, and collaborative research and idea generation. After a few weeks, I realized that this approach wouldn’t align with the daily program structure. My facilitation needed to address the low technology and written literacy of the members and their preference to act

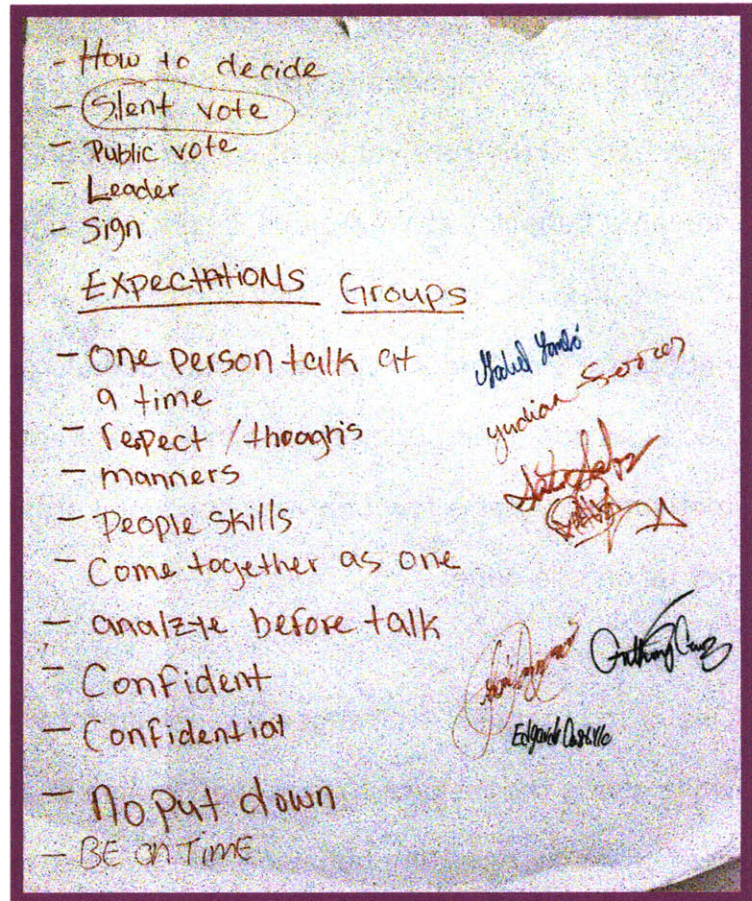
instead of discussing actions. I also quickly ascertained that there was a lack of functioning computer and multimedia tools at YouthBuild. Even though the promise of media production got me in the door, I prioritized building their individual organizing skills and the group cohesion over introducing external new media tools.

As I was learning in both class readings and through trial-and-error in meetings with the youth, I needed to start from the behaviors they excelled at and try to work back to the core values of cooperation and collective action. One natural and repeated behavior at YouthBuild is concrete, decisive action. To use an allegory, if a board is loose, they fix it; they don't usually discuss why it's broken or alternative options for securing it. Our weeks of open discussions instead of making quick decisions and acting upon them were a disorientating and unfortunately demotivating. After a few unproductive small group meetings, I decided to quickly get us on one page.

One of my toughest challenges as a facilitator was balancing focus and order with while giving them space to lead the sessions themselves. I tried to offset points of near chaos by modeling behaviors self such as mediating discussions and taking notes on the board. For instance, I walked them step-by-step through a discussion of their own decision-making process expectations, taking the role as an "outside expert" and not the leader. I asked them to take a step back and first determine how they wanted to come to decisions as a group.

When I handed the marker over, I asked one of them to take the lead on brainstorming decision making options, determining the pros and cons of each, and coming to a consensus. I aimed to align the organization's espoused values of youth-led policy-making to their behavior in our group. The big ownership breakthrough came when they explicitly agreed that when a vote was cast, the whole group would move forward with it, not just the proponents of an idea. One member's analogy was "get on the bus or it's leaving without you."

After they'd written up the group norms and expectations for membership in the group and signed it, they were better prepared to make a final decision on the issue to organize around. While it wasn't an issue obviously tied to every member's daily life, litter in streets and alleyways



(Figure 3.10 Working session whiteboard notes, March 21, 2008)

emerged an issue they could address through direct action. This strategy again aligned with the espoused values of both individual and community benefit tied with community service. And thus, votes were cast and leaders were chosen for leading the next discussion on how we could organize an anti-littering campaign in two short months.

## **Event 5: Skills & values discussion**

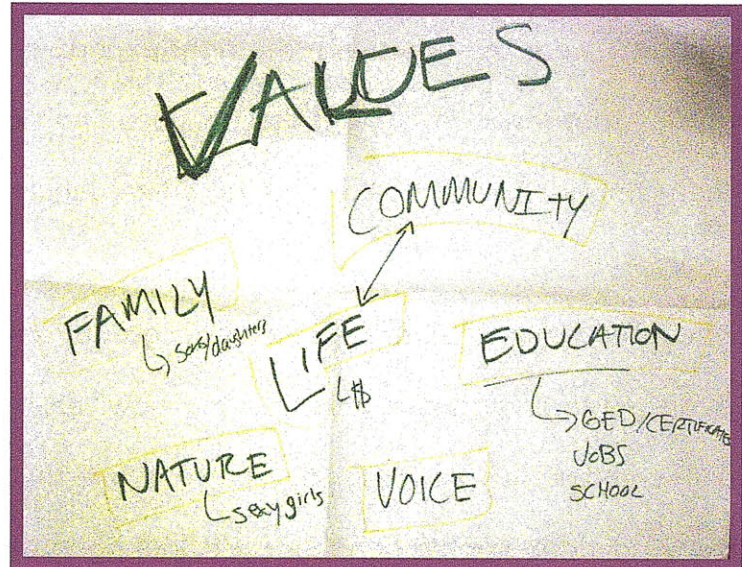
Based on community organizing strategy, the next step was to flow from determining how we'd organize to why these youth believed littering was a problem and they were the team with the right expertise to design a campaign. I learned quickly that if we articulated these values and skills early on as a team, we could then continue to refer back to them when deciding on tactics and strategy.

I adapted Ganz's technique to move a group from a value-based "story of self" narrative to an action-based "story of now" after my eye-opening one-on-one conversations with each of the youth. While the youth seemed adept at expressing their individual motivations for participating in the program, I sensed that they hadn't spent much time explicitly discussing these values as a group in YouthBuild. Luckily, the youth had been comfortable enough to explicitly talking about their individual assumptions in our one-on-one's. I then leveraged that trust into the group discussion space, and morphed those individual assumptions into common group values.

The group values discussions were tough to facilitate, because many of them had never discussed their values in this way. I asked them to take a few minutes on their own to write out the top things they felt were important for themselves, their families, and their community. I then asked them to share a few of their responses with the whole group. We created a common diagram that mapped the ideas or concepts that most of the group members valued, which included family, education,

health, and even “sexy girls” (a bit of humor for the predominately male group). We then posted it on the wall beside the group expectations.

We also talked about what aspects of the Lawrence community challenged these values. To counter the seemingly impossible breadth of the conditions working against them, I had them inventory all the skills and resources they each had that might help in a campaign to



(Figure 3.11 Group values notes, 03/12/2008)

support these values. One of the youths’ strongest resources was their own relational power or social capital through family, friends, and work networks. I offered a plain language explanation of the potential power of social networks with both strong and weak ties (Gladwell 1999), using visual representations suggested by Ganz. As evidenced in our discussions, the youth started to understand their collective strength to challenge the mysterious “they” who seemed to hold the power in the community.

When it came time to help the team discover they had many of skills necessary, I seeded the discussion by describing my own skills in storytelling and media production. When I worked with Leo Burd on the Young Activist Network, I learned that group media production is 99% agreeing on the message and 1% technically producing the output. If I had given these YouthBuild youth a video camera before

discussing our values and skills, they probably would have disjointedly documented each person's opinions. After I informally assessed the technology skills of the group in the skills inventory discussion, I knew with the time I had left in the semester that I'd get one shot at producing any kind of finished media piece.

Looking back, I realize that I made the right decision to leverage the current reactive, direct service strategy of YouthBuild's programs into a more proactive and empowering organizing strategy. In my journal, I noted one way I explained this to the youth:

"Yes, you could team up and go pick up all the discarded trash every week. But what happens when you can't anymore? Will that change people's behavior or the circumstances that lead them to litter this way?"

(Danielle Martin, Verdesmoke.com, blog entry 2008).

To truly take advantage of the collective power of the media tools we hoped to employ, they needed to brainstorm ways to pool their resources to alter the actions of others, not just their own behavior, in order to create more sustainable change in the community. I now know this was a good instinct, to link our planned behaviors in the project back to the organization's core values.

### **Event 6: Devise strategy**

Once we delved deeply into the youth's individual values and connected them into a common group understanding, I was more confident in the youth's drive or self-empowerment to devise their own strategy. Finally, I felt like I could step back and be more of a knowledge resource and participant than an instructor. Youth participants like Josue showed up with a bag full of green building research he had

picked up at a job fair. Eguardo handed me a re-written version of the two one-on-ones he had tried last week on his own. I, in turn, felt more dedicated to the process as well.

As these youth are developing more leadership skills and confidence as organizers, they felt confident enough to "push back" on my role as lead facilitator and have begun to take ownership of the meeting space. In fact, they made me write out and sign a vow that this would be the last day of planning and the next five weeks would be only action, with a little bit of reflection and evaluation along the way.

When the youth happily burst out of the shell of our contemplative discussions and assigned individual responsibilities for work of the campaign, the timing, targeting, and tactics started to flow. The major theme of this phase of the project became pacing, more in line with regular program milestones both within YouthBuild and the outside community than scheduled or reactive strategies (Gersick 1994). Our urgency stemmed from a desire to tap into all the existing Earth Day related cleanups being sponsored around Lawrence by other community organizations.

The process also flowed more smoothly as I got fully integrated into the natural rhythm, or entrainment, of the YouthBuild daily program schedule. Youth participants got in the groove of the repeated, common meeting format we devised including the end of session check-ins and reflection. When I handed the reigns of the meetings and projects over the youth themselves, I was truly able to transition to the role of mentor.

## ***Event 7: Gather signatures on the petition*** ▶

Natural leaders emerged, as Stoneham and the other YouthBuild founders had predict in YouthBuild artifacts. Based on their skills and values, we planned and implemented a campaign with two prongs:

1. canvassing for signatures on a petition to the Department of Public Works (DPW) to change how they upkeep public alleys and charge for exceptional trash pickups.
2. making an informational video commercial, by tapping into internal staff resources and borrowed MIT equipment.

To capitalize on their cohesiveness as a group and newfound confidence, I tried to incorporate sharing some new technology tools into our sessions, including internet research, video production and editing, and graphic design of flyers and logos.

After some failed attempts at accessing information via the Internet on their antiquated computers, the youth and I decided to visit City's Department of Public Works in person, to verify the rules for trash pickup or responsibility for cleaning up alleys. As I nudged the three nervous large 20 year-old men to approach the City staff, I watched as they quickly absorbed firsthand the dysfunction of their local government and then articulated their concerns outside of the comfortable walls of YouthBuild.

When we returned to the full team, we were all frustrated by the City's lack of action to address the local littering problem. To focus their energy on action, I encouraged them to balance a claims making action (a petition to DPW to support

more community trash barrels and enforce littering fines) with a more collaborative action (a promotional commercial to encourage youth not to litter)(Ganz 2006, 20). This decision became critical in later discussions around the political implications for YouthBuild as an organization dependant on City funding. Although we were pushing some buttons by demanding reaction from the DPW, we were also proactively offering help to fight the sources of trash in public spaces, the citizens of Lawrence who litter.

When we hit the streets, clipboards holding blank petitions in our hands, some youth took to petitioning like a fish to water. I silently observed Yudian, the lone female participant, use her sweet demeanor and lack of pretension to basically persuade anyone to sign our petition. Anthony returned from a walk with Patrick, where I feared they'd just goof off, with the news that he had walked right into the state representative's office and talked him into taking some blank petitions to get signed himself. Even though their sudden burst of motivation surprised me, I still let these two take the lead on canvassing and we gathered over two hundred signatures in two short weeks.

### ***Event 8: Produce video commercial***

With the end of the semester looming, we set some deadlines for screening the commercial within YouthBuild and delivering the petition to the City. Each action in this last push helped the members hone their own voice and test their own



(Figure 3.12 Video shoot for commercial,

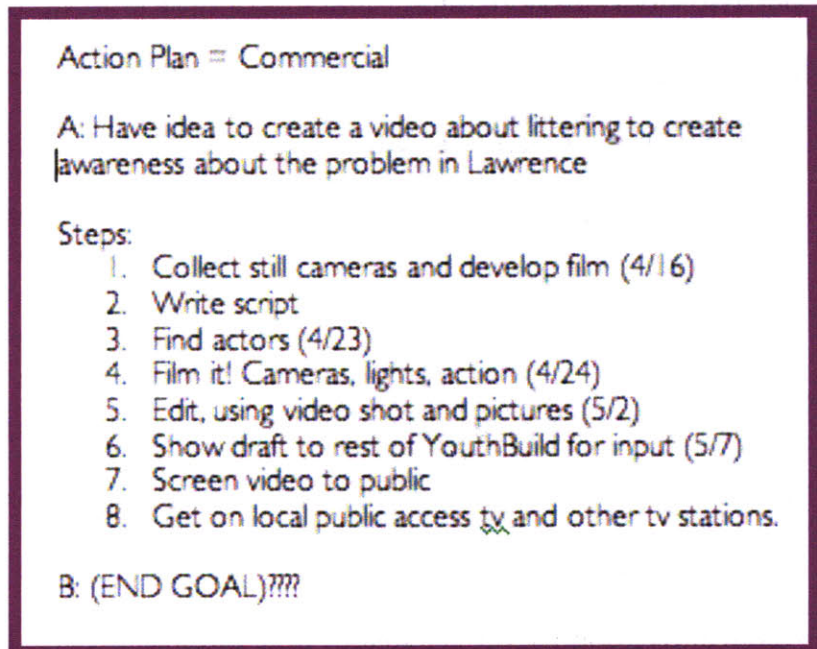
leadership and organizing skills. During video production, several members took the lead on writing the script, manning the camera, and directing the actors (other YouthBuild members from outside the leadership team). I offered to act in the commercial. By doing so, I created a situation where that they had to direct ME and that role reversal empowered them further.

The process of writing the commercial script as a team made it essential that they come to explicit understanding of the common message of what they wanted to say to which audience. It also

necessitated that they tap the internal skills and resources of the group, and also branch out into finding new resources, which included a staff member who had experience composing rap music and producing his own music videos and a local storeowner who let us use his store as a set (see finished commercial at <http://techtv.mit.edu/videos/2652-keep-lawrence-clean>).

### **Event 9: Create photomap**

Even though it was one of most low-tech pieces of participatory media I'd ever created with a group of youth, the poster map became a critical reflection moment in post project interviews and in my own self-reflections.



Action Plan = Commercial

A: Have idea to create a video about littering to create awareness about the problem in Lawrence

Steps:

1. Collect still cameras and develop film (4/16)
2. Write script
3. Find actors (4/23)
4. Film it! Cameras, lights, action (4/24)
5. Edit, using video shot and pictures (5/2)
6. Show draft to rest of YouthBuild for input (5/7)
7. Screen video to public
8. Get on local public access tv and other tv stations.

B: (END GOAL)????

(Figure 3.13 Youth-created action plan, 04/16/2009)

Early on in the semester, one of the staff had offered to buy and distribute disposable cameras to the leadership team to document litter near their homes, outside of our group meetings. The organization didn't have digital cameras and our two-hour sessions didn't leave room for a group outing. The team had met when I was away on break, brainstormed areas to target, and distributed cameras amongst themselves. Yet when I returned, only one camera had reappeared, with the comment "There's a LOT of trash out there" and an overall lack of motivation for the effort.

The cameras continued to trickle back and were mostly forgotten when we decided to create a video commercial. Then during a snack break, one member, not on the leadership team, congratulated us on our campaign's appearance on television. Apparently, one member, Josue, had the initiative to bring the developed photos to his uncle who runs a local Spanish language radio show. The photos caused so much discussion on air that his uncle decided to attend a local town council meeting with the photos and protest. The meeting then appeared on the local cable access coverage of the meeting.

This incident demonstrated that Josue had been motivated enough to act outside of our planned campaign activities. However, I still considered the photograph a missed opportunity. I realized too late that we could have used it to capitalize on the members' inherent knowledge. So in one of the last sessions, I asked one particular member, Richie, who hadn't shown much interest in being a leader in the

group, if he'd be willing to create a poster with the photos mapped to the spots where they'd been taken around Lawrence.

As the other members filtered in and out working on their individual tasks, Richie laid out all the photos and put pins in the map for every photo. He also solicited input informally from all the other members. We chatted about why they thought some spots were more littered than others and why some residents chose to clean their own front lawns but not the common spaces. I found out that he, and other members, were parents of young children, and



(Figure 3.14 Youth-created photomap of littered alleys, May 2009)

they particularly worried about the cleanliness of the parks where their kids played.

The photomap is a key example of the media product not conveying the complexity of the effort to create it. As Richie and the team collaboratively created this piece of simple media, the process also nurtured new conceptions of identity and the “commons.”

(see video at <http://techtv.mit.edu/collections/daniellemartin/videos/1641-photomap-making-with-richie>)

Yudian, in a post-program interview, noted that participating in the anti-littering campaign planning changed her assumptions about civic participation. She now thinks more people should work on these types of campaigns “all over the place...because everybody does it [littering]...and somebody has to care (Martin, audio recording, December 11, 2008).” Thus by creating this simple poster, we were able to connect our campaign actions back to the personal and organizational core values of a healthy community where residents felt responsibility for the common environment. (See video of Yudian practicing her canvassing skills at <http://techtv.mit.edu/videos/40515ea2e17e4a7d6575c956f6b13dc25df596d7/private>)



(Figure 3.15 Yudian practices canvassing skills on Danielle, April 2008)

### **Event 10: Reflect and handoff** ▶

The internal success of our small leadership team built momentum, but the screening of commercial to larger YouthBuild group turned out to be a lackluster jump-off for expanding organizing outside of the leadership team. When we solicited for more help getting signatures, some members asked: “Am I getting paid for this? Why do I care about litter, when so much else is wrong with this City?”

The youth who had felt comfortable enough to discuss these values in the leadership team meetings or through the lines of the commercial's script, now clammed up in the face of the group of their peers. I didn't know how even a professionally made commercial or a seasoned politician could fully answer these questions. I now realize we should have incorporated more feedback loops with the larger YouthBuild membership to prepare them better for this circumstance.

As a facilitator, I know that handing off ownership may mean the project's eventual failure. In my experience doing other collaborative media projects with youth, the adult instructor's desire to have a finished product often influences a move toward less youth-led processes. At YouthBuild, time and my personal priority to avoid deciding FOR the youth meant that I had to be comfortable that the project would end with my departure. I had to trust that they could eventually flow from the values to action on their own without my facilitation.

As spring thaw and final exams distracted us all, I prepared the YouthBuild youth team for my departure. First we celebrated by incorporating a visit to MIT campus to present their commercial to other Lawrence students and MIT researchers.



(Figure 3.16 YouthBuild Lawrence team at MIT Museum: Anthony, Eguardo, Richie, Yudian, Santos, Danielle Martin, and Michael Caban. May 9, 2008)

But more critically, I asked them in these last sessions if they wanted to continue the campaign. The youth vowed they'd continue to meet if given the space in the "school-day" schedule and I worked with the staff to secure this time. With DVDs produced of the commercial and over two hundred signatures on the petition, I departed for my summer research in Bangalore, India, which become the next case in this thesis.

## Summary

		<b>LEVEL</b>
<b>Key Events</b>	1	Do ▶ "Showing up" and <b>observing regular programs</b>
	2	Say ◐ Defining the problem: <b>large group brainstorming</b>
	3	Believe ◑ <b>One-on-one interviews</b> to form leadership team
	4	Do ▶ <b>Team forms</b> itself, establishes meeting norms; democratically choose issue from ideas of the large group; small hands-on projects
	5	Believe ◑ Interests/ <b>skills</b> inventory then personal <b>values</b> discussion
	6	Do ▶ <b>Devise campaign strategy</b>
	7	Do ▶ <b>Video production of commercial</b> , including screening
	8	Say ◐ <b>Get signatures on petition</b> during neighborhood clean-up and down Essex Street
	9	Believe ◑ Creating <b>photo map poster</b> documenting littered alleys, using photos taken with disposable cameras; Josue takes photos to local radio station
	10	Do ▶ <b>Reflection and hand-off</b> final leadership team meeting with Danielle

(Table 3.1)



**Chapter 4 - (Case 2)**  
**Trans-media Storybank Camp at Drishya Kalika Kendra**  
**(Bangalore, India)**

**Context**

**Place**

Bangalore is the third most populous city in India and revels in its new nickname, the "Silicon Valley of India." Migration, in the form of 4 million people, drawn by information and communication technologies (ICT) and complementary service sector jobs, has doubled in the last 30 years alone (Census of India 2001). While the lack of physical and housing infrastructure fails to accommodate these new Bangalorians, the city government also struggles with providing support services and mechanisms for sustained civic inclusion and participation. Civil society organizations have stepped in to fill these gaps in representative democracy, but they don't necessarily foster local voice, especially the voice of the young and most marginalized (Clay 2007). Bangalore is also experiencing other rapid urbanization growing pains, including overcrowded transit corridors and questions about cultural identity and land ownership (Rao 2008). This identity is so in flux that the city changed its name locally to the official dialect's name for the city, Bengaluru, when they opened a new international airport in 2008.

**Profile: Bangalore, India**



"new silicon valley"

**Increase in overall population:**

- 4,301,326 (2001)
- 5,180,533 (est. 2008)

4 million person increase in **migration** since 1970's

Total number of migrants to Bangalore *doubled* during the 3 decades

**36% participation rate of employment formal economy (2001)**

**New jobs:**

- Information technology (mostly young males)
- informal / support sectors (from rural)

**Native language:**

Kannada

**Other languages**

**spoken:** Telugu, Tamil, Hindi, and English

26 percent **illiterate**

Less than half of India's children (ages 6-14), at least 35 million, do not attend school

10% population lives in **slums**

(Figure 4.1)

## Organization

Drishya Kalika Kendra is a “not-school” educational program designed to fulfill the practical and long-term sustainability and economic needs of slum neighborhoods

### Profile: *Drishya Kalika Kendra*



8-16 year olds

50 members, over multiple years  
Food, uniforms, and healthcare provided

- “not-school” with both in and out of community learning spaces
- youth work in large and small groups with varied reading, math, and science experiential activities, facilitated by local staff and peer mentors
- civic engagement activities in the form of drama and community garden

(Figure 4.2)

through the education of fifty youth ages 8-16 year olds in five small community based classroom sites. The Drishya, Kannada for “vision”, community learning centers were formed under the umbrellas of three partners: (1) Geetha Narayanan’s larger research venture Project Vision, (2) the Srishti School of Art & Design, an undergraduate/graduate design college, and (3) local philanthropist Anita Reddy’s Association for Voluntary Action and Service (AVAS)<sup>23</sup>.

The Drishya program benefits from both foundations of on-the-ground activism in five of Bangalore’s slums and the participatory action research initiatives of students and artists in residence. The founders built the slow and iterative philosophy to counteract for the

<sup>23</sup> “AVAS had adopted a multifaceted approach to empowering slum communities not only on their land and shelter rights, but mobilizing women, youth, elders, and community leaders for participatory action on all aspects of life and livelihood, including health, education, and self employment. The intense and prolonged efforts in slum community mobilization and development by AVAS resulted in the emergence of viable, replicable alternative models recognized by Karnataka State and adopted by the policy makers towards evolving people-oriented development programs” (DWARKA 2005)

conventional Indian government education system's inability to serve the needs the youth in the slums. Drishya's strategy draws from the collective strength of the community, the enterprising "street knowledge" of the youth residents, and a desire to create a safe and exploratory space for learning.

### **Program**



(Figure 4.3 Rehearsals for final trans-media puppet show, June 2008)

This case focuses on a one-month long track in Drishya's annual summer camp program. As part of pilot project for an "afterschool" expansion, we designed the 4 week Kathegala Khanaja [Trans-media Story-Bank] daily sessions to foster an environment for imaginative play, where collaborative problem solving and the "commons"

could be redefined in a slow and positive way through traditional puppetry and trans-media storytelling. We utilized handicrafts and new media tools including mobile phones, MIT Media Lab's Scratch software for creating animations and games, and an on-line social network on Ning.com.

The sixteen participants created, recorded and performed four group puppetry stories, using their own hand-made puppets, scripts and songs, and digitally animated sets. These original stories featured characters such as a hairy caterpillar, a poor slipper, a soon-to-be demolished wall and a neglected toy top to explore youth-led themes of inequality, social injustice, responsibility, and hope.

## **Point of Entry**

### ***Personal Context***

“Take me across...I hear in this cry the voice of the young children as they try to make sense of a changing and complex world. I hear in this cry the pleas of teachers and facilitators who are on a quest to find ways of engaging with learning in contemporary contexts, with new tools and new agendas.”

Geetha Narayanan,  
*Symposium on Education & Technology in Schools...  
Converging for Innovation & Creativity Bangalore, August 20, 2008*

People who don't know me often ask why I made the leap across the world from Lawrence to Bangalore in May of 2008. The simple answer is that both places needed and accepted my help. On a deeper level, these places held a miraculously similar energy to find innovative solutions to persistent community challenges. The core assumption of these efforts is that knowledge can come from below as well as from above. Founder Geetha Narayanan exemplifies this mindset in both her academic pursuits and her program design for arts and alternative education programs for the most marginalized youth.

I first encountered Narayanan's vision for education in the MIT IDEAS Institute in 2005. During this weeklong workshop at the tail end of my time as a Computer Clubhouse coordinator, she worked with the Media Lab's Lifelong Kindergarten group to pair technology tools training with exploring new approaches to learning. At IDEAS, I had my first chance to critically reflect on my stance as an educator. I used my final research project as a chance to articulate my ideas for how youth technology projects could more concretely manifest of the values of peer mentoring and user created content (Martin, *Peer Mentoring and Creative Multimedia Design Processes*, 2005).

When I later wanted to find a foil to my graduate school investigations in Lawrence, Narayanan was the first person I called. I was full of my own curiosity how to form strategies on how youth development programs respond to different contexts successfully. Since Ms. Narayanan was an expert in this area, I hoped to observe and participate first-hand in how her organization operationalized the values we shared locally. I also wanted to push the envelope on how a non-native facilitator with new media skills could benefit local capacity.

### **Mapping Drishya's Organizational Culture**

I started this project with an ambitious imperative to create long-term participatory media component within their existing program as a tool for future expansion into after school venues. Ms. Narayanan enlisted my aid in starting a community radio program as part of a larger, proposed afterschool project called Aata Paata Horaata [Play-Learn-Transform]. These expansion goals not only came from internal staff desires, but were also provoked by external pressures to impact a greater number of youth using the same philosophy and strategy of Project Vision's Drishya "not-school".

Because Drishya is much younger in its organizational life and formed in a society based primarily on oral communication, I arrived in Bangalore with having read or heard very little about the organization itself beforehand. I felt hindered in these first days by my lack of literacy in the local dialect and a scarcity of local staff who spoke English. I used this challenge as an opportunity to hone my observation and research skills to uncover the culture of the organization in less obvious ways.

Since that summer, my analysis has also benefited from reading Narayanan's and other's academic publications, conference presentations, and new funding proposals from both before and after my intervention. In order to ground my description and analysis of this case, I'll first sketch the levels of the culture of Drishya, using both first person study and third person written artifacts. By delineating these assumptions, espoused values and artifacts, I can better reflect on my actions as a facilitator at align to the fundamental values with these new media storytelling tools in practice.

### ***Perceived Problem***

In 2006, Narayanan published a paper in *Leonardo*, the Journal of the International Society for the Arts, Sciences and Technology, to describe the problems she had come to perceive in her home city to the international arts and design community:

"Bangalore, which is today a soulless redeveloped city...[has] critical issues, such as the persistent "eve-teasing" or street harassment of women; the daily lives of people within the complexity of the traditional vegetable, fruit and meat "market"; the displacement of the community in the small township of Devannahalli, making way for Bangalore's new international airport; and the ceaseless pollution of lakes and water-bodies within the urban area with chemical effluents and raw sewage...provide artists and educators with powerful entry points for the creation of tactical media and the generation of critical discourse" (Narayanan, *Crafting Change* 2006, 374)"

Based on the foundations of its parent organizations (Project Vision and AVAS), the local Drishya organization was formed to combat two distinct perceived problems:

- (1) the unjust, unequal, and unsustainable physical and social structures of Bangalore as a community, and
- (2) the one-way transmissive or "3<sup>rd</sup> person" educational system that depends on learning and agency through mere access and rote memorization.

I heard local educators, students, artists, and community activists attest that this paternalistic or consumerist mindset in education does not meld with the socio-cultural traditions and reality for the low-income youth of this city<sup>24</sup>. The Drishya organization is a grassroots response to this polarizing dominance dynamic in educational structures and an effort to support the most “untouchable” youth in each city from within their local neighborhood.

### ***Shared Assumptions (Core Values)***

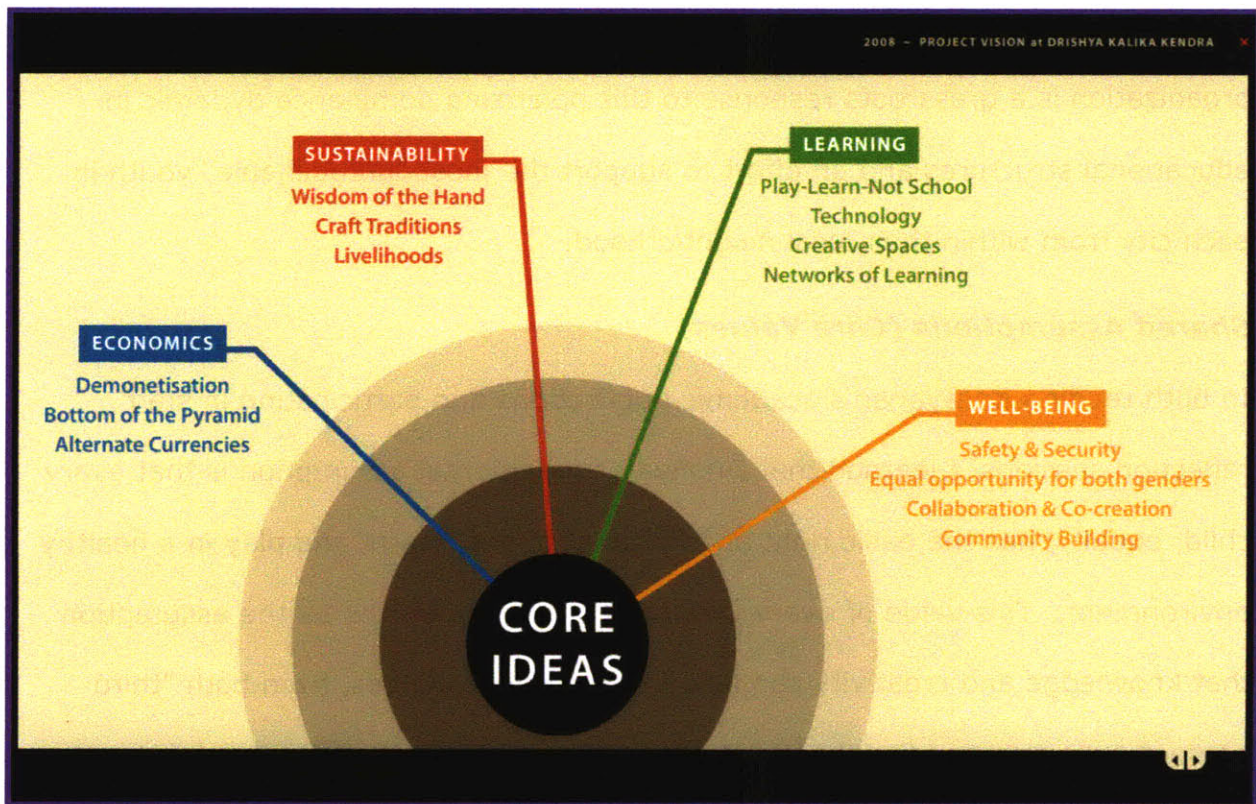
In both reading Narayanan’s academic publications and participating in staff reflection sessions, I learned that Drishya’s fundamental assumption is that every child, equally, has the basic right and freedom to live, learn, and play in a healthy environment. This value of every individual is also supported by the assumption that knowledge and creativity can flow from multiple sources, from both “third person” expertise and first-hand active experience. Simply, Drishya assumes that the local is as valuable than the global. This assumption is a direct reaction to the growing popularity of all things Western or first world as India grows as a rapidly developing force in the international economic stage.

One key perceived problem is that this heritage is being lost with industrialization and urbanization. This problem, combined with the value of native artistic and cultural heritage, melds well with the idea of environmental and economic sustainability, based on local resources and interconnectivity. Drishya’s formation is based on the assumption that these alternative educational activities, given the right social supports, will translate individual improvement into larger economic

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<sup>24</sup> Unfortunately, because of the language difference and Drishya’s philosophy to focus on positive play in the learning space, I wasn’t able to hear this directly from the youth themselves.

opportunities and eventually and social transformation” (Narayanan, *Crafting Change* 2006, 373).



(Figure 4.4, Aata Paata Horaata core ideas, unpublished project proposal, June 2008)

### ***Espoused Values***

The core values of equality, sustainability, play, and local manifest themselves clearly in both the mission and strategy of this organization. First, the local educational-focused mission of Drishya is at the origins of from both AVAS and Project Vision, the main sources of funding and intellectual direction.

AVAS began as an activist organization of intellectuals and professionals standing in front of the bulldozers that would have destroyed squatter communities. It soon evolved into a more holistic mission of “mobilizing with women, youth, elders and

community leaders for participatory action on all aspects of the life and livelihood” (DWARKA 2005). In its other complimentary programs, AVAS and the trust of Reddy’s family also support a mission of the training and distribution of traditional handicrafts as a locally sustainable economic engine.

Project Vision, formed when Narayanan started to explore new strategy for education and design with compatriots like Seymour Papert and Mitch Resnick at MIT. Project Vision bases its mission for “not-school” environment on three basic strategies:

1. “slow” design<sup>25</sup> that leads to deeper and more sustainable outputs,
2. first person learning that is mindful and improving for the self, and
3. choosing tools for creation and design increase participation AND “conviviality” or fun (Narayanan, *The Taste of India* 2008).



(Figure 4.5 Drishya youth play with their insect robotic inventions in community garden, August 2008)

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<sup>25</sup> The “slow” strategy of became particularly interesting to me as an admittedly “type-A” American professional trying to ethnographically understand the complex culture of both India and the Drishya organization. Narayanan cites the work of Alastair Fuad-Luke, who translated the tenants of the slow food movement to design at the 2002 Development by Design Conference in Bangalore, but stressed both to me in my first days and in much of her subsequent writing about our project that slowness as a pedagogy was both a value and a methodology. This strategy, which I translated into my own research techniques, aims to allow room for more playful and creative learning that can simultaneously support both linguistic and cultural heritage as well as new technologies. Through three, nonsequential layers of observation, reflecting, and creation, slow learning gives both the teacher and the learner freedom to “participate in the development and creation of educational tools, materials, and processes” (Narayanan, *The Taste of India*, 2008).

The slow and loose strategy of Project Vision is most clearly exhibited in the “learning system” strategy Narayanan and others are only partly finished piloting and implementing:

- The Community Learning Centers (Drishya Kalika Kendra) – full day “not-school” in the community (espoused value = local)
- The Idea-Media Centers – “afterschool” shared community centers (espoused value = loose)
- The Expedition - active, participatory learning through outings outside of the slums (espoused value = play)
- The Network – online spaces to connect slum youth to each-other, other city slums, and broader external communities (espoused value = interconnected)  
(Narayanan 2007; O’Connell 2006)

### ***Artifacts***

I was drawn to Drishya program by the unique open curriculum and reflective teaching techniques of Ms. Narayanan. However, this slow, loose and iterative nature of the organization posed a challenge to my facilitation style focused on deciphering culture. It took three months of direct observation, many follow-up interviews, and skimming years of academic publications to come to my own understanding of the shared assumptions and espoused values. As Schein warned, the organization’s daily artifacts, including visible norms, actions and tools, were the most available yet hardest to interpret, even without a language barrier (Schein 1996).

I observed several weeks of regular programming in the latter portion of my stay in Bangalore after the program described here in this case<sup>26</sup>. The Drishya staff members are designated as facilitators and not as teachers. During regular program time, these facilitators design the curriculum in four-week chunks, based on current events and environmental themes. Collaboratively, the facilitators form learning tracks, then split off to teach at smaller centers. As the program progresses, they stay in almost daily contact and usually hold Saturday planning days.

In my later research, I found an online presentation where Narayanan described the program design I observed while in Bangalore. She designated the curriculum as specific "learning arrangements":

- Learning space focused on seating in a circle
- Children grouped into mixed age, various literacy leveled teams
- Activities in large time blocks
- Themes as emergent and negotiated with the children<sup>27</sup>
- Project-based, instead of subject-based
- Use local content, resources, and materials, especially recyclable items or folklore
- Learner-centered interactions, for the development of self instead of memorization or skills acquisition (Narayanan 2007, 17).

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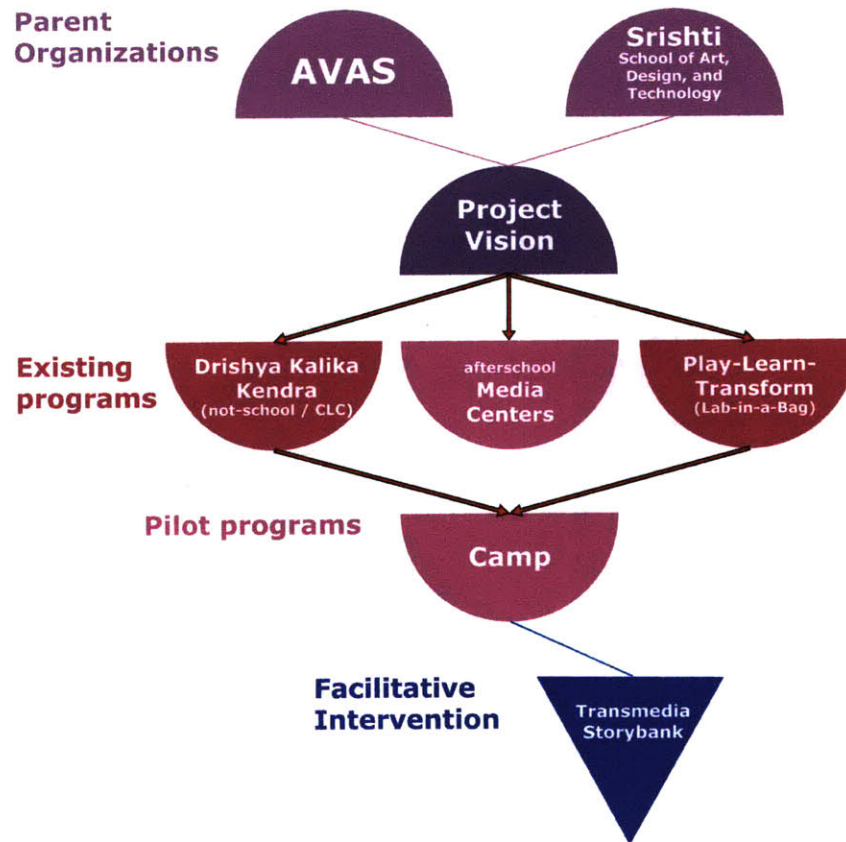
<sup>26</sup> It was difficult to get a physical copy of the Drishya regular curricula, even while I was in Bangalore. I came to realize that this was not because of disorganization, but rather a deliberate decision not to crystallize this artifact. They document each cycle's projects meticulously in youth-made folders and depend on shared knowledge of the group of facilitators and a very short-term and cyclical curriculum development cycle.

<sup>27</sup> For instance, the theme of the curriculum during my stay in 2008 was focused on both nature and China, in response to the success of Drishya's community garden and China's predominance in the Asian news. This summer (2009) I hear the theme is netherworlds, based on some current fascination with ghosts and spirits.

When I first contacted Ms. Narayanan about the possibility of working with Drishya, she proposed that my intervention as both an experienced facilitator and a technology skill resource would fit perfectly into Drishya's pilot summer camp efforts. A team of undergraduate researchers and visiting artists had begun work on more technical tools and techniques the previous summer. Srishti's Center for Media Arts (CEMA) is a media lab sculpted in the image of MIT's Lifelong Kindergarten group. One of their major research efforts is the Play-Learn-Transform project, of which Lab-in-a-Bag is a major component.

This particular iteration of the camp was designed to pilot Lab-in-a-Bag activities as a fuel for the expansion of Drishya into more drop-in after-school centers. Ms. Narayanan forwarded me the current Lab-in-a-Bag proposal for funding to Nokia before my arrival. It outlined several project phases with themes, actions, and outcomes, which included history, scientific thinking, participatory action learning, then reflective presentation and discussion. The "trans-media story-bank camp" as we came to call it, would run four weeks in one-week cycles, also included morning activities of yoga, circle or healing meditation time, and physical activities of swimming or football at a local stadium. (See Appendix 4.1 for Kinnari Thakker's diploma project diagram on the major concepts explored in our trans-media storytelling camp session.)

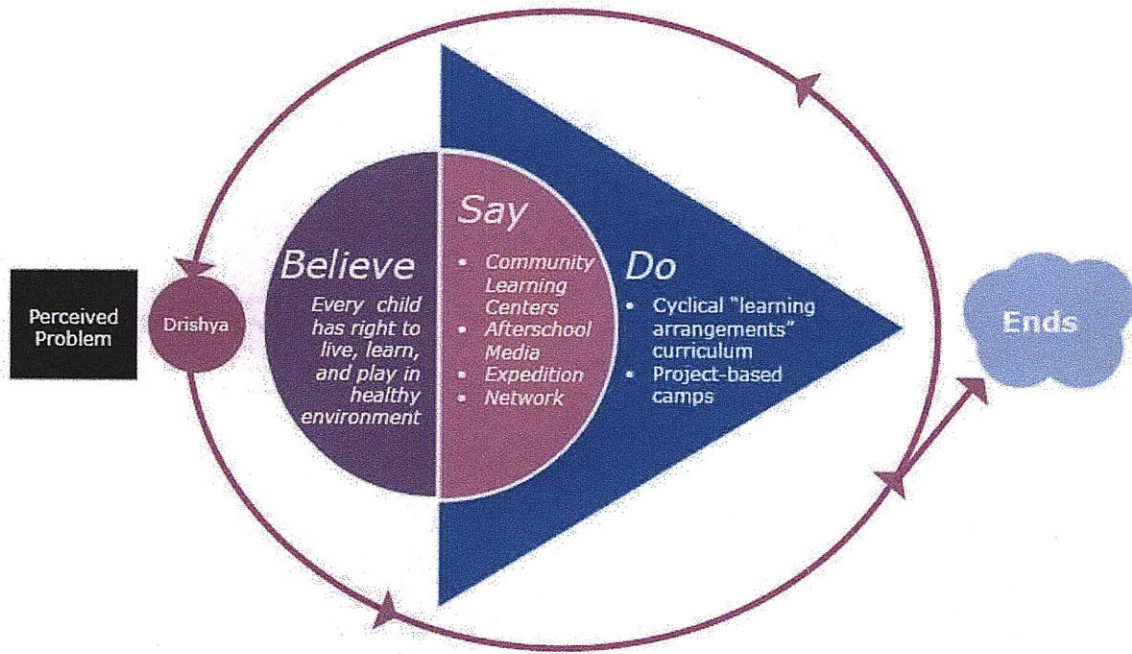
## Major Organizational Players *Bangalore Case, 2008*



(Figure 4.6)

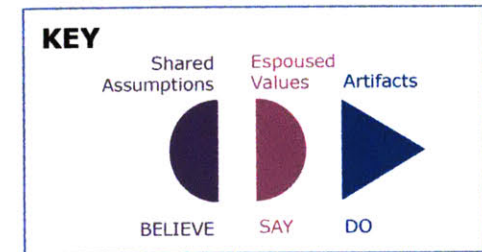
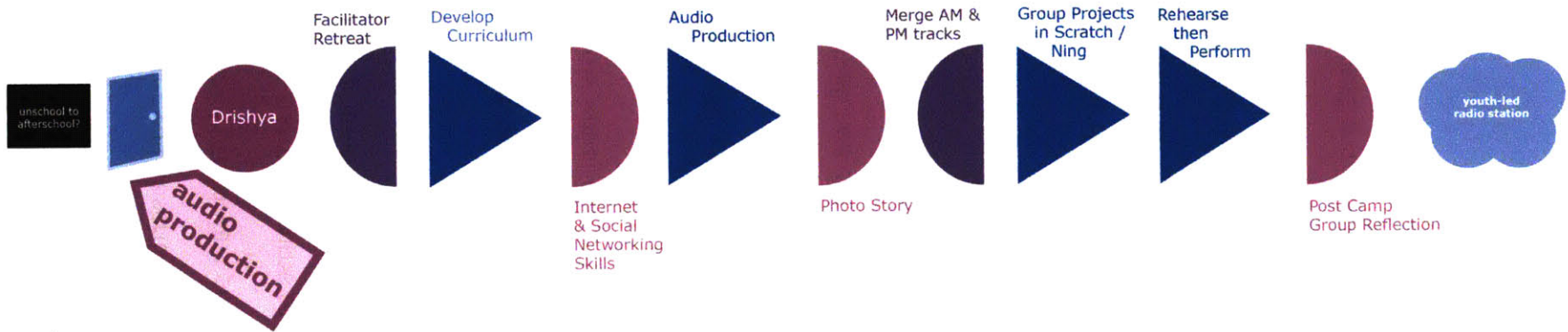
The combination of the actions of the Drishya facilitators, the Play-Learn-Transform researchers, and the “outside” experts like myself and local artists would be a new adaptation of the mission and strategy of Project Vision and AVAS. This change of strategy and behavior was in response to a newly perceived problem of expansion of educational programs from the fifty youth who took part in Drishya’s “not-school” daily program to the thousands of other youth in these slum settlements all over the city. Due to their core value of the slow and the local, these programs also needed to become progressively more community and youth-led, embedded in local networks and fostering internal generation of resources.

## Drishya Organizational Culture



(Figure 4.7)

## Case 2: Drishya, Bangalore Summer 2008



(Figure 4.8)

## **Case 2 Key Events**

The remainder of this chapter will describe my facilitation during the four-week trans-media storytelling track in Drishya's pilot summer camp in June 2008. As with the Lawrence case, this narrative aims to document my attempts to observe then align Drishya's organizational core values of equality, health, play, and first person knowledge through both my own and the local adults' facilitative actions.

### ***Event 1: Observe at facilitator retreat***

In the case of Bangalore, my initial project intervention planning was very different than with Lawrence. The program already had a history of working with student researchers and local volunteer artists on technology related projects. In preparation for my trip to Bangalore, Ms. Narayanan and I had a few phone conversations, where we sketched out how my personal questions about facilitation might be answered within the short and long-term goals of the Drishya pilot expansion.

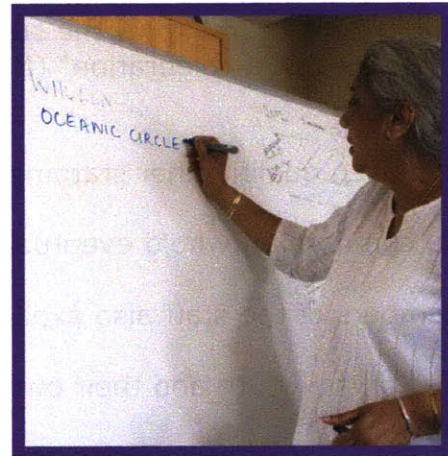
But since I'm more practitioner than theorist, I quickly questioned not only the why of my intervention but also the how. Ms. Narayanan's response was consistent both in the initial planning stages and later as the summer progress. She pushed me to approach my work as an immersion. I could use my language barrier as an opportunity to ask many questions of local facilitators. They, in turn, could my experience as an instructor and media producer as a resource to bolster their own facilitation technique.



(Figure 4.9 Drishya Facilitator Retreat, 5/29/2008)

Only hours after I landed in Bangalore, I was sitting in the middle of the Drishya yearly facilitator retreat. The team of almost a dozen facilitators sat in a circle I later came to know as typical for all Drishya activities. Ms. Narayanan, in both Kannada for the staff and English for the Srishti students, first sketched out the history of organization, tempered by projections of the skyrocketing rural to urban migration to Bangalore over the next ten year. I quickly realized that Ms. Narayanan had a technique of laying out the “big picture” with some guiding principles, then opening up the floor.

After she dumped all the demographics, timelines, and process diagrams on a white board, the working group of local facilitators and undergraduate researchers discussed the past values, present status, and future goals. The most pressing goal, to expand their existing learning model to reach more than the fifty or so youth currently in the program, seemed especially



(Figure 4.10 Narayanan explains values

challenging. The current “not-school” program is both human and funding resource heavy in its slow and project based approach. I quickly learned that the idea to form afterschool programs led by the youth themselves appealed to the staff’s desires to preserve the current school-day model and provide more opportunities for youth leadership.

I strategically held my questions about why more youth weren't involved in these first days. I instead focused on the opportunity to delve into the personal values of Ms. Narayanan as the organizational leader, as well as the personal values of the local staff. She set the stage well for these group discussions by reviewing the perceived problems that sparked the conception of the Drishya program. She then used this common perception as a springboard for future visioning and strategic planning. Ms. Narayanan aligned their planning actions to the strategies of slow, iterative pedagogy and the value of mindfulness and conviviality. In her own words:

"Drishya was established six years ago based on a set of founding values and a vision to solve the problem of urban poverty in a new way. Now the organization has reached success with a core group of students. It's now a time where the staff have to break form once again and revisit the organizational vision. This is a way for us to re-evaluate the project and identify and know the successes for ourselves. Today is not a work day...it's a bit of a celebration" (Narayanan, Audio recording, May 29 2008).

She often qualified her statements that these strategies were ideas they'd bring to the community, who'd eventually own and use them for themselves. Other members of the staff also explicitly tempered new ideas with the reality of the daily lives of the youth and their own day-to-day challenges teaching in slum-based community centers. These approaches of action both for and with the community tie directly back to their value of equality and experiential or first person learning.

Even though I was still curious how Ms. Narayanan's values filtered down to the youth members themselves, I did observe that the local staff espoused these core values through not only their methods to plan the camp's activities, but even more fundamentally in the choice to take the job. During my first introductions to the

staff, Ms. Narayanan asked the staff to speak a little to their backgrounds and interests as facilitators. One staff, formerly a commercial geologist, admitted that after some reflection, he felt he was giving back to the land by working with these youth, after scarring the land professionally for so long.

In retrospect, I now know that my introduction to Drishya organizational culture was both complex and essential to my ability to dive into such a unique and foreign environment. I was overwhelmed by this deluge of sights, sounds and ideas and couldn't articulate the value of this event until many months later. I observed these levels of culture in the words of the leader and staff and their actions in structuring, conducting and documenting their strategic planning discussions.

### ***Event 2: Develop the curriculum*** ▶

My intervention focused on a month-long "summer camp" break in their regular curriculum. Instead of the neighborhood-based sessions that included math, science, and reading activities, the youth were organized into tracks based on one artistic medium or project in one central location. My group of about sixteen youth, ages 10-16 years-old, would work with local artists and musicians in the mornings to learn craft and storytelling, and then learn about participatory media skills and tools the afternoon.

My first inclination was to get organized so I immediately outlined and proposed a fairly structured curriculum (see Appendix 4.1). Ms. Narayanan rightly rejected it, but did take the time to point out some of its misalignment's with the organization's espoused values of slowness and fluidity. Coming straight from the structured

world of YouthBuild and Ganz' organizing course, I was still in the American mindset of a goal focused strategy, that hadn't left room for slower adoption and valued quantity over quality.

Ms. Narayanan modeled a collaborative facilitation process to discuss the goals for immediate camp session. Upon reflection, I now know she was trying to balance the multiple interests and skill sets of local facilitators, the Srishti university researchers, technology and myself staff, and visiting artists. Through these collaborative discussions, my role became defined as a "train the trainer," at first because of language barrier but then more to ensure ownership by the local facilitators. These local staff had a much better idea of the youth's existing technology skills. The local technology volunteers had a much better idea of the local resources.

After the deep connection to values facilitator retreat, my facilitation at this stage still only connected to the most superficial artifacts level. I was still taking the organization at face value. I often played along with the actions of more established players in order to allow the planning to progress. Despite Ms. Narayanan's advise, I still feared too many questions around the justifications for some decisions and strategies would hinder the process.

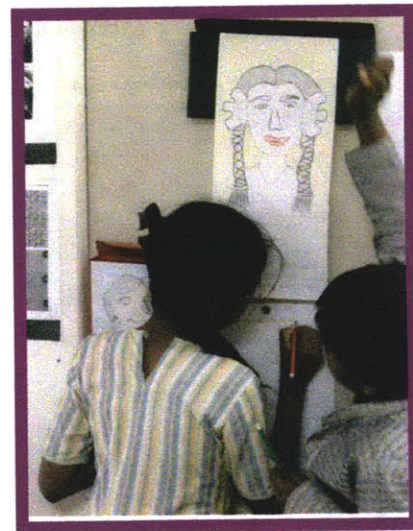
At the time, I felt like we were starting too much with the media product in mind. I only had a basic idea of the participant outcomes and program outputs, such as a physical puppet show and digital version of that show. I now see this event as the beginning of an iterative process of collaborative instruction with many of the

players coming to the table with different skill-sets, years of experience, and conflicting values.

### **Event 3: Introduce basic internet skills**

I was extremely excited about two things that first day of camp: first to see the classrooms flooded with youth and then to make a puppet. I observed the morning sessions where the youth learned folk-art puppet making and storytelling with two local artists. Then the group would spend the afternoons learning how to use new media tools for storytelling, including audio, photography, social networking and animations/game making in Scratch<sup>28</sup>. After years of implementing programs, it was a liberating to sit on the floor and silently make puppets or watch as local facilitators actualized our curriculum ideas.

Although Ms. Narayanan and I agreed the camp session would be a pilot for a youth-run radio show, we agreed that the youth needed to begin from a basic conceptual level. Our goal became to introduce Internet concepts using physical exercises. We started from an initial idea from Ms. Narayanan, then build on Kinnari's prior knowledge of these students and my own experience teaching basic technology literacy concepts to children at the Boys & Girls



(Figure 4.11 Youth learn about mailboxes and messages, June 24, 2008)

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<sup>28</sup> Scratch is a software for youth to create interactive stories, animations, games, music, and art, and learn mathematical and computational concepts. It was first developed during my time as a Computer Clubhouse coordinator in 2005 by the [Lifelong Kindergarten group](#) at the [MIT Media Lab](#). (MIT Media Lab 2009)

Club. Because the youth were so tactile and excited, we were able to pair physical medium of mailboxes or notes with their online counterparts of email and discussion boards.

We chose the technology tools based on their availability and flexibility, influenced by particular factors like Nokia funding to provide camera phones, open source software accessibility in India, and the ability of the Ning social networking platform to display Kannada language fonts. Our goal for the Ning site was to allow the youth participants to document their story development process and interact collaboratively online over the course of the camp session.



(Figure 4.12 Kathegala Khanaja social network site, 2009)

In these firsts afternoons, I honed my facilitation technique when the local facilitators and staff asked for my advice or needed to talk through an activity. I then sat back and watched others implement our strategy for teaching participatory media skills. We slowly started to use my backseat role as a way to iteratively change our strategy during each session and to relay customized skills to the local facilitators in real-time.

Even though I sat next to the youth, sharing scissors and glue, and I had to learn about youth through non-verbal observation or second hand through a translator. I sharpened my observational eye by silently watching how the youth worked



(Figure 4.13 Danielle and Drishya youth make puppets, June 2008)

both individually and in groups and how they approached solving challenges. Then I started to communicate with the youth through a hodge-podge of English, Kannada, Tamil, hand-signals and giggles.

In this new role, I started to hear their “voice” and finally see how the youth embodied the core values of Drishya themselves. For example, the more adept students often mentored their peers. These participants didn’t view duplication as “copying” or cheating as American students usually did. After some prompting from Ms. Narayanan, I also started to document how the core values manifested by

local artisans through their top-down teaching style quickly clashed my own and the Drishya values of hands-on and user-led creation.

***Event 4: Audio production (as the last straw of misalignment)*** ▶

My euphoria wore off a bit as we started the second week, partly because we began to feel like the growing disconnect between the facilitation approach of morning craft sessions and our afternoon media trainings. In the afternoon, the youth sped through learning to transliterate their messages from English keyboards to Kannada script into Ning posts and comments. Yet, their morning puppets didn't get any more sophisticated and I sensed they were growing bored.

When the artists taught storytelling skills through call and repeat or stream of consciousness, it was based on traditional folk genre. However, it didn't inspire much individual creativity or imagination or align with the strategy of multidirectional flows of knowledge. We started to feel an absence of creativity filtering down into the afternoons. Soon, the youth often needed prompting to expand their attempts beyond what was demonstrated to them.

We also started to realize we were too ambitious in our intended breadth of technical training. The afternoon sessions started to get crowded with review of too many tools too fast to match with their established slow pedagogy. Youth and adults alike got quickly frustrated and distracted with technical issues when the phone media transfer software glitched or the power went out.

I was especially disappointed when few of the youth showed interest in audio editing, even though the exercise of interviewing each other started some progression toward user-created content on the Ning site. The software tool wasn't locally significant and didn't inspire any play or creativity. It took too many steps to get the audio stories onto the Ning site within one session and the audio editing software was only available in English. Unfortunately, we became too focused on the tools as artifacts and lost sight of the values that had motivated us to choose them.

### ***Event 5: Converge into photo story***

Fortunately, we had a breakthrough at the end of the second week. It was only possible because our curricular strategy was designed to be flexible enough to change daily activities. After a particularly unfocused session, Kinnari had the idea to do a quick culminating project as a challenge. I stayed late with her and one of Drishya's facilitators to review the activities where the youth found the greatest resonance with over the past nine days. Then we tried to design a one project that could challenge the youth to employ several of these new skills at once.

When the youth filed into the computer lab the next afternoon, we immediately challenged them to use their storytelling and Nokia camera phone photography skills to create a photo-story. We gave each youth one hour to pick three existing photos they had taken with the phone and type a new story as a blog post on Ning. Then we encouraged each youth to read at least one other youth's story and leave a comment about what should happen next in the story.

We were delighted when the genuine inspiration bloomed and the youth finally demonstrated an understanding of how the tools could work together to tell a story. One especially imaginative girl used a photo of a blank CD to represent a rainbow, tied to a photo of the community garden and herself dancing.



(Figure 4.14 Photo story blog post, Youth captures photos with mobile phone, Kinnari & Shylaja explain story challenge, June 2008)

Although this activity was quick, it built upon the slow and deliberate progression. We started from a basic concept of messaging and capturing media to weaving this functionality into a story that could grow through others' input. The youth returned

to creating a story first-hand, from start to finish. They also returned to fun, easily playing with the tools to express their creativity in a friendly context.

Our adaptive facilitation re-aligned the youth's actions with the core justifications of the program, namely a holistic approach to learning, using creativity, "street smarts," and new technologies all at once. With this alignment, I noticed that both the adults and youth expressed a renewed excitement about the camp.

## **Event 6: Convergence of puppetry and technology**

After the success of the photo story activity and the lagging complexity of the morning's puppets, we gathered all the facilitators and artists once again to check our methodology. The undergraduate researchers and I had come to realize that the local facilitators were overwhelmed with learning the new skills at the same time as the youth, leading the sessions in Kannada and smoothing the transition between the morning and afternoon sessions.



(Figure 4.15 Kinnari, Danielle, & Babita first demonstrate puppets with animated Scratch set, June 2008)

With the additional of a new bilingual researcher, Babita Harry, to our team, we decided to collapse the day into the creation of several small group stories. Ms.

Narayanan sparked this culmination with the idea to use a projector to project digital

animations as backdrops for the live puppet shows, instead of spending the afternoons only recreating the stories in Scratch. This adaptation of our facilitation strategy returned us to the core values of interconnectedness and equality, eliminating any competition between the morning and afternoon sessions for the youth's attention.

The formation of teams, while it was a practical action because of availability of technical tools, was also a tactic that operationalized the value of collaboration. It freed up more time in the schedule for the youth to play with characters and storylines. I also noticed that it eased the transfer of the story from a traditional

medium of performance to new online space of animation and social networking. The stories only got richer as they drafted new songs and documented the story in blog posts, and audio recordings.

I still found it challenging as a non-native facilitator to translate the values and goals of using new media tools to tell folk stories. Luckily, I benefited from the flexibility and patience of the local staff and artists. They translated and check my understandings during the sessions. I also tapped into Drishya and Srishti's library collection of local writers and artists.

My facilitation slowly became more active, experiential and first person. Through modeling, my behaviors that translated these values into new media creation behaviors. Our emphasis on actions of inquiry and iteration only helped the youth write original folktales in their own voice. We did not explicitly instruct the youth to create fables with morals. Yet, we did facilitate several learning experiences in using voice and imagination in both writing and media design.

The youth fleshed out characters like poor slippers, demolished walls, and hairy caterpillars. They became adept at using both the puppets and the Scratch software to tell their stories. For instance, one young man, Aaditya<sup>29</sup>, led a group who created a story about a hairy caterpillar that

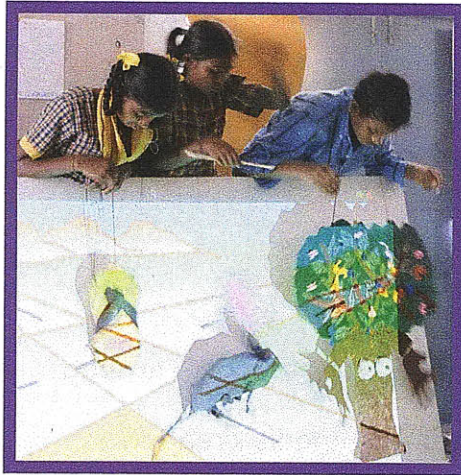


(Figure 4.16 Hairy caterpillar performance, June 2006)

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<sup>29</sup> name changed

is sad because the other children won't play with him. In a post-program interview, Aaditya said the reason he liked making his own story was the way that he could use the caterpillar character to express his voice in an entertaining way (Martin, participant one-on-one interviews, August 12, 2008).



(Figure 4.17 Youth rehearse slipper story, June 2006)

One group created a story about a rich and poor chappali (slipper) who had an argument about who has a better life. When an evil mouse captures the rich slipper in a net, the poor slipper gathers friends like a local tree to help free his pampered and cloistered cousin. The poor slipper tapped into his social network built through surviving on the street to act. Ms. Narayanan observed in a later phone interview:

“The kind of work that happened in the trans-media storytelling project happened with a swiftness and a simplicity that was amazing. Can you just see the power of that? These kids went and made puppets and they made them as chappali. And if you look at it, the big chappali was powerful and the little chappali was not. They've got all of life in that very simple story. And they've got it without you having to tell them 'tell me a story about your life' (Martin, interview with Narayanan, December 6, 2008).

For my part, I continued to observe, ask questions, and supplementing the existing technical skills of the undergraduate researchers. I began to use a technique I'd learned as a Computer Clubhouse facilitator to figure out answers to technical questions in real time with the youth. For instance, if a youth wanted to repeatedly turn an object in Scratch and I couldn't remember the code to do so, I'd sit and look at the Help or try out several options with the youth. This modeled the skill of

trial-and-error problem solving that is an essential skill of any new media project development.

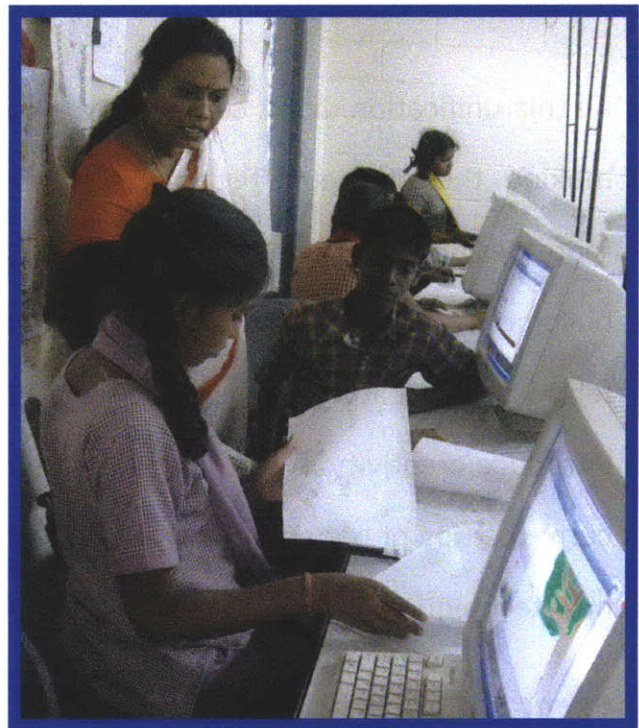
### **Event 7: Group stories in Scratch & Ning** ▶

After the convergence of the two parts of the day re-aligned our facilitation actions with Drishya's core values, the actions flowed without much discussion of why. In the morning, the puppets became the characters for the stories they devised as a group. With the help of myself and the local staff, the visiting artists facilitated a process where the youth:

- individually brainstormed then presented story ideas,
- formed into groups of four around the four strongest tales, and
- wrote the basic plotline and sketched visual storyboards.

We used the afternoon's technical tools to create interactive backgrounds for the stories in Scratch software, document audio versions of these stories, and post audio, video, photos, and written

reflections on the Ning site. We'd couch any new learning in group demonstration around one monitor, allowing the youth to often control the mouse and mentor their peers. The youth's individual puppets, songs, photos, and blog posts all



(Figure 4.18 Shylaja helps youth move from hand drawn storyboards to Scratch software, June 2008)

became narrative elements of the story as a process, not necessarily the product itself.

I can't discount the looming deadline of performing our puppet show. We felt the pressure to have a finished product and adapted our actions to most efficiently support the participants. The addition of our translator Babita eased the facilitation team into roles and norms. Babita, an older undergraduate researcher who was fluent in both Kannada and English, was comfortable playing liaison between the morning and afternoon facilitators.

All this unification didn't come without some road bumps. In the morning puppet making, the afternoon "techie" facilitators tried work with the artists to adopt a more design specification cycle or adopt a more horizontal facilitation style in building the puppets. These attempts usually ended a failure because the artists fell back on creating a template that the youth then just copied. I covertly tried to introduce creativity by adding bits of innovation to individual puppets, such as curly-q strips of paper as hair. The youth would laugh but also feel motivated to try new techniques as well.

***Event 8: Rehearse and perform*** ►

As program activity speeds up and norms of group behavior get more explicit, the last portion of any focused activity is often a blur of action without discussion. The collaborative facilitation team focused our confusion and multiple interests into accepted behaviors as steps to craft a final performance. We based decisions on

real-time utility when we whittled down from a wide list of media tools down to just the ones that worked best for the immediate tasks.



(Figure 4.19 Ravi records audio version of stories with youth,

For instance, we used the creation of audio versions of the stories as an opportunity to not only rehearse lines, but also reverse roles. Luckily, the artist, Ravi, who struggled with authority opened up in these smaller groups and allowed the youth to teach him how to use the recorder. Also,

the youth and adults were forced to collaborate to finish one story. This collaboration worked best when the participants used scientific methods of test, revise, and retest to plug at projects until everything worked.

In our rush to the finish line, we did make some compromises to our original goals to create a totally youth-created piece. When one of the artist facilitators wrote out scripts for the youth to save time, the final products became interpretations of the youth stories. As a result, the youth struggled to pronounce some of the formal language the artists selected. Based the collaborative and adaptable culture of our group, the facilitators and youth felt comfortable enough to mark up the printed scripts and make them their own.

On the last day of camp, sixteen very excited youth acted out their four original stories, manipulating puppets in front of projected animations and singing their hearts out. Their paper and glue characters told tell tales of redemption, resilience

and celebration to an audience who held up phones to take photo and audio snapshots throughout. Because we'd been so immersed in the work of the website, I hadn't anticipated the value of externalizing audience through live performance (see video at <http://techtv.mit.edu/videos/8326dd0d1b76a170ff40e582af04a73b20c8c807/private>).

They also scrolled back among a month's worth of entries on the Ning site a week later to make some final edits and post the final scripts. In both the performance and the reflective documentation, the participants could see the progression of their projects from sentences to sketches to puppets to performance.

### **Event 9: Post camp reflection**

In the end, the mechanism of final puppet performance was a useful motivation for the learning progression but also didn't leave room for more open-ended sustainability. In the flurry of the last week before the performance, we stopped checking against reality as a group of facilitators, especially around how the youth might take more ownership of the design of the project.

In a group evaluation session with the youth a few days after the final camp performance, I asked (through a local staff facilitator's translation) how they might use social networks more in the future. A few responses included: to "share our problems" with others outside Drishya, for community "emergency messages," and to share information and news about other states. But I also learned that not many

of their households had radio sets (more had televisions, surprisingly) and not many of them had access to the Internet outside the walls of Drishya.

I began to ask:

**Can youth development programs build the capacity of local social networks and connect them to larger networks using publishing and social networking websites, especially in communities like Bangalore where computer and internet access is limited?**

Although I felt much more integrated into the culture of the organization and was better able to articulate the core values, my actions to seed brainstorming of what could come next were hindered by the reality of the context and the priority of returning to regular programming.

The camp was only intended to be the first part of my three-month intervention at Drishya as a participatory media facilitator. In the following two months, I did several activities in an effort to build a foundation for a youth run community radio show, including observing regular Drishya programming, interviewing other non-governmental organizations that used community radio as a tool, and finally conducting a week-long Scratch training for the local facilitators<sup>30</sup>.

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<sup>30</sup> As of June 2009, the camp is continuing for a second year, again focusing one track on storytelling, but this time using a more customized content-management system social network, built by Kinnari, and MIT Media Lab's Scratch board hardware to even more seamlessly connect the physical elements of storytelling to the virtual Scratch environment.

But even after two more successful performances of the puppet shows (for visiting MIT Media Lab staff and the youth's parents), both Ms. Narayanan and I agreed that the radio show may be a step much further on in the progression of Project Vision into a new as an afterschool program. The value of slow but deliberate learning is at odds with the fast paced immediacy of tools like radio podcasts and online social networks; several other factors need to fall into place for these tools to be fully aligned with the lived vision of this organization.

## Summary

		<b>LEVEL</b>
<b>Key Events</b>	1	Believe ◐ Observe at yearly <b>facilitator retreat</b>
	2	Do ▶ Collaboratively developing camp session <b>curriculum</b> with local facilitators, visiting artists, and Srishti undergraduate experts
	3	Say ◑ <b>Internet &amp; social networking skills</b> on Ning website: Train-the-trainer, forced observation, then iteratively update curriculum
	4	Do ▶ <b>Audio production</b> : last straw of misalignment (after stalled puppetry and bad tech tool choices)
	5	Say ◑ <b>Photo story</b> : reconnecting puppets with internet, social networking, and media creation skills
	6	Believe ◐ <b>Convergence: merging am and pm sessions</b> to make one puppet show in front of projected animated Scratch sets
	7	Do ▶ <b>Group Projects in Scratch/Ning</b> : using progression of small to group project based instruction: lots of learning when combining individual Scratch scenes into one big show
	8	Do ▶ <b>Rehearsal then perform</b> for other camp students and facilitators and Srishti faculty
	9	Say ◑ <b>Post camp group reflection</b> and testing the potential for community radio

(Table 4.1)

These nine key moments (Table 4.1) tell a rich narrative of Drishya’s short-term success in incorporating trans-media storytelling as a new tool for experiential learning and youth voice. I will more deeply review this narrative later in the Analysis chapter, both alone and in comparison to the work at YouthBuild Lawrence. First, however, I will describe how my methodology evolved through the participatory action research and reflection documented in these two case studies.



## Chapter 5 - Methodology

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### What Leads to a Reflective Practice?

When I entered into the planning and implementation of the projects at YouthBuild and Drishya, I was primarily focused on solving one immediate challenge: using media tools to facilitate participant-led collective action. But when the evitable questions arose around how to expand and replicate these kinds of projects, I realized that I, as the outside facilitator, could be the common denominator.

None of the projects described in the preceding cases occurred in a vacuum. No city or organization, or youth, is exactly alike. In these two case studies, I was able to document how similar facilitation methods could be applied in two different contexts with similar positive outcomes. By moving from Lawrence then Bangalore, my lessons learned in one American post-industrial city aided in the work in India's booming IT capital (Figure 5.1).



(Figure 5.1)

My interventions as a facilitator could be about more than just teaching a few youth how to use a camera or create a video online. I can also use each intervention as a new chance to improve my own facilitation practice. If I collaboratively reflect with

the local staff and participants, the community organizations can then use my involvement as a unique opportunity to hone their own strategies. But ultimately, I wanted my work to benefit more than just these two organizations and myself.

### **My Iterative Methodology**

After I acted and reflected, I formed a new challenge for this thesis: to use the tools of reflective practice to develop a methodology to articulate and analyze my facilitation approach and strategy. My methodology is unique because I developed it in cycles before, during and after the actions documented in the cases. Mirroring the on-the-ground approaches of the two organizations, I often moved from starting with surface actions to deeper reflection of values and assumptions.

This chapter will outline my journey to develop this methodology, where I:

1. acted, reflected, and documented with media tools,
2. described a full narrative of each case,
3. identified critical facilitation events on a timeline,
4. studied Schein's organizational culture theories developed my own key for coding events,
5. sketched the organizational culture,
6. coded events on each case timeline, and
7. looked for patterns and compared coded timelines to develop the analysis.

## ***1. Participatory Action Research & Media Tools***

My strategy for facilitating is a complicated mash-up of instinct, curiosity, theory, and personal experience. I also reflect and adapt my practice by networking with like-minded practitioners. But whenever I'm invited to walk through the doors of any youth development program, I start by asking myself a similar series of questions: who the youth participants are, why the program needs me to intervene, and how the staff provides support or builds knowledge every day. Then, I try to identify any other programs, somewhere in the world, trying to address these challenges in innovative ways, in order to build upon their experience and adapt their learning to the local challenge.

Often I move through these initial facilitative steps without realizing it. Luckily, I am also a media producer who's found value in using media tools as a non-intrusive, seamless, and fun way to document and reflect with acting. I often take digital photographs, write observation notes, and record audio of conversations and interactions during any workshop or training I facilitate. Through this creation process, I collect the raw media content that feeds into reflective blog entries, digital video stories, or online photo galleries. While I personally enjoy making the media, it also has a more practical function. I use these finished media pieces often to complete class assignments, report to funders and supervisors, or to communicate and collaborate with fellow researchers or practitioners.

In both Lawrence and Bangalore, I kept detailed journals of my observations on daily occurrences. I also conducted one-on-one and group interviews with participants, staff, and organizational leaders. Later, I gathered as much written

and digitally published on each organization, including articles, speeches and trainings offered by staff and leaders. Tempered with artifacts from the projects themselves like curriculum drafts, meeting notes, and participant feedback surveys, this reflective media content became the data for my analysis.

## ***2. Full Case Narrative***

While I value quantitative forms of examination, I also use a narrative story as an accessible and qualitative aid to describe facilitation and encourage user-led content production. The narrative is a familiar form for most people, especially for low-literacy or traditionally oral cultures, but I've also found it as a useful professional tool for crafting messages, building solidarity, and now for reflective documentation and analysis.

When I returned from Bangalore to begin the process of crafting my thesis, my first step was to "brain dump" the details of both cases. These fleshed out stories came mostly from memory or review of my journals, photographs, and videos. These detailed accounts became the cumulative narrative arc of each project from the day I arrived until the last day of the program.

## ***3. Critical Facilitation Events on a Timeline***

After reviewing several bodies of literature, I determined my two units of analysis, (1) the culture of the organizations and (2) my actions as an outside facilitator. Based on these two lenses, I culled through the full narratives to identify the key moments of facilitation.

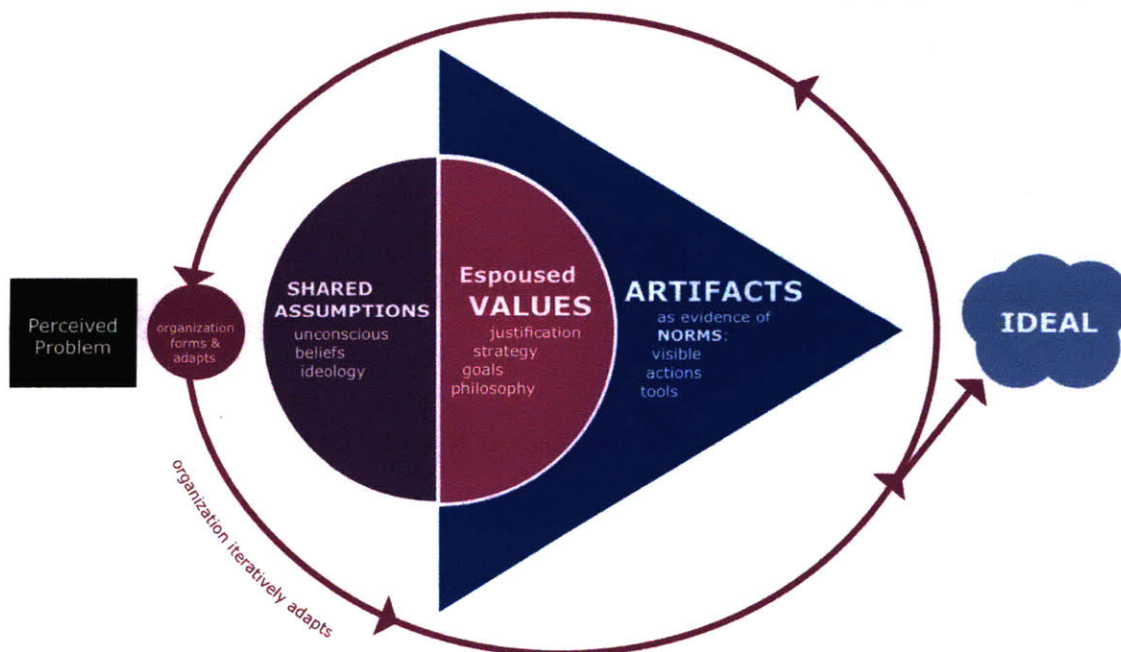
In order to document this facilitation process in the central case studies, I mapped the projects' development using a linear timeline. Each event is a key catalyst or intervention moment as an "outside" researcher and facilitator, embedded in a larger, cyclical picture of the overall program design.

#### 4. A New Organizational Culture Diagram and Key

Since the most common point of entry for working with youth in communities is organizations, I chose the focus structure of Edward Schein's "organizational culture deciphering process." Schein ascribed to using an observer's validated sketch of organization as a guide for facilitating change (Schein 1996, 149).

#### 3 Levels of Organizational Culture in process of cognitive transformation

*Adaptation of Edgar Schein's Cognitive Transformation model for analyzing organizational cultures (1992)*



(Figure 2.2)

To review Schein’s theory of organizational culture, I had to start from the assumption that the core values of these organizations can align with the values behind the functionality of the tools. This alignment happens when tools or artifacts of actions and espoused values flow from established and agreed upon assumptions.

As described in Table 5.1, Schein advised facilitators to find evidence of these levels in certain common organizational statements. He, and other researchers after him, also cautioned that these aspects could range from tacit understandings to more visible evidence. Ironically, the most visible artifacts can also be the hardest to decipher because their underlying assumptions are rarely discussed (Schein 1992; Whiteley 2007, Kotter and Heskett 1992; Cameron and Quinn 2006).

	<i>Level of Org Culture</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Evidence</i>
Tacit or underlying ↑ ↓ Visible	◐ <b>Shared Assumptions</b>	"ends" based in core beliefs and ideology	Core values, vision
	◑ <b>Espoused Values</b>	"ends" defined in behavioral terms or choices for the "means"	Mission statement, strategy, justification, goals, philosophy
	▶ <b>Artifacts</b>	Detailed operationalization or actions towards the ends	Program, policy, tools, actions

(Table 5.1)

He also described a process where by facilitating the use of new tools, a facilitator could begin to understand an organization on each of these levels. He/she can use the "presumed ignorance" of their role as an outsider to elicit the articulation and reflection of implicit assumptions collaboratively with local leaders, staff and participants.

By explicitly discussing these assumptions, the facilitator and the organizational members can check understanding and identify misalignment of stated values to behaviors. Through this reflective process, a facilitator can ease the tension of adopting new technology, through double loop organizational learning that relies on multiple iterations of reflection and adaptation.

I decided to analyze if I had successfully adapted Schein’s culture deciphering technique to my own efforts to facilitate the use of new participatory media tools in these two youth organizations. I created the 3-level visual key previously described in Table 2.2, pairing it with the loops of organizational learning.

	<b>Level of Organizational Culture</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Event represented a moment when staff and/or participants:</b>
◐	<b>Shared Assumptions</b>	<b>Believe</b>	Discussed individual and/or group core assumptions, connecting them to speech or actions; sometimes rippling down to fundamental changes in other levels of culture (double loop learning)
◑	<b>Espoused Values</b>	<b>Say</b>	Developed their own strategy, by adapting or at least acknowledging the organization’s established cultural norms or values (single loop learning)
▶	<b>Artifacts</b>	<b>Do</b>	Acted on the organization’s stated values, usually without explicitly identifying or discussing the values

(Table 2.2)

### **5. Retrospective Organizational Cultural Sketch**

Each case first began with a brief dossier of the context and circumstances of my facilitative intervention, including a description of:

- community’s demographics, history, dominant narratives;
- organizational history, scope, and mission;
- and my intervention’s main program, including the participatory media tools used, the outcomes, and final products.

These cases are a personal account of my own actions and not a cookie-cutter description of facilitation in general. Consequently, I needed to also document my own point of entry in each case, including my personal motivation or relationship with the organization.

Next, I retroactively sketched each organization's culture before my intervention. I started with a deeper analysis of written artifacts, including their mission statement, published curriculum, public relations materials, and internal training guides. I then tempered these artifacts with my own first-hand ethnographic observations. This sketch included a perception of the problem the organization formed to address, the ideal or "ends" of which is their goal, and the shared assumptions, espoused values, and artifacts that represents their shared culture. Basically, this sketch described what the organization believes, says, and does.

### ***6. Coded Case Timeline***

With the organizational sketch as a touchstone, I coded each event, case by case. In each newly focused case narrative, I paired the detailed event description with an evaluation of how deeply it represented organizational cultural learning or transformation. I also analyzed how the choice to adopt a participatory tool aided or hindered cultural alignment.

Because I ground my facilitation technique in collaboration, each coded event timeline represents the choices and actions of not only myself, but also the local staff, volunteers, and participants. I qualified these behaviors by their ability to

account for constraints and capitalize on opportunities of the environment and the chosen participatory media tool.

### ***7. Patterns and Comparison Become the Analysis***

Finally, I looked for patterns in the progress of events within each case. I then compared two coded timelines to look for similar patterns or glaring contrasts. These patterns and comparison developed into the analysis, where I was able to articulate a more generalized strategy for collaborative facilitation of participatory media for participation and capacity building.

### **A New Kind of Methodology**

While it was not the original goal of my thesis, there is value in documenting my attempt at developing a new kind of methodology. Personally, I grew as an analytical thinker because my own non-linear and non-traditional methods matured. Learning to hone this critical eye on myself has had obvious repercussions in how I approach observing, commenting on, and facilitating change in the learning behaviors of others, whether they be mentors, peers, or participants. The flexible and iterative nature of this new method gave me room to pair my “on-the-ground knowledge” with more formal pedagogical theory. As a reluctant academic who plans to return to grassroots practice, I like the idea of routinely grounding moments of self-reflection as part of larger organizational processes.

I was able to use this thesis to analyze my facilitative actions and realize that I was implicitly trying to build organizational capacity with my technique. The next step

is to enter into future interventions with the ability to clearly declare my intentions. For instance, I can use the "culture deciphering process" during my preparation and initial stages of orientation at an organization. In the future, I also intend to use this new methodology to incorporate organizational learning as more explicit goal when designing workshops and trainings.

The process of developing my own methodology also allowed me to ground my personal reflection in the possibility of benefit to other theorists and practitioners. I was able to hone this framework through formal written review cycles and several public presentations with academics, professional colleagues, and fellow students (see presentations and video at <http://verdesmoke.com>). In the end, I not only documented my own facilitation technique to share with others but also produced a new convention for doing so within the scope of a master thesis.

## **Chapter 6 - Analysis**

### **From Single Case to Comparative Analysis**

Each of the two case studies in Lawrence and Bangalore can easily stand alone as windows into my facilitative technique. To begin this analysis chapter, I will first differentiate patterns of both my own and other's behavior in each case separately. As I examine each timeline, retrospectively through the lens of organizational culture and learning, I will be able to analyze the patterns within each case and glean a few major lessons I took away from each experience.

However, in order to tell the whole story, I also need to compare these two cases side by side. These overlapping contexts and values may have muddied the waters of my analysis at first, but several commonalities became clear. If I consider these cases as a cumulative continuum of my experience, I can see repetitive patterns of success and glean surprising insights about my own process as a researcher and a practitioner.

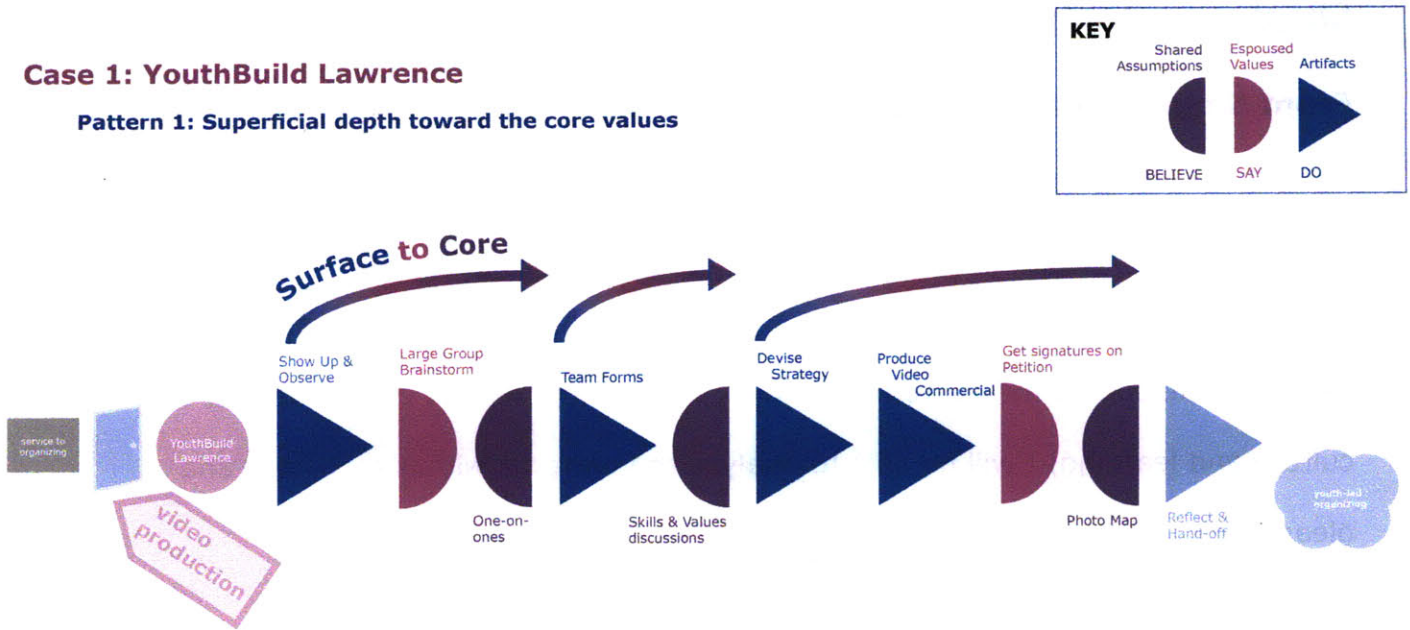
### **Patterns in Case 1 YouthBuild Lawrence**

When I take a global view of the ten key moments in the progression of the YouthBuild Lawrence project (see Figure 3.2 or Table 3.1), four major patterns emerge:

1. I repetitively started my cultural exploration from the most superficial depth and moved toward the core values in the progression recommended by Schein in his original documentation of this technique (Figure 6.1).

## Case 1: YouthBuild Lawrence

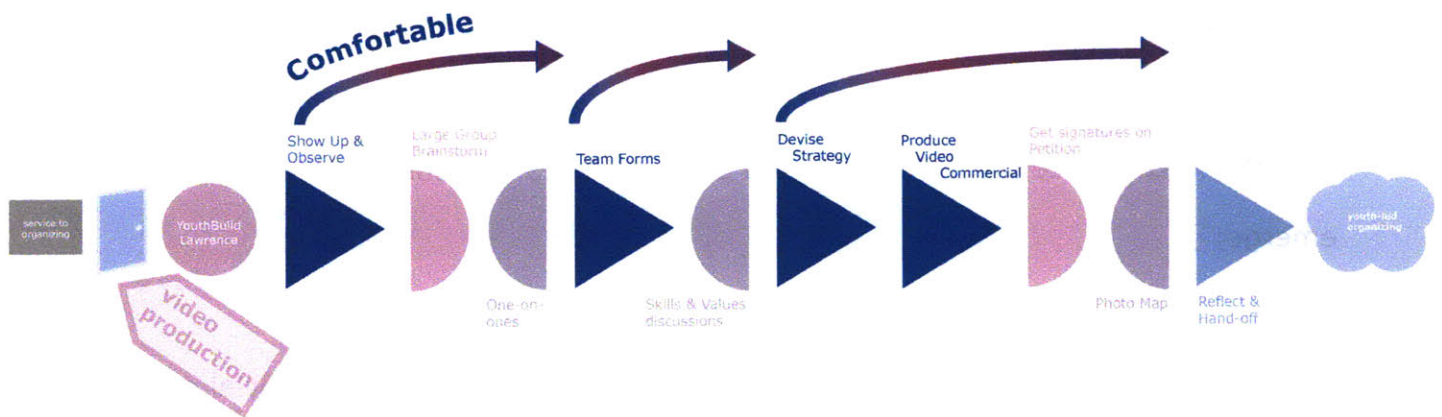
### Pattern 1: Superficial depth toward the core values



(Figure 6.1)

2. The repetition came from a need to return to the more stable and less invasive artifacts or action level to keep the participants comfortable and incrementally build trust to be able to delve deeper with each iteration.

### Pattern 2: Start from comfortable then move towards implicit values

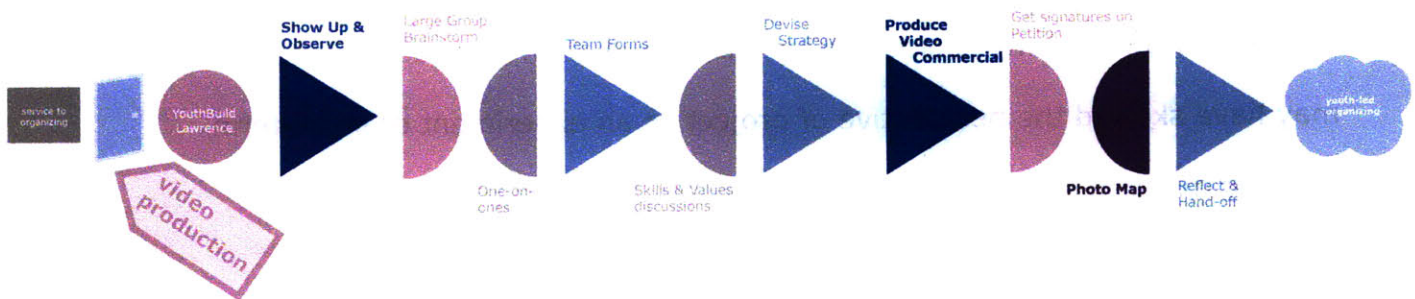


(Figure 6.2)

3. Not every event involved intervening with a participatory media tool, but when I did, the events had common characteristics including:
  - a. Media tool as the hook but not necessarily the product
  - b. Media creation as an opportunity for deep discussion and alignment (that isn't necessarily reflected in the content itself)
  - c. Media content often became the articulation of the alignment of values to action (through explicitly shared assumptions) but didn't reflect the process it took to get there.

### Case 1: YouthBuild Lawrence

#### Pattern 3: Media tool intervention events



(Figure 6.3)

4. Despite the alignment success in the small leadership group, this alignment wasn't immediately replicable with the larger network of the whole youth membership, perhaps because of my lack of capacity building with the staff

## **Major Takeaways in Case 1 YouthBuild Lawrence**

### ***Build Capacity of Youth AND Staff***

The group's inability to become autonomous and sustainable upon my departure can be attributed to more than a simple lack of local leadership or technical resources. On one level, the participants' strategy felt rushed to find a concrete issue and act on it, consequently leaving little room to connect with other community organizations or involve internal staff consistently.

On another level, we benefited from using program time to hold the planning sessions. However, my choice to base the campaign in an educational program, may have skewed the perspective of project as an experiment or short-term learning exercise.

Finally, even though the team visited MIT and presented their commercial to other Lawrence youth involved with MIT@Lawrence programs, we didn't have time to realize that their small actions were part of a larger network of activity. Their final reflections were disappointingly shallow, rushed by their desire to move on to the next thing.

In the end, the YouthBuild participants produced several pieces of media: a commercial, an articulate statement with 200 agreeing citizens' signatures, and a photomap poster of the most littered alleys. These participants displayed visible improvement in their capacity to articulate ideas and motivation to think about change as a possibility in their community. My intervention might have failed to spark sustainable action because I didn't focus on building the local capacity of the YouthBuild organization, namely through the staff, to capitalize on the campaign's outputs.

I did have a few conversations with staff about how they could learn from the project. Upon the executive director's request, I also wrote a proposal they could use to fundraise around acquiring in-house media production equipment. Nevertheless, the program essentially ended in their eyes when most of the participating members graduated the program. Then the staff was consumed with selecting the next year's participants and planning for new fall construction sites.

In post interviews six months later, one local staff member, Andre Gonzalez, did express that they had changed their fall orientation to include more member leadership development, discussion of community issues, and use of digital photography to document their work. But he didn't attribute this to any change in organizational philosophy or as a direct result of the spring's littering campaign (Martin, Gonzalez phone interview, December 5, 2008).

In the long run, I was able to use the opportunity to introduce the idea that new media tools as a catalyst for aligning individual youth member's core assumptions

to the shared values of their group and the YouthBuild organization. To replicate this with the full membership at the Lawrence site, I should have integrated the staff in the project in order to make this idea more organizationally sustainable.

### ***Focus More on Incremental Successes***

The participants never delivered the petition to DPW nor did they send the DVD of the commercial to the local cable access station. Nevertheless, the YouthBuild staff did not perceive the project as a failure. When I interviewed Andre Gonzalez, a few months later, I asked what he saw as the biggest benefit of my intervention. He responded that the real value was someone from outside caring to listen:

“For someone from the outside to come in and take the time...to ask them what they thought, that’s powerful because you [Danielle] didn’t have to do it here, which is immeasurable alone. When you took the time to actually see what they thought about certain issues and develop their own goals...it gave them ownership over it...The value is that they get to see someone who cares who doesn’t have to care.”

If I was able to build the capacity of the youth to speak and be heard, what were the lasting effects on the organization? How could participatory media tools have aided with the sustainability of these efforts? Perhaps I set realistic expectations for the members outcomes; I spent so much time exploring their interests and skills individually, discerning the shared values of the group, and devising actions that corresponded to both. In addition, I could have rolled these expectations up to the larger organization, using the successful alignment of the small leadership team to project this cultural analysis to the whole organization.

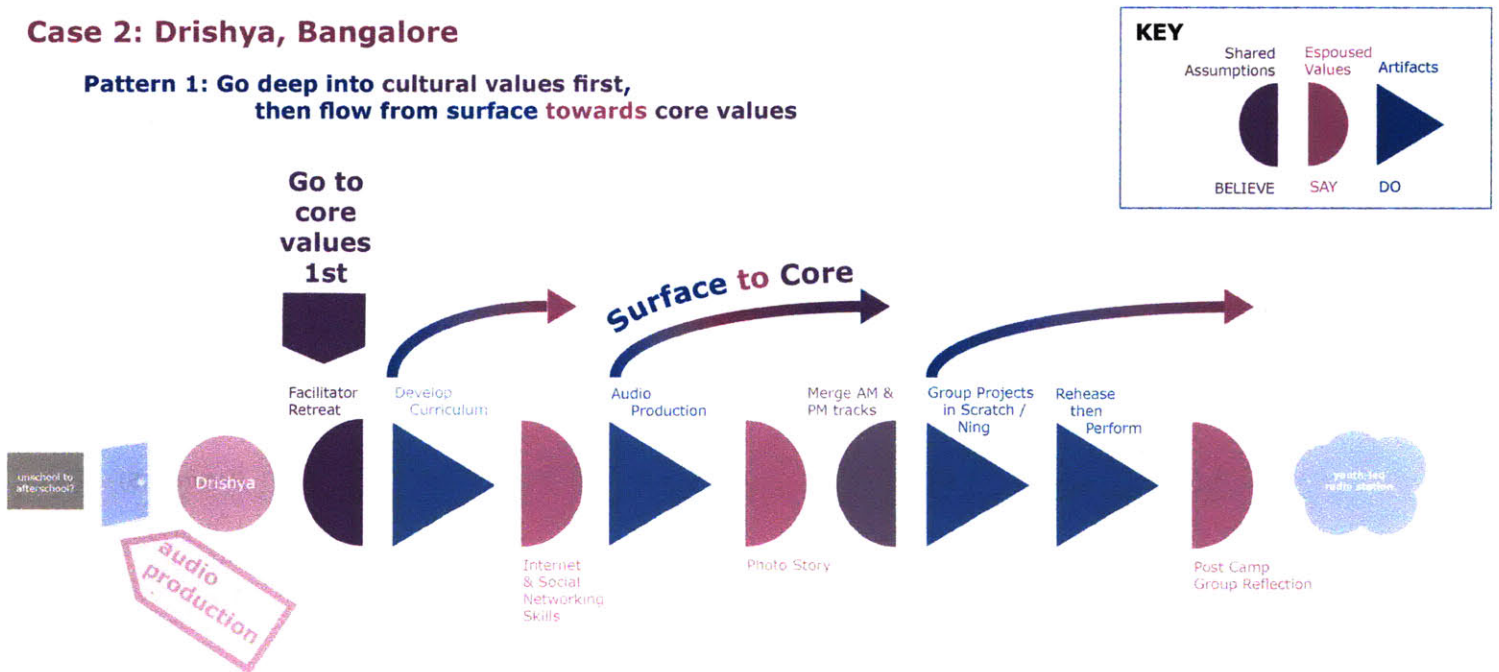
## Patterns in Case 2 Drishya, Bangalore

When I now analyze the collaborative facilitation of others and myself within the walls of Drishya, Bangalore, I can identify four critical patterns:

1. We started the program planning by explicitly discussing core values and shared assumptions, which was critical because of the breadth of experience and languages of the facilitation team and the short time frame. Even so, we began facilitation from a comfortable surface level of culture then delving into deeper core values (Figure 6.4).

### Case 2: Drishya, Bangalore

**Pattern 1: Go deep into cultural values first, then flow from surface towards core values**



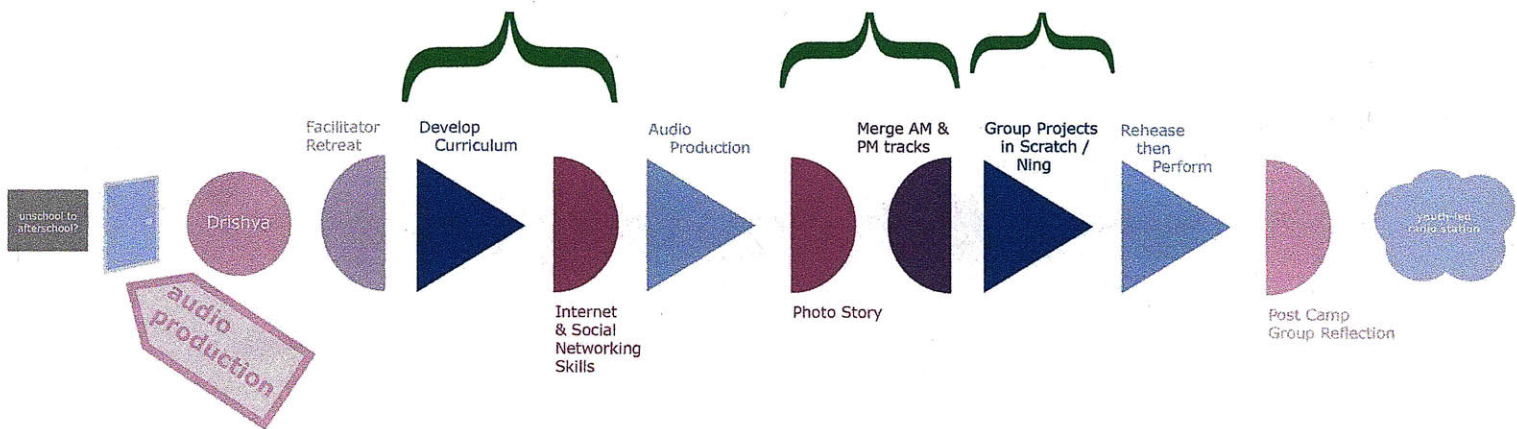
(Figure 6.4)

2. Our collaborative facilitation strategy benefited from iteration when we were able to:

- a. turn instances when I needed translation or clarification as a non-native observer into moments of reflection, and
- b. balance facilitation authority when we capitalized on opportunities to reverse the roles of facilitator-and-learner, by becoming learners ourselves (Figure 6.5).

**Pattern 2: Iteration through moments of**

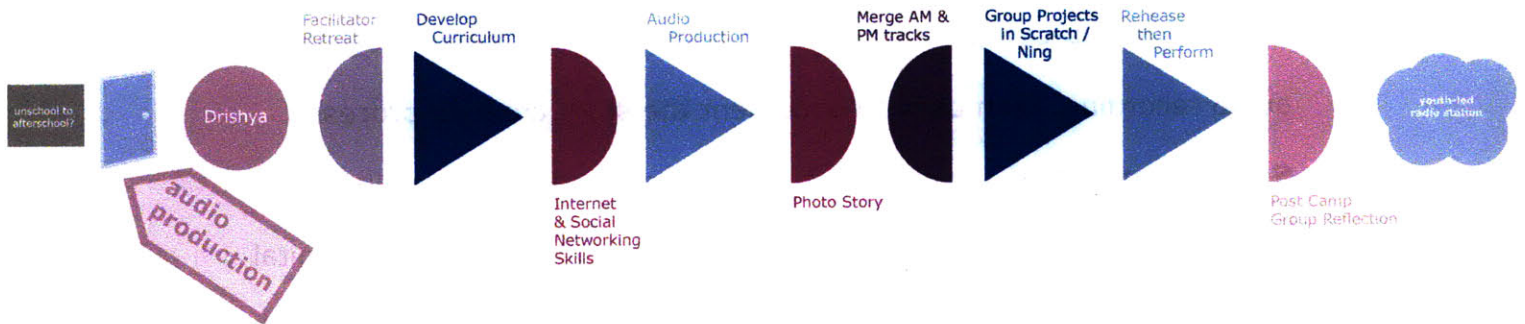
**non-native questions, reflection, & role-reversal**



(Figure 6.5)

3. Our facilitation team was most productive at building understanding and consensus among ourselves when we discussed both educational strategy and the choice of media tool. Interestingly, these moments didn't only happen when I coded our facilitation actions as touching the deepest values of Drishya's culture. We also made these decisions in both outside reflection time and in real-time during sessions with the youth (Figure 6.6).

**Pattern 3: Collaborative consensus when discuss both educational strategy and media tool**



(Figure 6.6)

## **Major Takeaways of Case 2 Drishya, Bangalore**

### ***Don't assume media tools are too sophisticated***

To summarize, the tools employed in this case included:

- **traditional oral storytelling & puppetry**, taught by local experts in a hands-on morning workshop
- **social network website**, Kathegala Khanaja [Story Bank], **on Ning.com**, designed by a Srishti School of Art, Design, and Technology undergraduate researcher and adapted to be in Kannada language, so youth could create both individual and story group profiles
- **Bahara translation open source software**, used by the youth to transliterate from English character keyboards into Kannada script, in order to post story drafts, reflections, and comments in Kannada
- Donated **Nokia cell phones**, used to learn about digital photography and audio recording, then used to document the story creation process
- **Scratch software**, developed at MIT Media Lab and also available in Kannada, which was used to create the animation "sets" for the digital puppetry show, projected onto a screen where the youth performed the puppet show.
- **Audacity audio editing software**, used to do interviews and edit sound effects for the Scratch animated backgrounds



(Figure 6.7 Kathegala Khanaja, member profile page, 2008)

Even given the plethora of technology employed, this case begins to sketch how the participation gap can persist in community organizations even if special consideration is paid to facilitation and capacity building. The tools became useful in this program when they naturally employed various expressions of local knowledge, tapping into traditional storytelling techniques or the local language. This connection to the value of the local had immense use in enlisting the youth's participation and creating a feeling ownership of the stories.

We used these tools to construct a practical skill-based learning environment, where ideas could have immediate concrete application to the "problem" of creating an original group puppet-based story. Scratch, in particular, was an accessible and open tool because it is based on:

- Non-linear, object orientation that encourages creativity

- Simple layers of accessible multi-media creation
- Open format and easy collaboration among small group members
- Connection to a larger international user group

However, this concentration on tools and performance, not planning a future process for youth empowerment, may have hindered the ultimate goal of seeding immediate youth ownership of the program. All involved, youth and adults, admitted in the end that we had tried to incorporate too many tools. The sessions became more increasing more adult-led in its final stages in order to “finish” the puppet stories for the final performances. Many argued that this performance became a new critical literacy for communication, but it may have sacrificed some of the ownership of the projects and didn’t leave flexibility for adaptation of this project into longer term programs.

### ***Redefine the role of facilitator***

The balance of skill sets with fluid adult facilitation roles allowed the learning space to evolve beyond a classic instructor into more of an expert and mentor. By reflecting in a journal and talking with my peers, I recognized several significant similar impacts on my own facilitation methods after this case including:

- a comfort in not depending on more “cookie cutter” curriculum to more open and iterative curriculum design
- a tendency to focus more on enabling local facilitators than leading workshops myself, with an eye to local sustainability

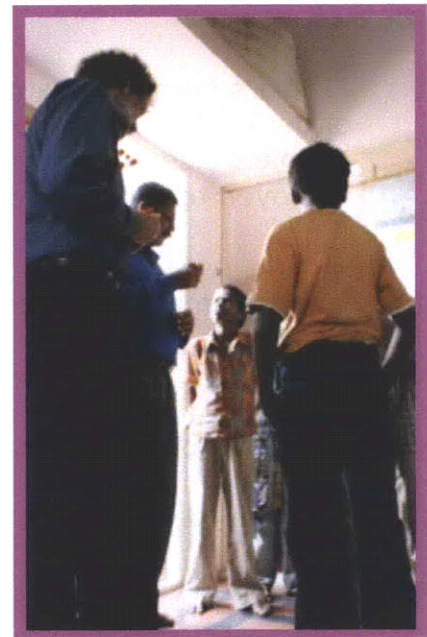
- a keen interest in exploring and sustaining traditional narrative storytelling practice, especially collective intelligence and holism (Michaels 1994), in new media contexts

### ***Move from pilot project to youth-led programs***

In its conception, the trans-media storytelling camp project had a primary goal to test the use of social networking websites to build basic Internet skills and to document the creative development of the camp project. This goal was overwhelming met, but the Ning site sometimes felt more like reporting and less like collaborative engagement for activating public voice. The Drishya youth clearly felt ownership of the Ning site within the context of the program and identified ways that these skills might be useful to do projects in their communities later.

When Mitch Resnick and other researchers from the MIT Media Lab who created the Scratch software

visited Drishya, the youth proudly repeated the puppet performance. Afterward, several youth confidently stood up in front of a room of American adults, gave Mitch honest feedback on how they could make the Scratch software his group had designed better or asked him how he built it so they could try. Based on the clearly abundant intelligence and budding confidence of these youth, Drishya staff are now searching for resources to create a new “safe” commons outside the Drishya “not-school” day, by moving directly into local slum communities and linking to larger



(Figure 6.8 Mitch Resnick gets tour of Drishya site from youth, August 2008)

neighborhood plans for action. In this case, the youth were able to use the space created by the camp sessions to test out new skills in recognizing problems and devising their own solutions.

But if there hasn't been evidence of further youth-led actions outside of the camp, in the regular school or in the wider community, *was this project just participatory exercise? Or could they have been first steps?* Rheingold, in his paper on civic engagement in MacArthur Foundation's Series on Digital Media and Learning, gave me a bit of hope:

"There's nothing innate about knowing how to apply their skills to the process of democracy. Internet media are not offered here as the solution to young people's disengagement from political life, but as a possibly powerful tool to be deployed toward helping them engage" (Rheingold 2008).

I can't just blame the overestimation of the organization's capacity on just their other planning workload during that time. In retrospect, these local staff and youth did get a great breadth of knowledge and experience, but lacked the depth of knowledge to feel confident or empowered to make the program sustainable after my intervention. Could this now be a moment to explicitly form youth leadership? Was this too "early" in the progression of Drishya as a youth program? I'm left with many questions around how to set appropriate expectations for my facilitative interventions but also for slowing down the expectations of organizational leaders and funders for these projects to build immediate capacity.

## **Comparative Analysis**

I spent two months after the Drishya camp bemoaning my failure to start a radio program. Yet, local staff and Ms. Narayanan still identified my intervention as

critical of the progression of Drishya into new forms of media storytelling. By retrospectively analyzing both cases, I was able to see how my progression from one project to the next influenced each other. These realizations builds a powerful argument that reflective practice be iterative and on going, not a luxury of isolated pauses or sabbaticals.

Although it sounds obvious, I first need to be more self-aware about how my towering expectations created frustrations that affect my subsequent actions. This realization proves that even the tested methods of experts like Schein need to be patiently tempered with on-the-ground realities. For instance, both my own and the instructor's high expectations of the short internship for the Ganz organizing class eclipsed the subtle yet important changes that I realized in the YouthBuild participants upon later reflection and interviews with staff.

I also identified a second common thread between the cases: the importance of not only finding the right tool or the right context, but also finding the right conspirators. I know I've been both deliberate and blessed to find experts, mentors, compatriots, volunteers, or an especially insightful youth participants to participate with me in these investigations. Many of these players explicitly expressed values that aligned with my own.

I've had the chance to learn from education experienced thinkers like Geetha Narayanan and Mitch Resnick and find co-patriots in grassroots investigation in students like Leo Burd and Kinnari Thakker. I've also learned valuable lessons in creativity and perseverance from local staff and youth who willingly shared their

daily lives with me. In the end, the goals of both technical skills building and increasing local capacity were so much more attainable if I found people who also agreed and vowed to take the time to collaborate and compromise to reach a shared “ends.”

These brief insights, despite the long journey I had to take to gain them, are too generalized or particular to the context, to be useful as a strategy that could be helpful for other facilitators. To reiterate, I started this journey with a primary question:

**How can participatory media tools be used to build the capacity of community organizations through member participation?**

After reviewing the literature and the details of each case, I now have a more detailed question:

**When I facilitate the adoption of participatory media, how can I**

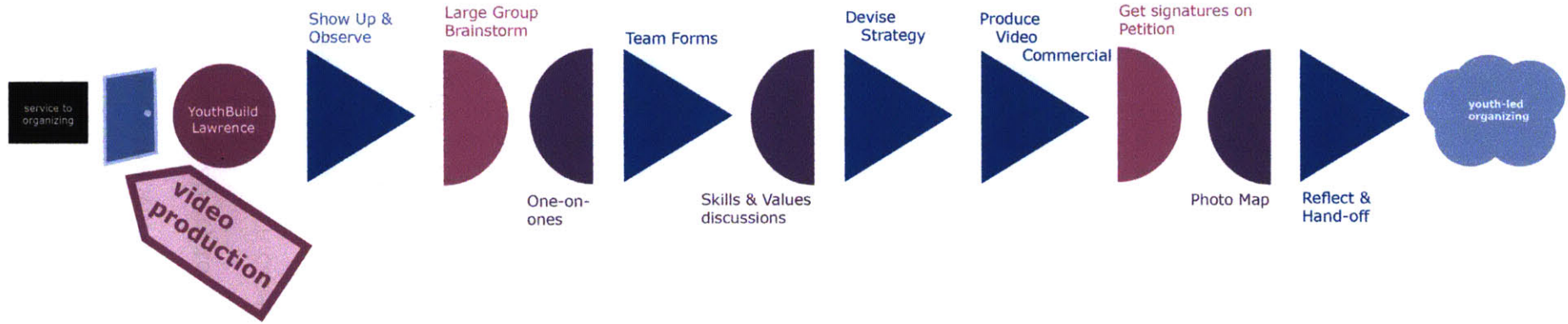
- **spark individual voice and participation,**
- **create critical moments to reflect on an organization’s culture, and**
- **transform how the organization learns and adapts?**

In order to answer these questions, this analysis will first reflect on the common challenges and opportunities that arose in each case. Then I will summarize my own facilitation strategy as both documentation and guide as I move forward to continuing to do this work and mentor others to do the same.

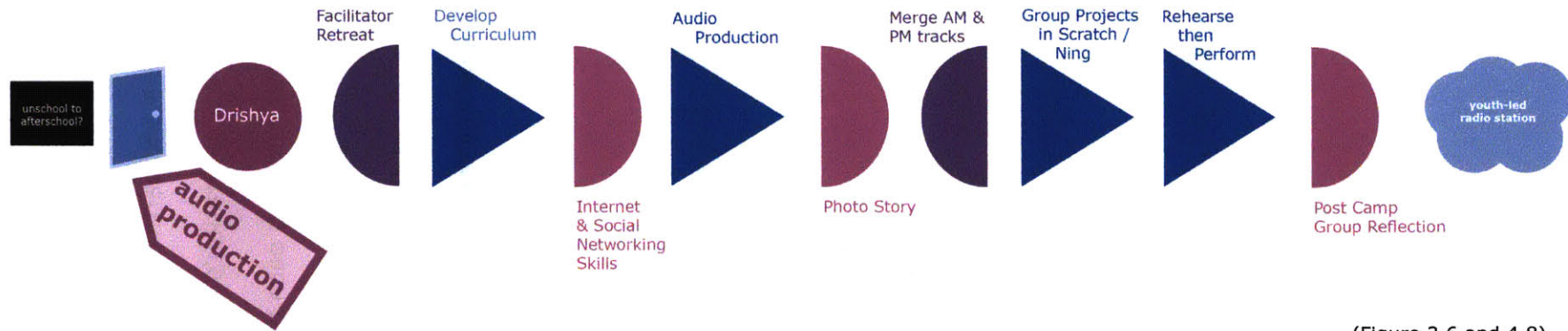
## **Balance – the Common Challenge & Opportunity**

My facilitation, plus the work of local staff, volunteers and participants, make up all factors that affect my ability to get at the root of the organization's culture. As I described at the end of each case, the exercise of diagramming each program as a narrative timeline allowed me to identify patterns of decisions and actions over the course of the case. These timelines also created a format that allows me to compare the patterns side-by-side and to identify common issues despite the variability of the local context as reactions to opportunities and challenges.

## Case 1: YouthBuild Lawrence Spring 2008



## Case 2: Drishya, Bangalore Summer 2008



(Figure 3.6 and 4.8)

Each organization deals with misalignment of values to action in different ways, making it necessary for an outside facilitator to adopt specialized techniques in order to support them. In the case of YouthBuild, I had to focus more on establishing trust and embedding my investigations into the core values in a casual manner. In contrast, the Drishya organizational members were much more comfortable discussing values yet I had to find the right moments to interject my questions and ideas into the already existing planning sessions.

These two organizations do share one simple challenge, finding balance. Organizations often forge ahead in the short term with the hope initial momentum will organically grow into long-term sustainability. The leaders of these organizations also know that immediate action on the ground needs to be balanced with future strategic planning discussions. In these moments where organizations pause to plan, these leaders can find useful opportunities to also balance between competing interests and conflicting values.

Based on the experience of the organizations described in these cases, I reflected on how I find balance when I'm facilitating interventions with new media tools within an organizational culture. My facilitative approach focuses on three dimensions of balance: (1) talking vs. acting, (2) individual vs. organizational capacity, and (3) process vs. product.

### ***Talking/Acting***

I begin each case in this thesis starts by sketching what an organization says in comparison to what it does. Through this process, we can understand how each organization starts from a different comfort level with explicitly discussing the core values both before and during program design and implementation.

Both organizations state a value of change in the local community, but each acts out this value very differently. Drishya, although it started as an outgrowth of Reddy's activism in the slums, is securely embedded in Project Vision's on-going cerebral and artistic cycle of innovation. YouthBuild, especially in the local program in Lawrence, starts from a nationalized vision communicated in orientation and weekly wrap-up discussions but ends in a foundation in learning through physical, hands-on learning. Both organizations value learning through acting, but Drishya prioritizes explicitly checking stated values to shared assumptions through its more iterative curriculum design cycle. Drishya prefers to balance the walk with talk on a regular basis.

Regardless of their preference, I had to find my own balance between planning and acting in each organization. I had to balance my technique to smoothly reach our goals and address any challenges that pop up along the way. At YouthBuild, I had to keep returning to a more shallow cultural level of actions in order to build the trust of the action-oriented youth. They had to believe that we were getting somewhere, so I even had to sign an agreement at one point to "stop planning and get to it." But when we were able to delve deeper into both their personal and our group's shared values, these common interests and skills became an indispensable

base for a series of actions that left many of the youth feeling empowered and the local staff impressed.

Consequently, when I arrived at Drishya just days after finishing up my time at YouthBuild Lawrence, I felt confident to dive right into working directly with the youth. While I valued their cultural tradition of continuously checking of our facilitation based on the shared values, my role grew to be the instigator of action and a mirror for the local staff. Since the staff had been so immersed in this philosophy, they sometimes found it hard articulate and thus transfer the cultural norms to others like myself and other new members. Both my probing and the looming final performance became catalysts for action.

### ***Individual/Organizational Capacity***

As discussed in the background chapter, one common assumption about new media technologies is that once every citizen has access to the hardware, software, and network tools, full participation will be inevitable. I've seen a version of this idealism morph in youth organizations into strategies that put technologies straight into the hands of the youth participation and assume they'll naturally begin to use it as a tool for civic engagement and activism. While both programs in these cases don't make this assumption, I discovered over the course of these two projects that I had formed a similarly hindering assumption about capacity building while facilitating the use of these tools. At several critical moments, I usually chose to focus on individual participant capacity over the usually less accessible local staff members, who arguably are key to organizational capacity.

For instance, because of the freedom the local YouthBuild staff had granted me to design my own project with the youth members, I felt a bit narrow-minded when I discovered quite late into the project that some of the local staff had existing interest and skills in media production. Over the course of the end of the campaign, I quickly tried to incorporate more participation of staff like Michael and Andre in both the actions and skills building. I realized I had failed to balance building individual capacity with that of the organization through its more permanent fixtures, the staff.

I kept this realization in the forefront of my mind when I stepped into a different facilitation role in the Drishya project. While the primary goal of the trans-media storytelling camp track was to escalate the creative and technical networking expertise of the youth, I also facilitated experiences where the staff learned new skills along side of their youth

participants. Harkening back to my Computer Clubhouse days, I coached both the university

students and the Drishya facilitators in the lessons I'd learned using constructionist techniques to reinforce the skills of trial-and-error that are essential when learning to use media creation tools. I often found myself using an instance when I had to have the local facilitators translate a youth's question into an opportunity. For example, I would explain to the local facilitator how I would answer in English, then kept an eye on the facilitator-participant pair as they tried to figure out the answer



(Figure 6.9 New local facilitator, Murali, learns to give feedback on youth storyboards. June 2008)

together based on my input. At the end of my stay in Bangalore, I asked a few of the local facilitators how I could help best before I departed and their answer was overwhelmingly to hold a facilitator training in Scratch.

In both cases, I admit that I might have leaned too far onto the side of participant capacity and this may have been a factor in the long-term sustainability of the projects after my departure. I know, however, that this tension between focusing on individual and group capacity, will exist in any community organization, but at least this reflective journey has left me with the imperative to plan for dichotomy from the beginning of the project planning process.

### ***Process/Product***

Earlier this year, I found myself espousing in a class discussion that I'm always going to choose process over product. This inclination is rooted in youth and adult media creation workshops where the seemingly rough or unfinished piece didn't encapsulate all the learning that led up to it. Upon reflection of these cases, I noticed I consistently prioritize process over product isn't a good overall facilitation strategy. Sometimes you need a concrete success, especially in the form of a finished media piece to spark understanding and/or deeper commitment. The delayed photomap in the case of YouthBuild and Kinnari's impromptu cumulative photo story challenge at Drishya are both moments when a small product crystallized understanding for participants.

The tension between focusing on process or product is an especially hard duality to negotiate when external concerns, such as parents or funders, come into play. In

my experience, it's rare to find opportunities to have enough resources (energy or time) to achieve both a capacity building process and an impressive media output. However, one common facilitative technique I've learned to account for this tension is to be very explicit and deliberate about making the decision to lean either way with both local staff and participants. It also helps to keep track of your tendencies over time in order to achieve balance over the whole course of the project.

## **Collaborative Facilitation Strategy based on Organizational Culture and Learning**

This second half the of the analysis will focus an answering a question that I and other practitioners in the youth development and organizing fields often feel impossible to truly answer:

### **How do I collaboratively facilitate?**

The challenge of describing practice was addressed by Schön in his book, *The Reflective Practitioner*:

"When we go about the spontaneous, intuitive performance of the actions of everyday life, we show ourselves to be knowledgeable in a special way. Often we cannot say what it is that we know. When we try to describe it we find ourselves at a loss, or we produce descriptions that are obviously inappropriate. Our knowing is ordinarily tacit, implicit in our patterns of action...It seems right to say that our knowing is in our action" (Schön 1983, 49).

While it's relatively simple to describe actions and reactions, I now realize that some of these actions were deliberate and explicit, while some were implicit, instinctual, or a result of years of experience.

But I don't ascribe to the adage that good facilitators are born, not taught. Consequently, I hope to borrow from community organizing doctrine and describe my facilitative technique as a strategy, made up of not only activities or tactics, but also timing and targets (Figure 6.10). Marshall Ganz breaks down strategic action into these three elements in order to help organizers adapt common practice to changes in the environment or specificity of context. While tactics define the activity within the strategy, timing involves finding "teachable" moments of opportunity and targeting concentrates existing resources for the most significant impact (Ganz 2006, 71-2)

### Facilitation Strategic Actions

By describing each case as a narrative, the linear timeline reveals patterns in my timing, with both proactive and reactive actions corresponding to opportunities and constraints. However, since every case has unique timing, it becomes hard to predict the entrainment of future



(Figure 6.10)

events and create a pre-determined set of steps that can be generalized across contexts. Thus, it is also helpful to also consider how and why I make targeting decisions around how deep into the organizational culture my action aims to reach.

Targeting, in this context, involves who and what resources a facilitator aims to employ to make the greatest impact on the transformation of the individual

participants, the program, and the overall organizational culture to re-align actions to espoused values and shared assumptions. Therefore, the following list of tested facilitation actions (and useful participatory media tools) is first grounded in the timing of some common critical reflection or decision moments, but is also grouped by the targeted depth of the loop of learning into an organization's culture.

### ***Artifacts***

Single loop learning strategy involves adapting action so it might seem superficial or easy. However, Schein advised that the artifacts level is sometimes the hardest to decipher because motivations are so implicit or habitual (Schein 1992, 22). Thus facilitation actions devised to touch this level of culture often seem the most simple to an outsider but often demand the most internal concentration of the facilitator:

1. **Show up and jump in:** Often timed at the beginning of a project but often useful at moments of group freezing, this tactic often involves getting your hands dirty, looking like a participant, or sitting through longer meetings or on stoops waiting for the critical moment for support or relationship-building. Case examples included volunteering for a day at the YouthBuild worksite (Event 1) or making my own puppet with curly q hair to spark creativity in the last stages of the Drishya puppet workshops (Event 7).
2. **Get structured to get loose:** In organizations like YouthBuild, structured programs are more predictable and comfortable for youth in unstable neighborhoods; but sometimes this structure isn't a product of a collaborative process where the youth participants chose the structure. One particularly challenging facilitative technique is the constant negotiation between leading and stepping back to let the participants build appropriate

norms of behavior, all the while keeping a close eye to key intervention moments and hints of leadership to foster. With both the YouthBuild youth and the Drishya staff, I tried to pair one-on-one praise and confidence building with group techniques like stopping the discussion to point out a potential leader's insight and asking them to repeat it.

3. **Be the change first (modeling):** In moments when you're first introducing a new media tool or organizing action that the participants have never seen before, a bit of facilitative modeling helps the participant form an concrete conception of usually abstract or new idea. At Drishya, founder Ms. Narayanan often organized the first iteration of the curriculum but then allows the facilitators and youth change it completely to fit their interests. In turn, I used modeling by showing my videos about Lawrence to the YouthBuild members before making their own commercial, or when I created a puppet and manipulated it in front of a Scratch project on a monitor to explain our final show idea to the local artists and the youth.

I've found that two participatory media tools are useful as part of facilitation at this more superficial level of culture:

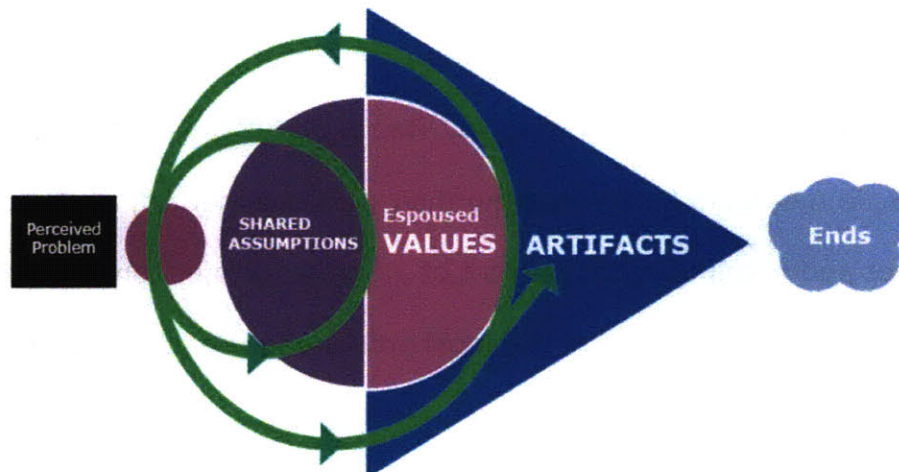
1. individual **digital photography** projects aggregated together on one group website page, or
2. a **personal profile page for each facilitator** on a social network that is seeded with many kinds of content.

Both of these tools are usually familiar to most youth participants, and a good number of adults. Since they're friendly, they have low barrier to entry for those

with little technical expertise. These tools can also be used to spark quick individual or group projects right at the beginning of a longer program. Then, participants can use the media content created by these two tools as building blocks for more sophisticated projects like photo collages, websites, and video slideshows later. The photos participants choose the way they describe themselves on a profile page can also be useful launching points for deeper discussions about identity.

### ***Espoused Values***

#### **Double Loop Organizational Learning**



(Figure 2.5)

The deeper second loop of learning strategy (Figure 2.5) concentrates on facilitating discussion and experiences that confirm a consensus on the espoused values of the organization. Most of the facilitation at this level is a lot like ballroom dancing, because it involves observing but using your impressions as beginning points of conversation or chances to step in, but all at the right time, with the right tools, and with the right people:

4. **Stand back and then dive in:** Observation usually comes at the beginning but also should be a cyclical part of facilitation. I found it useful to defer some decisions to local staff or the participants themselves, but use these points of passivity as springboards when I have new or valid interjections. Case examples include when I let YouthBuild staff choose the leadership team but I added Ganz meeting agenda format (Event 4 & 5) or at Drishya when I willing let my initial curriculum get rejected but brought my Scratch peer mentoring techniques into play later on.
5. **Start where they're at, then innovate:** Again, assessing the existing skills and resources of the participants shouldn't be confined to the first stages of a project. A facilitative process of constantly checking what participants already know or care about often leads to critical moments where you can interject new tools into existing behaviors, building individual confidence and promoting peer mentoring. In the case of new media tools, I found media tools as new ways to help the participants come to consensus on values, especially toward the end of the project, such as the process of writing the script for the YouthBuild anti-littering commercial (Event 7) or having each Drishya youth write individual summary blog posts of their puppet stories and read those of their fellow team members (Event 7).

Choosing a tool for this level of cultural facilitation means doing a casual but critical **technology assessment of the participant's existing technology literacy or areas of interest.** At YouthBuild, many of the youth had seen music videos by local artists (including one of the YouthBuild staff) or public service announcements on the local cable access station, so the choice to make a video commercial aligned

well with their interests. In the case of Drishya, we chose to use Scratch software because some of the youth had used it before so it created a space where we could let the youth play then ease in to expand the complexity of their animations.

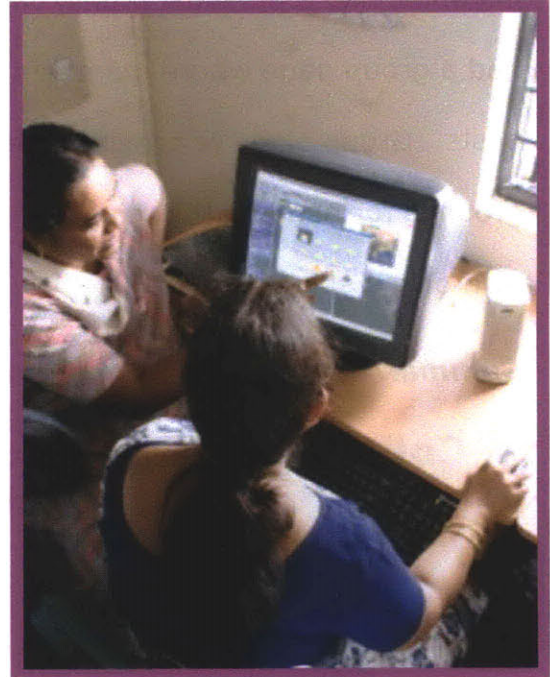
### ***Shared Assumptions***

The most pervasive double loop organizational learning is uncomfortable and disruptive, so facilitators should approach this level of cultural change with caution and patience, two things I'm admittedly still learning as both a human and practitioner.

6. **Be casually ignorant but insightful:** Over the course of any project where I am new to the organization, I ask what some would term "dumb questions" in an effort to explicitly discuss how actions point to implicit assumptions in a comfortable space where I'm not judging the staff and participants but rather trying to figure them out. For instance, I gladly used my role as an academic inquirer when I embedded my observations in questions as foreigner at Drishya during the iterative curriculum discussions or asked YouthBuild members to answer my questions in a new way or to give an example in the one-on-one interviews (Event 3).
7. **Be clear about your story:** As I quickly learned when one YouthBuild member stumped me in a one-on-one interview when he asked me about why I was there, being open and honest about your own values as a facilitator creates moments that can lead to reciprocal participant reflections. It also helps to use this tactic when you have a misunderstanding or a roadblock, as I did when Ms. Narayanan early on at Drishya rejected my first

attempt at a curriculum and we came to better consensus when we explicitly discussed the values that motivated our instructional approaches (Event 2).

8. **Everyone is a facilitator:** If an organization has the core value of participation (as most youth organizing focused do), then facilitating horizontal learning is critical. But as these cases have shown, this aspiration of reaching to the top of Hart's ladder of participation is not easy task, especially in teacher-student relationships that hinge on pervasive assumptions about authority and power. My tactic to facilitate this value alignment is an incremental translation of the "peer" role in adult-youth relationships based on trust and willingness to let things fail before they succeed.



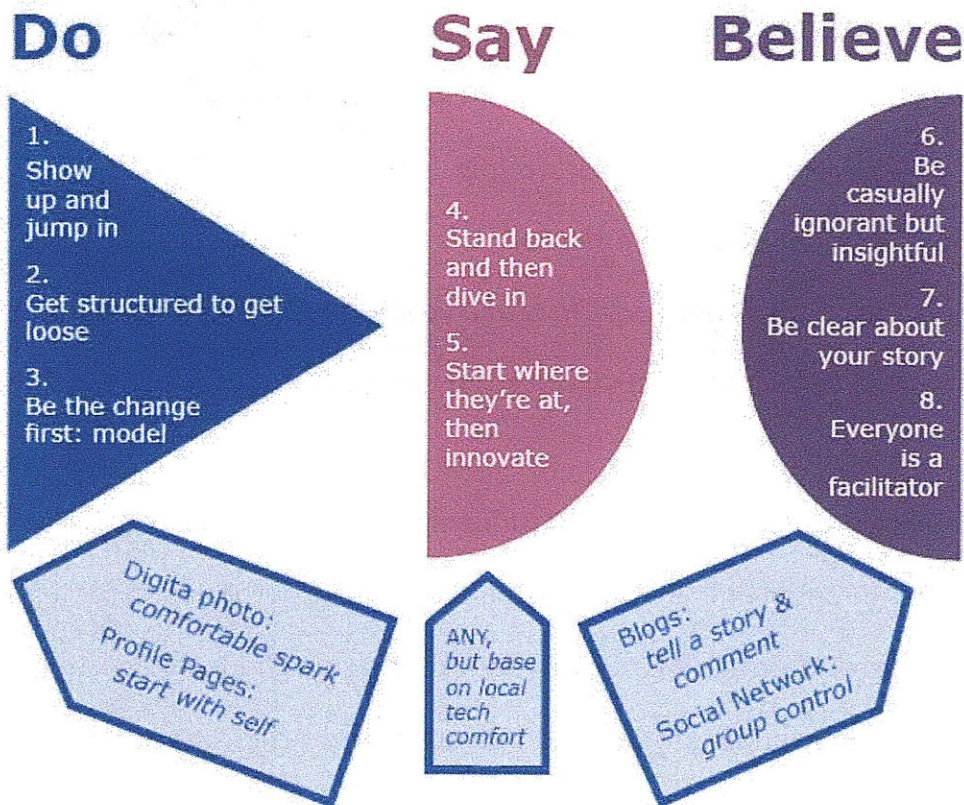
(6.11 Local facilitator, Shylaja, took her new knowledge learned from the youth and shared it with other facilitators, August 2008)

This up-ending of the power relationship worked well when I purposefully became an actor and let two youths direct the YouthBuild commercial (Event 7) or when I prompted Drishya youth to instruct the local artists about how to record their audio stories and upload them to the Ning website (Event 7 & 8).

**Blogs and social networking tools** are especially useful when facilitating to this deep level of culture, because their functionality allows for individual contributions that can be commented on or adapted by the group. Each Drishya youth, for instance, had a personal profile page on the Ning site, but each puppet story also had a group page where members of the group could comment on each other's posts. Group blogs or private networks on Ning also make excellent testing grounds for handing the reins over to participants to design and administrate their own online spaces.

**Summarizing a Facilitation Strategy**

**Collaborative Facilitation Strategy  
& Participatory Media Tools**



(Figure 6.12)

By positioning these eight facilitation tactics and tools within the structure of organizational culture and learning, I have crafted a framework that describes my facilitation strategy (Figure 6.8). Given both the descriptions of my actions and concrete case examples, this framework can serve as a personal guide in future projects because it allows for flexibility in timing and targeting depending on the local context. By capitalizing on the openness to cultural adaptation that new technology adoption creates, a collaborative facilitator like myself can work with local staff and participants to use new participatory media tools as both the hook and the grease that reduces friction as we attempt to cultivate both individual skills and capacity to act as a team or organization.



## Chapter 7 – Epilogue: Next Steps at Union Crossing

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### **Mentor New Facilitators? - The M@L Lawrence Practicum**

Every good story could have a sequel. When I started writing this narrative journey in the fall of 2008, I intended to apply my newly defined facilitation techniques as a community practitioner in the field after graduate study. However, a more immediate opportunity arose to explore these ideas. Starting in that fall, I became the teaching assistant for the MIT Department of Urban Studies & Planning's (DUSP) spring 2009 Practicum course set in Lawrence, MA, *11.423 Information, Asset-building, and the Immigrant City*.

I soon realized that the course could be chance to test if my facilitation strategy could be adapted for organizations focused on the participation of adults as well as youth. But more interestingly, the course became a chance to test how I could mentor the students in my facilitative strategy, as a tool to be more collaborative planners while building the capacity of local community organizations. My challenge, if I chose to accept it, was to answer a new question:

**How do I mentor others to become collaborative facilitators?**

### **Context**

#### ***Practicum as a Program***

The Practicum is an experiential-based course required as part of the Masters in City Planning degree, which strives to pair academic theory building and reflection with real-time action for a community "client"—basically, a studio with a real world

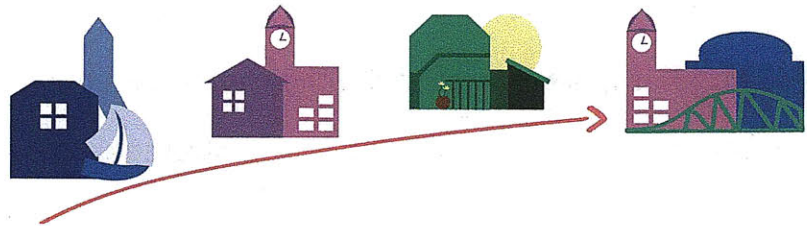
project for planners and community development aspirants. The focus for Spring 2009 was based Lawrence Community Work's Union Crossing (UC) project:

"An innovative mixed-use affordable housing mill redevelopment project...aims to simultaneously transform the physical, economic, social, and psychological dimensions of the site by combining a variety of contemporary tools...It also holds tremendous potential as a new model of redevelopment capable of altering the broader landscape of power and hope for its own people as well as those living in America's other 150 forgotten cities (Hoyt and Glenn, 11.423 course syllabus 2009)."

This particular semester's challenge for the students was formulated by community partners, the two formal instructors, Lorlene Hoyt and Ezra Haber Glen, and myself, to explore how historical narratives and new media storytelling tools could be utilized to document and build community around a mill redevelopment.

**Organizations in Alignment**

For the past seven years, the Lawrence Practicum course has been a key instrument for action in the larger



(Figure 7.1 Progression from Charlestown to M@L Practicum)

MIT@Lawrence (M@L) city-campus partnership, as discussed in my first case.

Originally, I jumped at the chance to work as an M@L graduate assistant because I saw it as a way to keep working on the ground but still expand my mindset through interdisciplinary investigation. It was no accident that I felt drawn to both this community project and the Practicum's unique learning space, as I had been to YouthBuild and Drishya. Perhaps this Practicum hooked me with the juxtaposition of new media tools and two unique organizations, MIT@Lawrence (M@L) and Lawrence CommunityWorks (LCW) (see Figure 7.2 or expanded sketch in Appendix 7.1).

## Practicum Organizational Culture



(Figure 7.2)

I recognize that I'm both an architect and artifact as a M@L staff for the past four semesters. After four semesters of weekly individual and group reflection, I'd describe M@L's core assumptions as:

- Equity in research and practice, because urban planning shouldn't focus only on big cities and for-profit development
- Innovation is critical the development of both media and technology tools and participatory planning processes
- Knowledge can originate and flow in multiple directions

(M@L Staff reflections on MatLStaff.ning.com, MITatLawrence.net, Hoyt and Leroux 2007)

M@L sustains the engagement of its network through programs of formal courses and workshops and less formal research assistantships, internships, and volunteer opportunities. At the end of my first year, I eagerly became a co-facilitator of a process to form a new more student-run management strategy that aligned closer to the group's core values. This new strategy opened up new opportunities for greater breadth of partners and greater depth of knowledge created and flowing in multiple directions. Then as the Practicum teaching assistant, I aimed to facilitate a process where additional students in the Practicum course could not only engage with the context of Lawrence but also work side-by-side with community practitioners to identify or adapt participatory media content and tools using collaborative facilitation strategies.

When instructor Lorlene Hoyt first described her intention to concentrate the Practicum's work on the Union Crossing project, I immediately agreed that because M@L's core values are aligned with the project's developer, Lawrence CommunityWorks. In 1999, LCW formed from the remains of a mostly inactive community development corporation (CDC), fueled by the energy of three MIT Department of Urban Studies and Planning graduates and the network organizing visions of a seasoned community development practitioner. The organization's open and fluid network model was based on flexible plans and provisional groups in an open architecture (Plastrik 2004), with a strategy based on a group of espoused values that include:

1. Form should follow function, avoiding restricting bureaucratic structures or cronyism
2. Build issue based affiliation networks that are based in

- collective benefits,
  - space for authentic voice,
  - resonant interest of the network,
  - and last as only as long as necessary;
3. Invest in the process, not outcomes;
  4. Create sustained, grassroots engagement spaces that are functional, diverse, interactive, and FUN (Lawrence CommunityWorks 2009, Traynor 2005)

LCW's implementation model, now honed and recognized in the community organizing field, aims to create a functioning public sphere. The organizational culture builds habits of participation in the predominantly Latino and low-income resident base through organic "neighbor circles," voter engagement campaigns, Movement City (a youth arts after-school program)<sup>31</sup>, and real estate development projects like Union Crossing.

These programs focus on both individual and group advancement, using educational and skills based learning as a motivation (LCW Network Organizing Forum: Autumn/Winter 2008 Workshop Series brochure 2008). The civic engagement aim, then, is not to "plug" members of the network into existing programs like a consumer, but rather empower them to proactively design deliberately open-ended processes for themselves (Gibson 2006).

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<sup>31</sup> Movement City is "a "virtual city" where young people (ages 10-18 year old) explore their potential through design and performing arts, and choose to participate in a wide range of economic, academic, leadership development and collective action activities (Martinez 2008).

### ***Perceived Problem***

While these two organizations share similar core values, they formed in response to problems of power balance in their respective local contexts, the city and the campus. MIT@Lawrence originally formed in an effort to create a longer term relationship than just a semester course but also to shift the direction in which knowledge flows between MIT as an institute and community. Using the base of the three DUSP alumni that moved on to LCW, the partnership iteratively adapted new learning spaces away from a technocratic “ivory tower” approach when the university only brings down expertise to the community.

In turn, LCW formed as organization to combat the effects of economic decline Lawrence suffers as the industrial engine of apparel manufacturing leaks out of the city was on the most vulnerable residents. However, the organization also perceived a problem in the collective mindset of disempowerment on top of economic decline, where residents became increasingly disengaged with their community, absorbing the dominant narrative of decline propagated by commercial media (Hoyt and Leroux 2007).

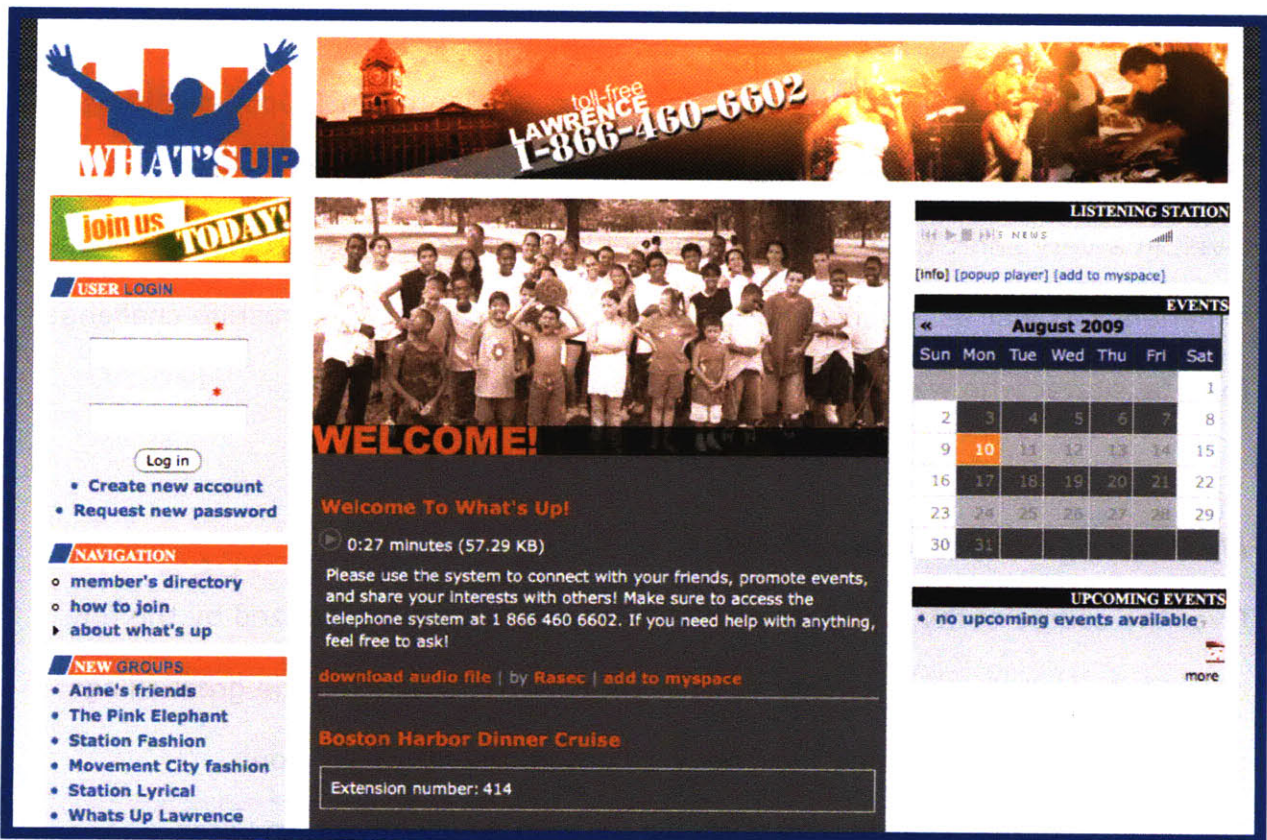
While the disparities that prompted the formation of M@L and LCW are important to this chapter, the real problem that I faced was the challenge of creating a short-lived but meaningful ad-hoc organization out of the group that was formed by the Practicum course. While the group of graduate assistants and interns that form the core of M@L go through a formal orientation and met on a weekly basis to build the norms and strategy of the organization, the participants in the Practicum class were new to the cultures of all the organizations involved.

In essence, I had a crew of “outside” facilitators to mentor and support in their own journey to tackle a community wide problem, from a very specific organizational level, in a very short time. The demands of the course as a rewarding academic experience as well as a benefit to the community created an interesting challenge for a facilitator who was defining her own approach in tandem.

### ***My Point of Entry and the Hook(s)***

Over the course of my first year with M@L, I was instantly energized by the few chances to visit the programs of LCW. I witnessed firsthand all the great things LCW could accomplish using their network organizing strategy, from homeownership counseling, to affordable housing development, to voter engagement, and much more. After two semesters watching LCW from a far, I was bursting with ideas around how they could adopt more new media technologies to take their grassroots actions even further.

But I also knew that other MIT students, including Leo Burd, had tried unsuccessfully to build sustainable tools for LCW to expand their successful network model to online spaces. Burd’s attempt to create a customized participatory media wasn’t hindered only by constraints like access or availability of appropriate technology and the technology literacy of the adults or youth themselves. Burd used existing tools, namely members’ cell phones, and open-source technologies like the Drupal content management system. In the end, he developed a model a mobile phone based organizing communication system, What’s Up, based on several collaborative design cycles with MC staff and youth.



(Figure 7.3 What's Up Lawrence website, <http://www.whatsuplawrence.org/>, Burd 2007)

However, they didn't sustain in actively using the system after his departure as an external facilitator. Burd concluded that both a lack of realistic expectations on staff and organizational capacity were the main barriers to full adoption of the What's Up tool in Movement City's programs (Burd 2007).

After a few preliminary meetings, I identified several points of entry for both myself and the future Practicum course students as facilitators, based on the goals of setting clear expectations and seeding local ownership of the project after our departure:

- Integrating youth involvement in Real Estate: The Real Estate department of LCW, who houses the Union Crossing project, has always struggled to

incorporate youth as active leaders in their participatory planning processes and they valued my youth engagement experience.

- Partnering with the Lawrence History Center (LHC): The local historical preservation non-profit was interested in documenting the redevelopment of a historic mill while also integrating youth involvement; they also brought a slew of equipment and adult volunteers to the table.
- Digital storytelling and production: Both community partners were interested in not only my technical skills in digital video and audio production, but also my experience training all kinds of community members in doing their own interviewing and storytelling.
- “Showing up” and being “real”: My commitment to M@L and to persistently showing up to meetings and chances to observe did not go unnoticed. When I incorporated a day of observation at Movement City into a paper they could use for their own documentation, the local staff graciously made time to meet with me after I proved my interest in making my efforts mutually beneficial for both my own studies and the local organization<sup>32</sup>. (internal M@L Project Description report, December 2008)

By combining the strengths of these two organizations with the students as facilitators under the umbrella of shared values, the culture of the Practicum course had the potential to be both mutually beneficial and effective (see Appendix 7.1).

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<sup>32</sup> In a later interview, Movement City director, Misael Martinez, cited one moment in that first observation day that proved to him that I was “real.” He was walking me through the program rooms during the drop-in time, including a dance or fashion design studio, computer lab for graphic design and video production, and a music-recording booth. Some youth were recording their voices over beats they had constructed themselves. I stopped asked the youth to play the music for me and congratulated them on their beats being “hot.” Misael told me later that this moment of enthusiasm and attempt to talk with the youth at their own level had proven to him I could be an outside partner that still “got” the youth at LCW (M@L Internal staff blog, Fall 2008).

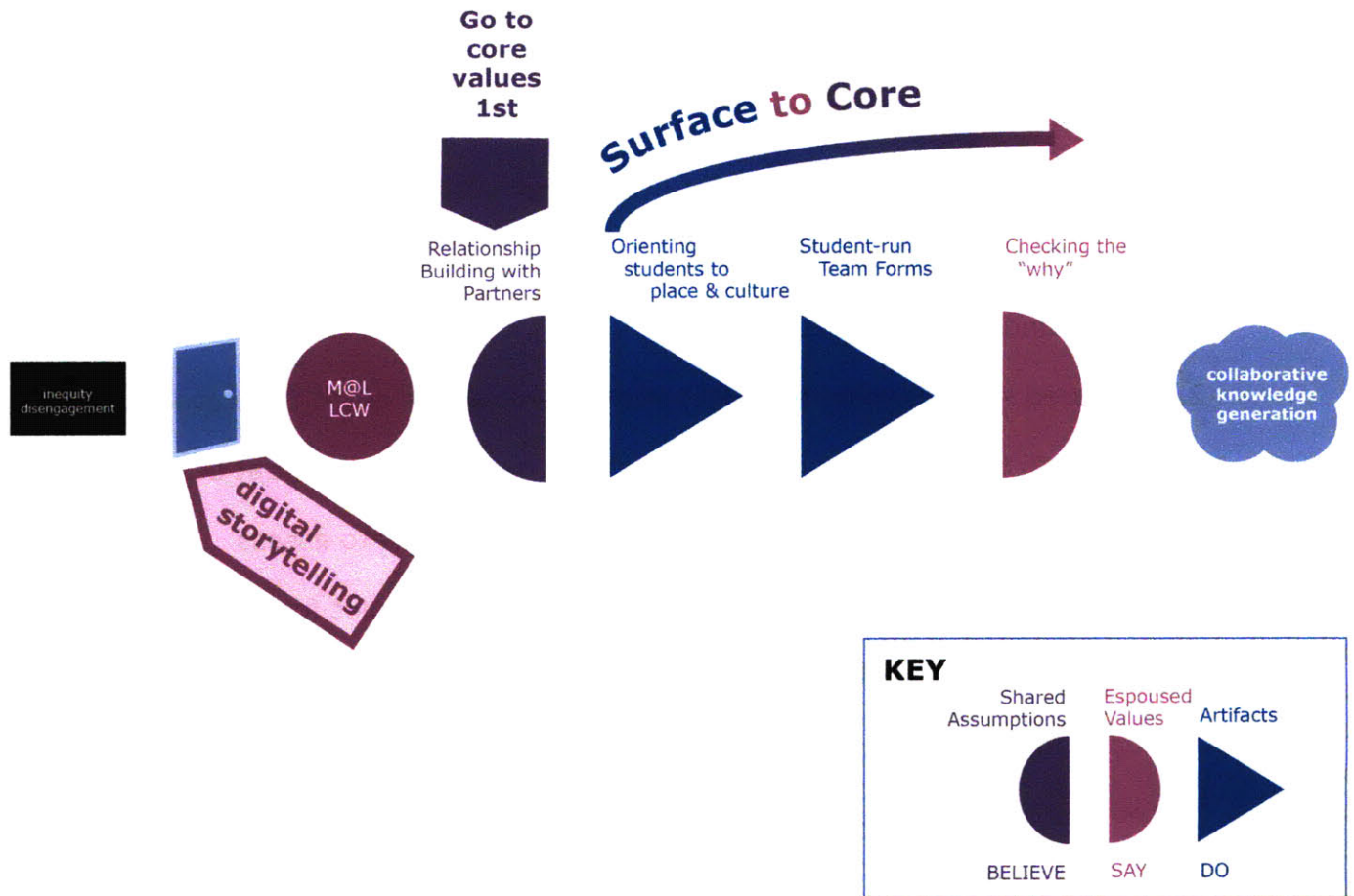
For me, as the teaching assistant and subject matter expert, I entered the spring semester hoping the course would offer a chance to expand my progression as a facilitator. By building on this alignment, I focused on training and guiding others in the design of a new program that capitalized on this alignment, using participatory media tools as a catalyst.

### **Testing My Facilitation Strategy Through Mentoring New Facilitators**

This chapter of my story is unique because it is formed from a collective set of formal and informal reflections of both the course participants and myself. This reflective data came from individual and group reflection assignments and discussions, project reports for the MIT@Lawrence initiative, working session notes, and final course outputs and presentations. However, the key events will concentrate on my actions, and inactions, as a facilitator in the process.

In a small effort to appraise my newly articulated facilitation strategy (for review, see Figure 6.8), I'll examine several key events of the Practicum course to not only the level of organizational culture my actions hoped to touch, but also if I was able to mentor others in the facilitation actions I suggested for reaching each level (see Figure 7.4).

## Epilogue: StoryMill at Union Crossing, MIT@Lawrence Spring 2009



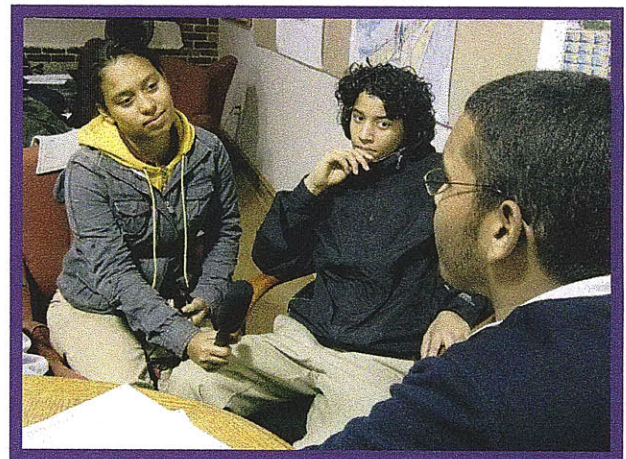
(Figure 7.4)

### **Event 1: Building Relationships and Trust**

After some patient conversations, I committed to building rapport with the various partners by starting as an organizational observer looking for the individual benefit to each organization involved, including not only the primary partner LCW, but also the Lawrence History Center, Movement City, LCW's youth development arm, and Groundwork Lawrence, an environmental change non-profit.

During the preceding fall semester and winter break of January 2009, I built this trust and my own understanding of the partners core values and motivations through three activities:

1. I conducted a weekly digital storytelling hands-on train the trainer workshops in the fall with two Movement City youth instructors, to help them incorporate first-person narrative video creation in their existing graphic design and video courses.
2. I secured some funding from MIT Public Service Center (PSC) to conduct a one-month technology and communications needs assessment at LCW; using both one-on-one interviews and meeting observations to assess organization's current use of new media and technologies for organizing and storytelling in order to make recommendations for realistic strategies for adopting new media tools and communication processes.
3. I worked with Union Crossing program manager Dan Koff and LHC executive director Barbara Brown to conduct oral history interview trainings with Movement City and Groundwork Lawrence Green team youth, to produce audio interviews with departing Southwick mill employees and other key UC players (<http://uchistory.ning.com>).



(Figure 7.5 Green Team youth practice interview technique, January 2009)

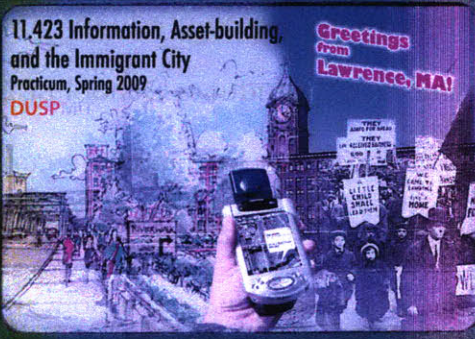
(Martin, M@L internal blog post November 5, 2008, PSC report March 2009)

As the spring semester neared, the course syllabus (see Figure 7.6) became an artifact of all the partners' shared assumptions and espoused values, with a basic strategy for the practicum students to expand upon.

During this process, I become very articulate about the approach of the course and my values as a facilitator and media producer.

Later when I arrived in Lawrence with these students in tow to do research or present their ideas, I was welcomed both as a friend and a colleague. I attest this trust to reciprocity of the space and time I took to learn about their organizational cultures and the explicit discussion of the alignment of their values to my own. These preliminary actions allowed me to tell a more compelling story about media as a community-building tool, to both the partners and the newly recruited class participants.

**11.423 Information, Asset-building, and the Immigrant City**



In this course, we will explore two important historical "threads" (with our partner, the Lawrence History Center) (1) energy and technical innovation, most recently "green" public and private-sector initiatives and (2) organizing and mobilizing people for change, from the Bread and Roses Strike of 1912 to LCW's nationally renowned "network organizing" model.

The practicum, as a course for students throughout MIT and from local universities, will explore this project in three phases:

1. identifying historical themes and documenting their influence or connection with the grassroots process of development of UC,
2. perennial challenges, comparative advantages, and strengths of Lawrence as one "forgotten" city, and
3. participatory action-research using innovative information and communication technologies to develop specific strategies and prototypes for Union Crossing to incorporate historical narratives and oral histories both physically and virtually

This action-based inquiry will be uniquely based on tapping into both historical practices and community successes & failures to encourage shared knowledge creation and dissemination in the future...all using cool new media and technology tools!

(blurb from syllabus and course recruiting materials 12/3/09)

(Figure 7.6)

## ***Event 2: Orientation = Formal and Informal "Jumping In" ►***

After recruiting seven graduate students and one undergraduate student from MIT and Harvard's Graduate School of Design, the first phase of the Practicum course was a quick immersion into the context of Lawrence, the mission and strategies of the organizational partners, Union Crossing as a project, and the themes of (1) energy and technical innovation, and (2) organizing and mobilizing for change (Practicum syllabus January 22, 2009). This quick fire orientation included readings, formal presentations and tours, and informal visits and volunteering.

Although many of the students, upon reflection, cited that this orientation process was too much observation without action (the first four weeks of a fifteen week semester), the students who volunteered for the day-long member convention especially felt like their first-hand experience helped them form their own image of the place and begin to explicitly understand the core assumptions that fuel the Union Crossing project.

Sung Kim, the only undergraduate, cited one particular moment when she looked around at the attendees of the Convention and school where the convention was held, and realized that most were Hispanic and seemed to know each other, much like the Korean-American culture of her own hometown. As she stated in her personal reflection exercise:

"This simple connection has allowed me to see how LCW may be structured, which affects my perspective on the project at hand. Our class no longer feels like a thread hanging in thin air. With a fully formed image (however skewed) of the community in mind, I believe I can contribute to this project more successfully"

(Kim, individual written reflection, March 27, 2009).

As both instructors and facilitators, the professors and I tried to expedite this understanding through first-person encounters, not only by securing Lawrence partners presentations in the class but also by driving students out to Lawrence ourselves. These physical exchanges were complimented by individual reflection assignments, class discussions, and most significantly through informal one-on-one "chats."

Upon reflection, I now see that the one critical organizational culture that we didn't support or discuss was that of the internal student and faculty team of the course itself. The course syllabus and the actions of myself and the instructors served as initial artifacts of the culture of M@L as a research project, but we didn't discuss unique expectations and values of the course until much later in the learning process. While we tied reflections on the partner's organizational culture to individual values in the first reflection papers, we made the wrong assumption later on. Not everyone in the group was equally self aware of their own values. Also, the student team didn't necessarily share a common set of assumptions about the most sustainable approach to community develop and academic learning and they never explicitly discussed this until the final days of the course.

### ***Event 3: Form team norms and leadership roles*** ►

The first group assignment for the class participants was to produce a group work plan, detailing how they would communicate, make decisions, and strategize around designing the final products. The parameters of these products were left purposefully vague, as just a project proposal and a visualization or proof of concept, in order to leave room for the students to devise their own common ideas based on their own research. At its core, I perceived the class product as a strategy to incorporate historical and present day narratives as a community-organizing tool for building internal and external support of the new neighborhood UC would create.

Unfortunately, the short timeframe of a semester, the abstract nature of the course's goals and the wide breadth of the experience and skill sets of the students made it especially challenging to quickly form a fully functioning team. The students struggled to form clear interaction norms and a consensus on scheduling meeting times and leadership or decision-making structures. The shared leadership roles were taken on by two female students, reluctantly, then the work plan focused more on figuring out the themes of Union Crossing or a possible product instead of documenting how the team would function for the rest of the semester.

I struggled immensely with my role as a mentor and not a leader, not wanting to confuse the authority structure the students were trying to create for themselves. In an effort to create a very horizontal management approach, we never formed

enough structure to react with any flexibility when the dynamics of the project changed. In essence, we never got structured enough to get loose.

Also, in an effort to assess the students' technical skills and organizing experience, we also conducted a skills assessment in class. Each student listed their current skills and new skills they hope to gain through the class and shared these insights with the group. Again, we failed to make time to have the students reflect on their own learning values and interests and come to a consensus as a group. Matthew Totilo, a graduate student with project management experience, expressed that this exercise helped him reflect on himself and his own personal motivations for participating in the course. Unfortunately, he thought that this wasn't capitalized upon in the rest of the semester because the team management was too informal:

"If the instructors force the team to develop a structure and schedule earlier in the course, then more time could be devoted to skills learning and less spent on tuning the [internal] organization. This requires a structure that is not "discovered", but rather "imposed"

(Totilo, individual written reflection May 10, 2009).

A few of the students also attributed this reluctance to the expectations for horizontal collaboration set by DUSP, the M@L partnership, or their own personal motivations as leaders (Martin, audio recordings June 11-16, 2009). I now wonder if it also had a bit to do with my own facilitation style and goals. In past years, the Lawrence Practicum teaching assistant had often purposely stepped in as the role of project manager and ushered these decisions (Unpublished video interview with Amy Stitely for the M@L Story Project documentary, February 2009). On the surface, I could attribute my decision to purposely not be the team leader on the

coordination demands of the orientation phase of the course and my role as the technical knowledge expert.

But I also know I intentionally held back on “imposing” a team structure because I assumed that structure formed by the participants themselves would be more organic and meaningful. One of the group leaders, Kendra Leith, reflected in a post-course interview that one particular thing she struggled with as the co-leader in the ad-hoc horizontal structure was a lack of explicit authority and well timed feedback. She added that her authority might have been bolstered early on by verbal support of the instructors and myself, especially later in the process when group members had to “do the work themselves” (Martin, Leith interview June 16, 2009). In reflection, our mistake was not that we failed to require an efficient, hierarchal team structure. Rather, we only facilitated a process where the students could discuss shared values and link them to actions for the project.

#### ***Event 4: Finding the “why” (or core values)***

As March rolled in, the group was flailing a bit, feeling overwhelmed by all the orientation information and the task of forming the internal team structure. This second month of the course was characterized by often tough conversations, figuring out the murky ‘why’ or values



(Figure 7.8 MIT students present mid-term ideas to Union Crossing committee, March 18, 2009)

behind the class project and UC itself. With the looming deadline of the first midterm presentation to the community partners, the instructors and I worked at

facilitating spaces for the students to discover, articulate and check back to the espoused values of the organizations and the course. Three of these spaces included particular class discussions, the midterm community presentation, and subsequent first person follow-up interviews

Many of the early course discussions focused on the final output, the content needed or how the students would design and describe the process of using storytelling as a tool. But in one particular class discussion, one of the group leaders sat back and asked why the course was doing the project. As one of the co-leaders, Kendra Leith noted:

“This is actually the most important question, but up until that point, we had not explicitly asked it. We had focused so much on the stories that we might tell (the what’s) and how we might tell those stories (the how’s) because we were so worried about dividing up the work that we did not look at the overarching issue of why”. (Leith, individual written reflection, March 27, 2009).

The instructors and I responded well to this shift and moved to opening up a discussion so the students could hash out their opinions and assumptions. The group then met after class and was able to articulate their justification, and finally their role, this way:

“Our interest is to know stories about Lawrence. We can help Lawrence members to explore their own history. We are facilitators to help the community explore their own stories. LCW is a participant but also a facilitator in this process of community interaction. [The goal of our] project is to understand [and document] how LCW engaged the community and facilitated a transformative process” (Student internal class notes, March 5, 2009).

From there, the students pushed to combine their initial observations, research, and reflections into one common set of ideas and themes. In particular, we tried to tie these ideas to some available media tools or strategies, in order to present

concrete examples to the community members. LCW hosted a special meeting of the member-led committee who designed the plans for the first phase of the Union Crossing development and offered the students a space to check their understandings and pitch technical proposals (see video at <http://techtv.mit.edu/collections/mitatlawrence/videos/2733-lawrence-practicum-midterm-student-presentation---lawrence-a->).



(Figure 7.9 Video of Practicum final presentation, May 6, 2009)

It was during this phase of the course that I now feel like I grew the most as a mentor for other aspiring facilitators. For instance, I know now that a good facilitation mentor needs to not only know when best to hold back or take over, but also when to stand in the middle and referee. When I later interviewed the course participants, I asked them to specifically describe my facilitation style. Several trends emerged, such as:

- (1) **Stand back:** Based on my experience gained facilitating from the background in Drishya, I spent much of my time trying to support the students by remaining purposely silent. I have vivid memories of biting my

lip in an effort not to step in, even when students looked to me to take charge. Instead, I tried to roll with the tension of letting the group devise its own norms and expectations, only intervening to sum up my observations or suggest actions for leaders.

- (2) **Poke:** Later, Kim described my technique as “poking” and compared it to the bumper guides at bowling alley, when I didn’t lead them to the finish but rather gently keeping them on track with their eyes on the pins.
- (3) **Translate:** Other students also identified my role as the students’ “translator” or sounding board, between the instructors, the community partners, and even between each other
- (Martin, Kim, Totilo, and Leith interviews, June 11-16, 2009).

**Summary**

	<b>LEVEL</b>	<b>Facilitation Action</b>	<b>Event Description</b>
<b>Key Events</b>	1 <b>Believe</b> ◀	6. Be casually ignorant but insightful 7. Be clear about your story	Relationship building (with embedded assessment), including syllabus development, Movement City instructor digital storytelling training, January break internship to do technology and communication assessment, and youth interpretative oral history interviews with Southwick employees
	2 <b>Do</b> ▶	1. Show up and jump in	Orientation of graduate students, including formal presentations and tours, and informal volunteering at LCW convention
	3 <b>Do</b> ▶	2. Get structured to get loose	Student team forms norms and leadership roles, including skills inventory
	4 <b>Say</b> ▶	4. Stand back, poke, and translate	Facilitating moments to discover, articulate and check the “why” or core values: class discussions, midterm presentation, first person follow-up interviews

(Table 7.1)

## **Missed Opportunity: Modeling use of Participatory Media Tools**

### **Within the Class**

Because the students were challenged to create both a project proposal and working proof of concept around the use of participatory media tools, an integral part of my facilitation had to focus on supporting their exploration and discussions around technical options for the new storytelling program at LCW. However, as the team focused most of their energy on collaboratively developing the conceptual framework for the process of storytelling at Union Crossing, the technical visualization of their project ideas often took the backseat.

But more importantly, the student team never adopted any consistent use of the available tools themselves in order to organize the workload. I missed a key facilitation step of modeling the use of the tools for internal use. This circumstance made me reflect on the role of personal motivation, expectations, and time in empowering others to try new tools, even in the rush of a semester long course.

### **Success: Designing New Programs Aligned to Organizational Culture**

In last the phase of the course, the facilitators and students did the often hard work of describing how to operationalize abstract themes into mechanisms. Upon review of the existing interviews, the student realized that future stories should reflect some common themes: "a sense of ownership and responsibility in the city, opportunity and entrepreneurship, and community involvement." These themes became part of a comprehensive narrative strategy with three channels: (1) through on-site installations, (2) an event series, and (3) through virtual media

such as the internet and the radio. (Final Class Proposal deliverable and final M@L final report, May 2009)

When the course started, most the students identified their team goals as creating a new program proposal with a technical visualization of how media stories could become part of Union Crossing. Most of the students also admitted they had no conception in the course's first weeks what the output of their efforts would look like at the end of the semester.



(Figure 7.10 Student developed proof of concept for Story Mill, May 2009)

The students' final output was a model process for customizing a collective story gathering and disseminating process for a specific community's challenges and values. Ultimately, the model was to the community. Maggie Super Church, Union Crossing's project director, praised the students at the final community presentation for truly understanding LCW's "DNA" by focusing on the process not just a product. (see video of final presentation at <http://techtv.mit.edu/collections/mitatlawrence/videos/2723-lawrence-practicum-final-student-presentation---storymill-the-union-crossing-project>)

### **Missed Opportunity: Developing Story of Self**

Due to the extreme abstract nature of the main subject matter, collective narratives and storytelling, and the newness of the task as a Practicum project, it was challenging to get all the community partners on-board. I also spent a hefty portion of my facilitation time to get students the up to speed and be able to articulate their ideas. Remember, the group of student participants was very diverse in their backgrounds, skill sets, and interests, but also in their communication styles and personal motivations.

Ironically, the students were able to hone their observational skills enough to devise actions for LCW that aligned to their values, but they were not able to do this for themselves in their internal organization. Through an intense series of observations, reflections, and collaborative discussions, both at the end of the semester and in post semester one-on-one interviews, I came to realize that I had failed to double loop the student's learning back to reflecting on their own values and articulating that to the rest of the participants as a tool to build an aligned organizational culture with the class itself.

## **Reflections on My Own Facilitation Strategy**

Despite these revelations, I found experience testing my facilitation strategy in a more train-the-trainer format has helped me reflect and expand upon several aspects of my own facilitative practice:

- Facilitating from behind requires as much, or probably more, energy and time as leading from in front
- Letting things go or fail, knowing that inaction in itself can be a strong facilitative strategy but should be used only in tandem with iterative confirmation of shared expectations, goals, and authority
- Articulating my own personal motivation, then have others to the same, to come to shared understanding of group motivations that becomes useful in managing tasks later
- Finding a balance between technical skills training more other more abstract relationship-building or reflective work, by pairing tangible media outputs with more abstract community participation processes

## **Transformations: Next Steps for the Facilitation Strategy**

To summarize, I started this journey, in the cluttered energy of Charlestown's Computer Clubhouse, with the nagging question:

**How can participatory media tools be used to build the capacity of community organizations through member participation?**

In my quest to answer this question in terms of facilitation practice and organizational learning, I developed an analytic methodology I used to document two case studies of my efforts to use adoption of participatory media tools for capacity building. These efforts evolved into an articulation of my personal strategy

for collaborative facilitation that I can now try in contexts outside of youth development organizations and academic inquiry. However, I am still left with some questions on how these methods and tools could be applied across domestic and international contexts and to transform voice, theory, and practice.

### ***Further Questions***

Argyris and Schön, in their 1996 book, *Organizational Learning II. Theory, Method, and Practice*, discuss several controversies of organizational learning that are pertinent here limitations of using organizational culture as a lens for analyzing my facilitation strategy (Argyris and Schön 1996). First and foremost, these ideas are built on the aggregation of subjective and personal values and interests, including my own. While I corroborated my observations with individual interviews, group discussions, and surveys, the responses were sometimes skewed by politeness and participant eagerness to be positive about our shared experience.

Also, like many development practitioners before me, the definition of concepts like “productive learning” and “capacity building” are difficult to quantify, especially in common terms across context. As always, “real world impediments” like history, politics, and the cognitive ability or stage of the participants constricted both my own and the local staff’s facilitation efforts. Finally, no two outside facilitation interventions are ever the same—they vary on initial role, authority, existing information systems, personal and organizational incentives and the purpose of the inquiry, internal vs. external requirements (Argyris and Schön 1996, 200-1).

This analysis also leaves me personally with some questions how to take it forward as a tool:

- Would this focus on organizational cultural alignment be as useful with organizations that didn't have such strong local program cultures, especially around orientation and socialization, or organizations that didn't share the same epistemology of constructionist learning?
- How would this cultural alignment process work if the facilitator doesn't personally have resonance with the organization's core values?
- How could I begin to measure outcomes of capacity building, both qualitatively and quantitatively, for individual participants and the organization as a whole?
- To combat the subjectivity of reflective practice, could this framework be used to analyze the actions of other facilitators?
- What if I did a pre-intervention sketch of the organizational culture, only from published artifacts, and used this tool an initial conversation starter with local staff and participants about organizational values?
- What if I recorded audio and video of myself facilitating, instead of basing my reflective analysis on journals and interviews?

### ***Transforming Individual Voice in Organizational Learning***

I approach most media creation endeavors, my own and those I do with youth, as exercises in enunciating voice. As the nature of communications on the Internet redefines voice in terms of time, place, and audience, I see a new opening to experiment in adapting local oral storytelling to global new media lexicons. But these chances excite me as a community development practitioner, because they provide a new space to challenge dominant and sometimes oppressive mindsets and create new sources of power, in knowledge and in social connections.

If I learned anything in predominantly Latino Lawrence and the slums of Bangalore, it is that a first world facilitator like myself can't use a western mindset of authorship to universally evaluate cultural content, especially new media content. As the line between public and private blurs, I left Charlestown agreeing with Rheingold that public voice has to be the bridge between media production and civic engagement (Rheingold 2008).

Yet within the walls of YouthBuild and Drishya, I learned the value in critical literacy skills like private identity and voice explorations that tie slowly to more civically minded actions. For instance, it doesn't matter to me now YouthBuild youth used media like the photos of the trash filled alleys for self initiated protests on the radio or that I cannot read most of what the youth wrote on the Drishya's Ning site—neither media was written just for me and loses meaning in the translation to an "outsider" like myself.

Now I admit the value my facilitation efforts may be based on our ability to sustain an experimental space that organically fosters individual and collective voice. This space has to be culturally sensitive, open enough to change in response to the needs of the youth and the context, and relish in the freedom of a fluid “product.” And I see this product in the confidence of the youth in using their voice and listening to the voices of others. In the words of the most especially articulate youth participants at Drishya:

“I feel very proud when I’m telling my story to others. It’s hard work and I’ve done it, and...if people are listening, I feel happy about it. [As for the moral of my story] it is an analogy that the caterpillar has trust in God, so that’s why he was able to get a solution for the problem. Similarly, you should have confidence and trust in yourself. Only if you believe in yourself or if you do something you can do, only then do you achieve something” (Martin, audio recording, August 12, 2008)



(Figure 7.11 Quote from Drishya participant)

### ***Transforming Theory Across Disciplines***

These case studies demonstrate that although technology may be easier to access, the participation gap persists in both first and third world contexts. The real challenge of the participation gap, as opposed to the theories around the digital divide, is that it cannot be simply remedied by just providing *access* to technology. To fully take advantage of the new capacity of technology tools, youth have to know their value beyond consumption or technical expertise.

Yet organizations have an even bigger challenge: to better adopt these media tools to operationalize their value of participation, organizations need to become literate

in the overlapping but distinct disciplines of theory and practice explored in this investigation.

Using programs like those described here as a model, facilitation methods need to not only impart technical media making skills, but more importantly need to bridge these fields in order to align actions to the values of creation, participation, and local sustainability. These programs and facilitation strategies, as practical application of new media literacy theory, also need to reflectively inform back to planning and urban development academia at the same pace that technology integrates into our daily lives.

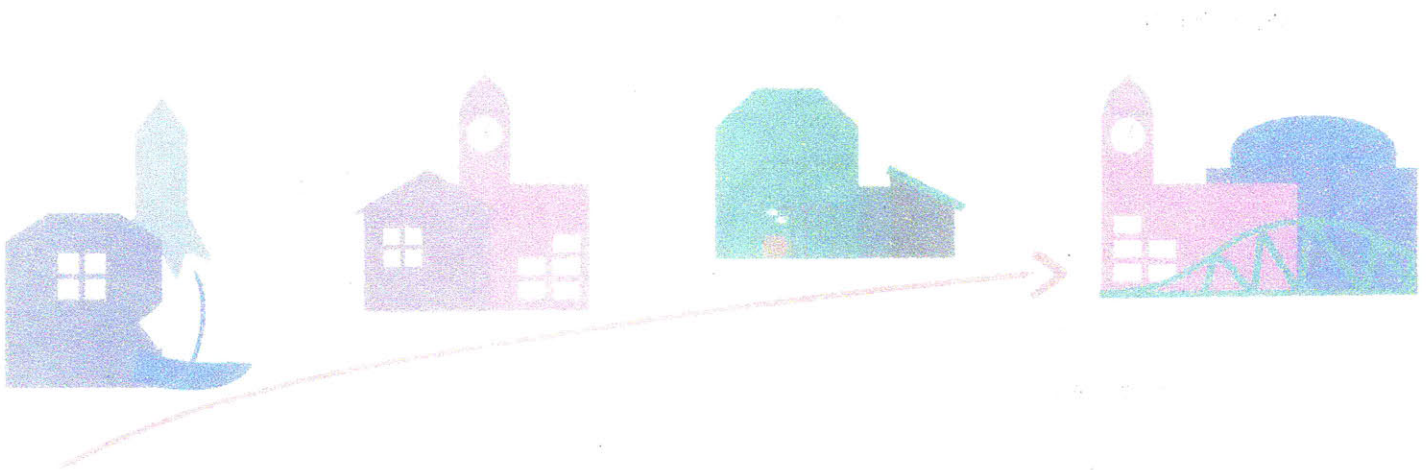
### ***Transforming Development Practice***

Basically I'm still left wondering: Can community organizations really build the capacity of local social networks and connect them to larger networks using publishing and social networking websites? While this analysis yielded several concrete examples of how we can truly spread the use of new media tools for social change, it leaves many questions unanswered around how youth development and organizing programs might move forward.

Most critically, my short-term interventions didn't leave room to study how these facilitation processes can be sustainable after an outside facilitator exits. While the pre- and post-tests and longitudinal study that would be necessary to analyze sustainability are greatly lacking here, the story does offer some methods that are realistic for the budgets and time constraints of small youth development programs like YouthBuild Lawrence and Drishya.

## The End?

Although I still have many questions, my hope is that youth development and organizing practitioners, community development staff, and new media enthusiasts across global contexts can find value in my analysis. I aim to use the reflection documented here as a springboard to further collaboratively develop and document these facilitation methods. These types of collaborations could reverse the flow of knowledge and build the faith of community organizations in the power of participatory media as a tool for individual, organizational, and ultimately community transformation.





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Appendix

1.1 Young Activists Network Children Rights Poster 2004

# Check IT!

## Children's Right's in Charlestown

Created by the Young Activists Network at Charlestown Boys & Girls Club!

Find out more about Charlestown at [www.charlestownonline.net](http://www.charlestownonline.net)



**Who do you call when you're in trouble?**

Charlestown Sub-base  
55 Banker Hill St  
617-343-4879



**Article 2**  
You have the right to protection against discrimination. This means that nobody can treat you badly because of your color, sex or religion, if you speak another language, have a disability, or are rich or poor.

**Article 11**  
You should not be kidnapped.

**Article 12**  
You have the right to an opinion and for it to be listened to and taken seriously.

**Article 15**  
You have the right to be with friends and join or set up clubs, unless this breaks the rights of others.

**Article 19**  
You have the right to be protected from being hurt or badly treated.

**Article 24**  
You have a right to the best health possible and to medical care.

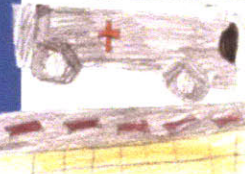
**Article 28**  
You have the right to education.



Visit the Boys & Girls Club 617-242-1775 or the Medford St Gym 617-635-5169!



Contact MGH Charlestown about your health!  
[www.massgeneral.org/charlestown/](http://www.massgeneral.org/charlestown/)



Go where there's a lot of people around that will help you!

Charlestown Branch Boston Public Library 617-242-1246

Call 1-800-the-lost about missing kids!

I will help you



Kids should be able to read any books!

Call 1-800-KID-508 to stop abuse!

Rights according to the UNICEF Convention on the Rights of the Child [www.unicef.org/crc/](http://www.unicef.org/crc/)

# 4.1 Major Concepts of the Drishya Trans-media Storytelling project

## CHARTING PATHS AND SELECTING TOOLS

To understand the context within which I will be working, I needed to understand the philosophies and tools already existing. My understanding of these ideas is provided on the next few pages.



(Thakker 2008)

## 4.2 Originally Proposed Drishya Summer Camp Curriculum







### *[DRAFT] Civic Media track at Drishya Summer Camp (June 2008)*

Week	Theme	Technology Skills	Journalism Skills	Social Skills	Daily Activity Ideas	Equipment	Questions?
1	Story of Self	Typing; Blogging?	Writing; Idea Brainstorming; Narrative Structure	Public Speaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Show/play/read examples of story of self</li> <li>BRAINSTORMING: Listing by questions</li> <li>Self Bubble Map</li> <li>Write your self story script</li> <li>Set up your own blog</li> <li>Story Circle(s) – peer review (Friday)</li> <li>HOMEWORK: Bring in an object that represents you</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pens/paper</li> <li>Blogging site (Ning)</li> </ul>	Should blogs be public? NO
2	Story of Us	Audio Editing	Interviewing	Local Social Networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Show/play/read examples of youth radio interviews</li> <li>Basics of Recording Sound</li> <li>Role Play Interviewing (video?)</li> <li>Writing good interview questions; good in-time interview techniques</li> <li>Interview your peers</li> <li>Editing Audio (Audacity?)</li> <li>Post your interview on your blog</li> <li>HOMEWORK: Interview someone in your network (just written?)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Microphones</li> <li>Cell phones?</li> <li>Editing software</li> </ul>	

**4.1 Originally Proposed Drishya Summer Camp Curriculum (cont'd)**

<b>Week</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Technology Skills</b>	<b>Journalism Skills</b>	<b>Social Skills</b>	<b>Daily Activity Ideas</b>	<b>Equipment</b>	<b>Questions?</b>
3	Story of Now	Photography	Audience; Composition; Visual	Bias/Ethics; Activism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Show/play/read examples of</li> <li>Brainstorm: opportunities/challenges of neighborhood?</li> <li>Basic Photography Skills (light, composition, angle)</li> <li>Tell a story with ONE photo</li> <li>Tell a story with 5 photos</li> <li>Create photo MAPS</li> <li>What is copyright? (where to find copyright free images/ sounds on the Web)</li> <li>HOMEWORK:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Take photos of your neighborhood (disposable cameras or cell phones)</li> <li>-Go back to your Story of Self/Us, find/take photos to match</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		
4	Spread the Stories (Connection/Network)	Podcast, Website, or social network site (need offline connection?)	Distribution; Advertising/Public relations	Team/Leadership skills; planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Show/play/read examples of ???</li> <li>Brainstorm: group final project (radio program with advertising campaign)</li> <li>Basic podcasting</li> <li>Writing/recording/editing commercials</li> <li>Alternative radio programs (music show, news, talk show, comedy, fiction, entertainment news, sports)</li> <li>Setting roles (director, editor, host, reporter, advertising editor)</li> <li>HOMEWORK:??</li> </ul>		

**7.1 Expanded Partner Organization Levels for Practicum Course, Spring 2009**

			Believe 	Say 	Do 	
	<b>Perceived Problem</b>	<b>Org Forms</b>	<b>Shared Assumptions (Core Values)</b>	<b>Esposed Values (Mission/Strategy)</b>	<b>Artifacts (Program/Policy)</b>	<b>Ideal or "ends"</b>
University	"Ivory tower," where university is removed from community	MIT@Lawrence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*EQUITY: urban planning can't just focus on BIG cities and for-profit development</li> <li>*INNOVATION: in tech tools and participatory planning processes</li> <li>*KNOWLEDGE originates and flows in multiple directions</li> </ul>	Sustained Engagement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*knowledge generated through networked relationships</li> <li>*'responsive cities'</li> <li>*reflective practice</li> <li>*student-run management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Research Assistantships</li> <li>*Lawrence@MIT youth education field trips to MIT</li> <li>*M@L Story Project</li> <li>*Yearly <b>PRACTICUM</b> course</li> </ul>	University innovation and knowledge embedded seamlessly in community
		<i>Partnership</i>			<i>STORYMILL</i>	
Community	Collective mindset of disempowerment on top of economic decline	Lawrence Community Works	All residents have right to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Ownership</li> <li>*Education</li> <li>*Civic participation/voice</li> <li>*Network to build social capital/power</li> </ul>	Networking Organizing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*member-led</li> <li>*form follows function</li> <li>*affiliation networks</li> <li>*process, not outcomes</li> <li>*work is sustained, diverse, FUN</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*<b>UNION CROSSING</b></li> <li>*Neighbor Circles</li> <li>*Movement City</li> <li>*Voter engagement campaign (Yes We Will)</li> </ul>	Vibrant, functioning community with equitable networks and participation