The Structure that Builds the Movement

By

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ABSTRACT
Many community organizing groups want to expand their effectiveness exponentially. Based on my experience one of the things that seems to be holding them back is frustrations group leaders express about the ambiguity of their roles. As an anthropologist and community organizer I have always paid attention to organizational structure and often saw these frustrations as related to the structure of organizations and their leadership. This study is an effort to understand the link between organizational structure and effectiveness. I investigate this link by looking at what an organization does to achieve one of its goals, leadership development, and analyze how its structure enables it to achieve this goal. The organization I study is City Life/Vida Urbana which is located in Boston and fights against evictions from post foreclosed homes.

Building off of City Life’s understanding of leadership development I developed a framework for understanding and evaluating deep leadership development. This framework shows how systematically paying attention to listening and dialogue in particular sites uncovers evidence of the development of self, relational and systemic knowledge. This study uses an ethnographic method that focuses on organizational meetings. This method shows how meeting components like the setting, participants and speech style, and combinations of these components in the planning and execution of a meeting, all influence leadership development outcomes. Once City Life’s leadership development outcomes have been explained, I explain their organizational structure by analyzing these outcomes through the lens of organizational theory. This analysis reveals how their structure operates and which structural components enable and disable deep leadership development.

Thesis Supervisor: Ceasar McDowell
Title: Professor of the Practice of Community Development
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Many community organizing groups want to exponentially increase their effectiveness or their capacity to achieve their many goals. What prevents them from doing this may be related to the frustrations group leaders sometimes express about the ambiguity of their roles and the groups' priorities. Often in groups where there is a lot of frustration I have heard leaders complain that they are excluded from decision-making or that the ball is being dropped on tasks.

As a community organizer and anthropologist, I have always paid attention to organizational structure which I see as related to the frustrations described above. I also pay attention to structure because leaders of STOP, an organization in Chicago which I worked with for several years, often talked about “lack of structure” as the cause of many problems. This study is an effort to understand the link between organizational structure and effectiveness. I will investigate this link by looking at what an organization does to achieve one of its goals, leadership development, and analyze how its structure enables it to achieve this goal.

The organization I will study is City Life/Vida Urbana, which is located in Boston and fights against post-foreclose evictions. City Life is a community organizing group, which mobilizes people directly affected by issues, it is among the groups sometimes referred to as mass mobilization social movement organizations (SMOs). Among this variety of SMOs, City Life is part of a subset which elevate issues of race and gender and practices ideological development\(^1\).

\(^1\) For the remainder of this study I will refer to this subset of SMOs as community organizations (COs).
By ideological development I mean explicit group learning and analysis of the social, economic and political system and how it should be changed (Sen 2003). Though these organizations are proliferationg, especially in communities of color, they have been studied far less than their “non-ideological” counterparts. City Life is recognized in the community organizing field as being fairly effective. This study aims to shed light on how they do what they do and how they can reach their ambitious goals of exponentially increasing their effectiveness. My long-term engagement with City Life has gives me the opportunity to test this study’s findings by helping them improve their structure through dialogues about my conclusions and a workshop, to be held after the completion of this study.

OVERVIEW OF STUDY

Organizational structure cannot be understood independent of the context in which it emerges. This is because it is practically accomplished in social interaction and cannot be taken for granted and studied as a concrete thing. This perspective, which draws on Helen Schwartzman’s (1989) work on meetings, suggests that understanding structure requires understanding meetings, which are the main context where it emerges. An analysis of meetings is the lens through which I will explain structure and related concepts in this study. Following Schwartzman, I refer to this method as the ethnography of meetings, which I will explain in Chapter 4.

There is a large number of community organizations which claim to be non-ideological. Among these is the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) and ACORN, which are influential COs that have membership groups across the country. These group’s “non-ideological” stance is criticized because it does not allow for questioning the foundations of the economic system (Kling and Fisher 85). “Non-ideology” in CO is rooted in the organizing principles laid out by Saul Alinsky, founder of the IAF. Alinsky’s own organizing work in the 1940s however, like all organizing work I would argue, was at least influenced by an implicit ideology. In fact, Alinsky himself may have had a more explicit ideology, in the early 1940s he referred to himself as a ‘professional anti-fascist’ and it was not until the late 1940s that he began to espouse non-ideology probably to avoid being called a communist or “red-baited” (Kling and Fisher 81-84).
My approach to uncovering structure begins with an analysis of the organization’s explicit goals, how they understand their efforts to achieve them and how they evaluate these efforts. Studying all of their goals is beyond the scope of this study, which is why I have chosen to focus on only one goal: leadership development. I choose leadership development because leaders of City Life have identified it as an area most in need of improvement. Chapter 5, the case study of City Life, begins with an analysis of their leadership development.

In the case study I explain how City Life’s leadership understands leadership development and I compare this to what I observe or the outcomes of their efforts to achieve this goal. In order to make this comparison I developed a framework in Chapter 2 for evaluating leadership development which builds off of their understanding of these concepts. I do this by drawing on models from the community organizing tradition in which these goals are rooted and from Otto Scharmer’s (2007) work on leadership development. Based on these models I develop a set of indicators which show the degree to which their goals are being accomplished and sites or contexts where these indicators can be observed. This framework can be used by other organizing groups and adjusted according to differences in their goals and/or contexts where they may be observed.

Comparing the leadership team’s goals with what they actually do, allows me to explain what the leadership considers to be their strengths and weaknesses, and also to identify inconsistencies that might exist between their goals and outcomes. Analyzing how the leadership team rationalizes these inconsistencies can reveal their taken-for-granted assumptions. An
understanding of the leadership team’s goals, outcomes and assumptions, and how they are related, is the framework through which one can understand the various processes which constitute the organization, including how its structure operates.

An organization’s structure is enacted through what the organization actually does, which as described above must be understood in relation to their goals and assumptions. Understanding how an organization enacts its structure also requires analyzing how the organization explicitly defines and evaluates its structure, and how they use their assumptions to make sense of it. In order to focus my attention on the key components of structure and the processes which enact it I will draw on models of organizational structure from organizational theory, research on effective leadership teams and organizing which elevates race and gender. I explain these models in Chapter 3. Applying these models to my analysis of City Life’s leadership development explains their organizational structure and how particular structural components enable particular leadership development outcomes.

My engagement with City Life always included an expectation that I would apply my analysis to help them improve their structure. This is why my engagement went beyond participant observation to include systematic humble inquiry\(^3\) and reflection\(^4\). I draw on my analysis of leadership development and structure, humble inquiry and reflection to develop recommendations of key structural components which City Life should improve to increase their effectiveness. These recommendations are mentioned throughout Chapter 5 and summarized in the Conclusion. As mentioned above, these recommendations will be tested through conversations and a workshop which will be held following the completion of this study.

\(^3\) Edgar Schein 2009.
CHAPTER 2

DEEP LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

“people have to be made to understand that they cannot look for salvation anywhere but to themselves”

“what is needed is the development of people who are interested not in being leaders as much as in developing leadership among other people”

-Ella Baker 1970

These famous words of Ella Baker are a response to the concept of ‘leaders’ as charismatic individuals in the lime light who solve people’s problems for them. This ‘superhero myth’, as it is sometimes referred to, is the opposite of Baker’s notion of leaders as people who work with others to help them solve their problems for themselves. If, as Baker suggests, leadership development is about finding salvation in oneself and building relationships to help others do the same, then self and relational knowledge are a key part of leadership development. This concept of leadership development is broader than just the development of individuals’ technical knowledge and skills. The concept of leadership development which Baker suggests fits well with Otto Scharmer’s work, which I refer to as deep leadership development. Scharmer suggests that leadership development is about the development of self, relational and system-wide knowledge in the context of individuals’ and groups’ day-to-day work engaging themselves, organizations and the whole system of which they are a part (see Table 2.1 below). The main tools for facilitating leadership development, suggests Scharmer, are deep listening and dialogue, and the intelligence of an open mind, heart, and will. Below I will explain how Baker’s community organizing work embodies this concept of deep leadership development and then how deep leadership development can be evaluated.

\* Donald Schon 1983.
Recounting his first meeting with Ella Baker, Bob Moses, one of the key organizers of the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), which Baker helped found, said: “she asked me about my upbringing, my thoughts on Harlem, my entrance to the movement. Her interest in me is what struck me” (Moses 33). Baker taught Moses that making personal connections, by deeply listening to and dialoguing with others, is the foundation for organizing, which Baker describes as the work of “creating ongoing groups that are mass-based in the sense
that people a group purports to represent have a real impact on a group’s direction”. Personal connections, or bonds of solidarity and trust, are the glue that holds together ‘ongoing groups’. The deep listening involved in creating and sustaining personal connections also facilitates understanding how people can support each other in building ‘ongoing groups’. Support can take the form of offering assistance in completing a task or asking Socratic questions to help someone solve a problem themselves. Supportive relationships should result in many leaders taking on the many tasks of day-to-day campaign work, from chairing meetings to speaking with the media.

The flip side of support is accountability, which means holding an individual or group responsible for following through on their commitments. An individual group member can be held accountable by other group members, the entire group or the group’s constituency and movement. Similarly an entire group can be held accountable by its constituency and the movement. When group members are held accountable they take their roles in the group seriously and understand how their decisions impact the group, constituency and movement as a whole (SOUL 8). Ella Baker suggested that she thought of herself as accountable in this way when she said: “I was never working for an organization. I always tried to work for a cause. And that cause was bigger than any organization” (Baker qtd. in Ransby 280). Accountability in this sense not only requires deep listening to each other but also to ‘the whole’, as Scharmer puts it (3). Listening to the whole is about focusing people’s attention on their collective experience, which is also central to another key aspect of Baker’s organizing work: ideological development.

Like Paulo Freire’s popular education, Baker’s approach to ideological development draws on the premise that learning about larger systems and how to change them should start with peoples’
experiences and that both teacher and student are experts in this process (Ransby 328). The many training programs that she helped design, including SNCC’s Freedom Schools, are examples of this approach to learning which facilitated deep listening and dialogue in order to simultaneously engage the various levels of problems (self, organizational and system-wide) which the organizing work was tackling. Deep listening and dialogue is integral to every element of Baker’s approach to organizing which is part of why her work exemplified deep leadership development.

Scharmer (2007) explains the leadership development process as consisting in: people engaging in deep listening to and dialoguing with themselves, each other and the whole; connecting with their source of inspiration and will; and then acting from that source. Scharmer calls this the U process and the theory behind it: Theory U. Deep listening refers to listening which moves beyond downloading and factual listening, to practices of empathetic listening and listening to the whole (11-13). Similarly deep dialogue is about conversations which move beyond downloading and debate to dialogues which access the collective intelligence of a group or even their highest future potential (271-272). This quality of listening and dialogue was described above in the example of Ella Baker building a relationship with Bob Moses and in her “work for a cause”. Scharmer also notes that this quality of listening and dialogue requires suspending voices of judgment, cynicism, and fear (42-43).

To explain what he means by connecting with the source of inspiration and will, Scharmer uses a metaphor of a visual artist in front of a black canvass. Scharmer notes that when analyzing art one can look at several levels: one can look at the final work, and talk about the composition or
color scheme for example; one can look at the process that went into it, the brush strokes, etc.; or one can look at the artist in front of the blank canvass and try to understand what is happening inside of them, see Figure 2.1 (7).

Figure 2.1 Outcome, Process and Source

Deep listening and dialogue helps people connect with their source like the artist does. Making this connection also requires developing, what Scharmer describes as, intelligence of the open mind, heart and will (41). Again, Scharmer notes that this intelligence or knowledge is not just about the self but also about relationships, organizations and the whole system, and can only be developed in the context of the day-to-day work of engagement at these levels. Ella Baker’s community organizing work provides an example of the development of this knowledge, or the U process in action, my case study also provides evidence of degrees of this sort of deep leadership development.

DEEP LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND THE CO MOVEMENT

In my case study, the organization’s ideas about leadership development draw on Ella Baker’s and the organizing tradition which she represents. This includes the idea of leadership
development as helping others to help themselves. This idea is commonly shared by many of the community organizations which proliferated after the civil rights, anti-war, and feminist movements of the 60s and 70s. By the 90s the community organization (CO) movement’s approach to leadership development demonstrated a consensus around the following principles: 1) leadership is developed not simply tapped where it already exists; 2) leadership should be developed in the people indigenous to the communities being organized; and 3) leadership is functional not structural, i.e. leadership is about what people do and not the titles they hold (Delgado 1). These principles are a strong foundation for developing leadership in the way Baker understood it. Beyond this foundation there is a lot of variety in how COs explain and evaluate their leadership development. Some do not go beyond considering how many people take on roles such as public speaking. Others such as Mothers on the Move from the Bronx, New York have developed a holistic approach to leadership development and a matrix which individual members use to track their development, the matrix includes categories ranging from relational organizing to culture and art practice. MOM evaluates events and the preparation for them according to whether they were grounded in their leadership development approach (Su 97-98).

MOM however, represents the exception and not the rule in COs approach to leadership development and how they evaluate it. The explanation of deep leadership development above is intended to fill a gap in COs explicit ideas on leadership development which often do not extend beyond the 3 principles above and the idea of helping others help themselves. It was developed with my case study in mind but can be applied to many COs. In order to further fill this gap in CO, below I explain a method for evaluating deep leadership development, which I will apply to the analysis of my case study.
EVALUATING DEEP LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Based on the theory of deep leadership development explained above I have identified six indicators of deep leadership development processes: reflective practice, interpersonal connections, supportive and accountable relationships, ideological development and solution development. These indicators can be observed in specific sites ranging from mass meetings to door-to-door canvassing. Below I will describe the indicators and the specific sites or types of interactions in which they are more likely to be observed, they are summarized in table 2.2 at the end of this chapter. The sites where these indicators can be observed include meetings as well as other organizational contexts. These sites provide a window into an organization’s development of self, relational and system-wide knowledge-in-context, their practice of deep listening and dialogue, and their cultivation of their open head, heart and will.

While deep leadership development requires the presence of all of the above, in practice individuals and groups only exemplify degrees of this ideal. There are different levels of leadership development which can be observed in each of the sites explained below. In fact, observing some sites often reveals that groups are going through the motions but not actually showing evidence of leadership development. The quality of listening and conversation is what provides the evidence that an indicator process being observed does in fact indicate evidence of the deep leadership development process. Scharmer’s leadership development matrix is a tool which can be used when observing the quality of listening and conversation of each indicator at each site to determine the level of leadership development. This method can be used to place individuals and groups on different levels of leadership development. While it is difficult to quantify individuals’ or groups’ overall level of leadership development on a continuum of
superficial-to-deep leadership development, it is possible compare the degree of a group’s deep leadership development to itself over time, and to other groups.

**Reflection**
Personal and group reflections are about examining experiences in order to learn from them.

Experiences which provide rich opportunities for learning through reflection include experiences of struggle, uncertainty, and breakthroughs. Different experiences can reveal different lessons, breakthroughs for example can clarify what one’s theory of success looks like and give insight into the conditions which allow creativity to flourish (Amulya 1). These types of experiences can be reflected on by individuals or groups. In organizing, reflection often happens in meetings after major actions or meetings and is called debriefing or evaluation, conversation in these meetings often revolves around the questions: what went well, what could have gone better, and what was learned or what are the next steps. Reflection can take this form as well as many others, such as storytelling or journaling (Amulya 3). Reflective practice can be analyzed in context to observe what learning is happening. The degree to which this learning shows evidence of learning about self, relational and system-wide knowledge, the practice of deep listening and dialogue and the development of intelligence of the head, heart and will is the degree to which deep leadership development is happening.

**Interpersonal Connections**
Another indicator of deep leadership development is the level on which people connect and listen to each other, for example, is it superficial or personal, emotional and or spiritual. Anecdotal evidence about relationships, such as that between Bob Moses and Ella Baker, can provide examples of personal connections and deep listening and dialogue. One-on-one meetings, like
Moses and Baker’s, are an example of a site where this indicator can be observed, another site is side conversations before, during and after an organization’s full range of meetings and events.

**Supportive Relationships**

Supportive and accountable relationships are another key indicator of deep leadership development. The kind of support people offer each other can be observed in conversations about tasks and in their implementation. As previously mentioned, examples of support include offers of assistance and Socratic questions, as well as the number of leaders taking on roles in day-to-day campaign work such as chairing meetings and speaking with the media.

**Accountable Relationships**

Accountability to oneself or other group members can be observed in conversations between group members when, for example, an individual does not follow through on a commitment, or in staff supervision meetings. Accountability to the organization itself and a constituency or movement is indicated by the amount of and quality of relationship building that members engage in with their constituency, and other organizations or coalitions. Door-to-door canvassing is a site where one can observe an individuals’ knowledge of the organization’s work and the systemic nature of the problem the organization is addressing. At this site one can also observe the level of personal connections and deep listening to the constituency, which is part of what it means to listen to the whole. Similar observations can be made in coalition meetings and report backs on coalition activities. These sites reveal listening to the movement and how people understand their engagement on a system-wide level. Accountability also requires decision-making processes which incorporate the listening and understanding identified above in
determining what the organization’s goals and priorities are, how they are accomplished and how they represent themselves. Incorporating this listening and understanding can be described as the extent to which members, the constituency or the movement influences decisions. This influence can be observed in meetings where decision-making occurs.

The formal decision-making rules clearly have an impact on the extent to which members, the constituency, and or movement influences decisions. However, one can imagine scenarios where for example, despite democratic decision-making rules one person dominates the decision-making process. This is why I do not consider the formal decision-making rules as an indicator of accountability. I consider decision-making rules a structural component. Deep leadership development can however, have feedback loop effects which influence decision-making rules so that they enable deeper leadership development.

**Ideological Development**

An important part of a group solving its own problems is its capacity to identify a set of conditions which need to be improved. This is a major focus of ideological development, which can be observed in workshops and sections of meetings devoted to ideological development. At these sites one can observe a groups’ understanding of problems and the degree to which their understanding is contextualized in the collective experience of the group and the larger system.

**Solution Development**

Ideological development can also equip people to develop more innovative solutions to problems. How members are involved in the development of solutions is another indicator of
deep leadership development. Sites of solution development include strategy discussions in meetings and workshops as well as prototyping which are activities that try out a solution. At these sights one can observe the degree to which the groups engage the intelligence of the group with an open mind, heart and will.

In evaluating deep leadership development one should consider the degree of deep leadership development observed in each of the indicators mentioned above and which sites if any are noticeably missing evidence of leadership development. This should paint a picture of a group’s overall degree of leadership development and suggest areas for improvement. In my case I show how this analysis also reveals how the structure of a group operates and which components of structure enable or inhibit deep leadership development. In the next chapter I explain what I mean by structure and the components which it is made of.
Table 2.2 Evaluating Deep Leadership Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator Processes</th>
<th>Example Sites of Observation</th>
<th>Evidence of Deep Leadership Dev.</th>
<th>Evidence of Superficial LD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reflective Practice</td>
<td>Post-meeting evaluations</td>
<td>Group recognizes how changing the meeting format from a large group to dividing up into small groups and telling stories helped deepen connections</td>
<td>Only a few positive things mentioned such as: lots of people and good food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal Connections</td>
<td>Side conversations before meetings</td>
<td>Before a meeting, a member asks another about their sick relative, and says they are praying for them</td>
<td>Before a meeting, members have polite conversation about the food, but no interpersonal connection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive Relationships</td>
<td>Number of leaders taking on day-to-day tasks</td>
<td>Many leaders canvassing, learning how to train others in canvassing</td>
<td>Few leaders canvassing, organizers do most of it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountable Relationships</td>
<td>Coalition meetings</td>
<td>Leaders participate in discussion of how though the experience of a coalition’s constituencies differ, they can build unity around a long term shared vision</td>
<td>Discussion of short term interests, only paid organizers participate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideological Development</td>
<td>Ideological development workshops</td>
<td>Group connects displacement from foreclosed homes to displacement of immigrants due to economic policies; alliances built between immigrant rights and anti-eviction movements</td>
<td>Expert lectures on financial crises with no discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solution Development</td>
<td>Prototyping activities</td>
<td>Small groups develop and tryout creative ways of choreographing and framing an action</td>
<td>A tactic is ‘sold’ to membership, they practice it after it has been fully developed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A leadership team determines the strategy that an organization will use to achieve its goals and mobilizes an organization to implement it. A leadership team’s structure and how it relates to an organization, which is part of the organizational structure, enables and limits what an organization can do to accomplish its goals. Below I will explain models from organization theory, which provide a framework for analyzing organizational structure and the structure of a leadership team. As I mentioned in the introduction I will apply these models to City Life, interpreting them from an ethnography of meetings perspective, to explain the organizational and leadership team structure of City Life and how it enables leadership development.

MINTZBERG’S TYPES

Henry Mintzberg wrote the book on organizational structure, he defined it as how an organization’s “labor is divided into distinct tasks” and “coordination is achieved among these tasks” (2). An organization’s division of labor and coordination mechanisms captures things like the committee structure, flow of communication, decision-making and the relationship of the leadership team to the rest of the organization. Using examples from community organizations I will explain different types of coordination mechanisms and divisions of labor and the different types of organizational structures which they determine. My explanation draws on Otto Scharmer’s (2007) interpretation of Mintzberg’s types of organizational structures, which

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includes: centralized, decentralized, networked, and ecosystematized. It is important to note that these types are ideals, and in practice organizations embody degrees and mixtures of them.

**Coordination Mechanisms**

Coordination is about how an organization’s task dependencies are managed. The tasks of an organization depend on each other in various ways, for instance, one task might have to be done before another one can be, or several tasks may require the use of the same resource. Different types of dependencies can be managed by different types of coordination mechanisms (Malone 17). A task which is dependent on using a shared resource, for example, can be managed by a standard process coordination mechanism such as ‘first come first serve’ or prioritizing tasks. Another example of process standardization is a protocol for work along an assembly line.

Other coordination mechanisms include skill standardization, direct supervision, and mutual adjustment. Skill standardization means coordinating by standardizing trainings for organizational members, this mechanism is used for work that requires lots of knowledge. Direct supervision is when one person takes responsibility for the work of another, guiding them and holding them accountable. Mutual adjustment is informal communication (Mintzberg 4), which can be interpreted as coordination through conversations that do not fall under the other coordination mechanisms. The relative importance of each coordination mechanism to an organization’s functioning is determined by the kinds of tasks they do and their division of labor.

**Division of Labor**

The division of labor into different tasks is defined by the roles and responsibilities of organizational members, how they are grouped into teams or committees, and how formal authority flows between members and teams. One of these teams is a leadership team which, as
mentioned above, is responsible for setting the strategy of an organization and mobilizing the organization to implement it. Though not all organizations have leadership teams, my case study and most community organizations (COs) do. The flow of formal authority is about how direct supervision, a coordination mechanism, is used in the organization. An organizational chart represents the design of an organization's division of labor. The flow of actual authority however, including decision and rule making, rarely follows the flow of formal authority as prescribed in the organizational chart. Instead the flow of authority, while influenced by the formal authority structure, takes on a different form which can be described as a geometry of power. Power, which here refers to control over decision and rule making, is achieved through interaction and cannot be understood independent of the context in which it is achieved. How people understand the geometry of power is an assumption and sometimes explicit belief which influences how they interact with others and the geometry of power which they enact. Because the context where these interactions occur is often meetings, an understanding of the geometry of power, a key part of the division of labor and organizational structure, requires an understanding of organizational meetings and how they relate to each other. This point is made clear when a chart showing an organization’s hierarchy of meeting contexts is compared to an organization’s organizational chart.

The particular form of an organization’s division of labor and coordinating mechanisms constitute a particular type of organizational structure. The geometry of power or authority structure is an important aspect of this organizational structure. Similar to how the actual and formal authority structure differ from each other, the formal organizational structure or the

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6 This comparison was done by Helen Schwartzman in her study of a mental health center 1989.
design of the division of labor and prescribed coordinating mechanisms differ from how the
division of labor and coordination function in practice. The way it actually functions, constitutes
or enacts what I refer to as the organizational structure. Below I will explain the forms or types
of organizational structures and provide examples of COs structured according to these types.

Scharmer (2007), building off of Mintzberg’s classification of organizational structures,
identifies four structural types: centralized, decentralized, networked, and ecosystematized. Each
structure has a corresponding coordination mechanism which is most central to its functioning,
see Table 3.1. These structures are ideal types, in practice most organizations include elements of
more than one of these types.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Structure</th>
<th>Coordinating Mechanism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Centralized</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple Structure</td>
<td>Direct Supervision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Machine Bureaucracy</td>
<td>Process Standardization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Bureaucracy</td>
<td>Skills Standardization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decentralized</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple Structure</td>
<td>Direct Supervision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Machine Bureaucracy</td>
<td>Process Standardization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Bureaucracy</td>
<td>Skills Standardization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networked</td>
<td>Mutual Adjustment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecosystematized</td>
<td>Seeing from Emerging Whole</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Centralized

The division of labor and geometry of power of a centralized structure is characterized by a single central hierarchy of rules and decision-making. There are three types of centralized structures: simple, machine bureaucracy and professional bureaucracy. A simple centralized structure is coordinated by the direct supervision of one person. A simple centralized CO would have one organizer who calls all the shots and other organizers and members would look to this boss for direction every step of the way. A centralized machine bureaucracy is coordinated by standardized processes, a CO machine bureaucracy might, for example, have set meeting preparation checklists, ideological development curriculum and issue selection criteria. The role of organizers would be to execute these processes according to the protocols which originate from a central core. A centralized professional bureaucracy is coordinated by standardized skills. A CO of this sort, similar to a consulting firm, would have organizers taking on several campaigns using methods learned in standardized training which originates from a central core.

In a centralized structure the leadership team controls decision making and is hierarchically above other teams, committees, and members.

Decentralized

Decentralized structures come in the same three types as centralized: simple, machine bureaucracy and professional bureaucracy; however, in decentralized structures, rule and decision-making are divisionalized or distributed across organizational groups, teams or committees. An example of a decentralized simple CO would be one in which several campaigns were going on simultaneously and each was directed autonomously by one organizer. In a decentralized machine bureaucracy, the organization in the above example would be coordinated by standard processes developed by each campaign. In a decentralized professional bureaucracy
teams of organizers would be coordinated by standardized training. In a decentralized structure
the leadership team creates the conditions which allow other teams or committees to make
decisions, in this structure there are multiple leadership teams leading the membership.

Networked
In a networked structure coordination happens through mutual adjustment of people in a network
that is broader than the organization. The quality of the relationships in the network form the
geometry of power of this structure (Scharmer 309). In CO, these networks are built through
networking events such as coalition meetings or multi-issue workshops for learning and
reflection. A CO can be described as having a networked structure to the degree that these events
and the relationships they build function as coordinating mechanisms for the organization. An
example of a CO with a networked structure was the Student Non-Violent Coordinating
Committee (SNCC), a civil rights organization from early 60s. In Mississippi SNCC coordinated
through a network of other civil rights organizations7 called COFO (the Council of Federated
Organizations) which drew upon a grassroots network developed by activists like Amzie Moore
and Medgar Evers who had been organizing NAACP committees and other activities for over a
decade before COFO’s formation. COFO was a multi-stakeholder alliance which cut across
organizations bringing together leaders and constituencies of different generations and
communities. Through this network SNCC coordinated organizing activities which ranged from
door-to-door canvassing to the Freedom Schools (Payne 1997). In a networked structure the
leadership team creates conditions which allow for other teams to coordinate through the

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7 These organizations included SNCC, the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) and CORE (Congress of Racial Equality).
network. The relationship of the leadership team to the rest of the organization depends on how the other teams and membership are related to this network.

**Ecosystematized**

An ecosystematized structure coordinates by mutual adjustment of people in a network who collectively sense future networks and opportunities that may emerge. This coordinating mechanism requires a network to systematically tune into the larger ecosystem which the network and ecosystematized organization is a part of (Scharmer 311). The ecosystem of a CO is the cluster of organizations across various issues which are part of a larger movement building effort. In an ecosystematized structure the relationship of the leadership team to rest of the organization depends on how the other teams and committees are related to the network and future networks and opportunities.

**Structural Evolution**

Historically the structure of organizations have evolved from centralized to decentralized to networked to ecosystematized. Mintzberg’s discussion of the evolution of organizational structures notes that age, size, technical system and the environment influence the evolution of organizational structure (121). In COs, leadership development has also been a key part of this evolution. In my case study I demonstrate how an organization’s structure enables particular leadership development outcomes; however, over time, leadership development can also have a feedback loop effect on structure, enabling the evolution of organizational structures. Many COs started out with a centralized structure and worked on one campaign, then after developing leadership they created the labor pool which was drawn upon to start new autonomous campaigns and evolve to a decentralized structure. As decentralized groups engage in cross
group work they develop knowledge and skills or leadership, which they use to coordinate across a network and evolve to a networked structure. As a networked organization engages in reflective practice and ideological development they can begin to tune into an ecosystem or the entire network of organizations and future potential organizations and opportunities. This tuning in is necessary to coordinate according to the ecosystem and evolve to an ecosystematized structure. Each of these structures enabled an organization to engage in leadership development which then allowed for their structure to evolve. While organizational structure has evolved this way historically, it does not mean that it must necessarily evolve in this way. Further, while the tuning into the ecosystem seems to enable deep leadership development, structures other than ecosystematized can also enable deep leadership development practices as my case will demonstrate. In a sense, centralized, decentralized and networked structures can all have the seeds which allow for the development of deep leadership and the evolution to ecosystematized structures.

Mintzberg also notes that the structure that is considered fashionable is a crucial factor which influences the evolution of organizational structure (Mintzberg 147-148). This point is especially important in COs which are largely funded and influenced by philanthropic foundations who have their own ideas about what effective structure is. Philanthropic foundations’ ideas about structure have been heavily influenced by federal policies and the efforts of foundations like the Ford Foundation which gave rise to the ‘community development movement’ in the late 60s (O’Conner 1999). These efforts led to the promotion of hierarchical centralized structures which included volunteer boards, an executive director and professional staff, and a volunteer membership. An analysis of how foundations have influenced structure in COs is beyond the
scope of this study; however, it is an important part of the explanation of why COs have the structures they do and I keep it in mind as a potential constraint when considering how to improve the organizational structure of my case study.

THE GANZ AND WAGEMAN MODEL

Similar to how an organizational structure explains the relationship of a leadership team to the rest of an organization, a leadership team’s structure explains the relationship of the leadership team members to each other. Research on effective leadership teams investigates how a leadership team’s members relate to each other and tries to find the structural components which make it more likely that a leadership team will achieve its goals. Marshall Ganz and Ruth Wageman draw on this research in their model for effective leadership teams which they use in a 2008 leadership development project with the Sierra Club. Insights from COs which elevate issues of race and gender also suggests particular structural components of leadership teams which enable effectiveness. I will draw on these insights in my interpretation of the Ganz and Wageman model, explained below. In my case study I use this interpretation of the Ganz and Wageman model to focus my attention on potential key structural components and to develop my recommendations about how they can improve their structure.

Ganz and Wageman define effectiveness for COs as the capacity to achieve public recognition, leadership development, and membership engagement. They identify four key elements of

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8 See Senior Leadership Teams: What It Takes to Make Them Great by Ruth Wageman; Debra Nunes; James Burruss; Richard Hackman. Note that the research drawn upon in this book investigates teams in context, making a sharp break from the research on the qualities of effective leaders.
leadership teams necessary for effectiveness: relationships, narrative, strategy and action. They explain that all four elements are enabled by the leadership team structure. This theory suggests that in order to understand structure, it is necessary to understand how it is related to the four elements. The relationships element of leadership teams refers to how individuals on the team are related to and responsible to each other, the rest of the organization, their constituency and the movement. Narratives, as described in Chapter 2 are the stories of me, us and now, these stories articulate values, experiences and actions. Strategy is the purpose of the group, and the timing, tactics and targets they set to achieve it. Action brings all of these elements together through what the group actually does and plans to do.

Many social movement activists who organize in communities of color and elevate issues of race and gender argue that ideological development is also a crucial element of leadership teams (Sen 2003). Ideological development, as explained in Chapter 2 is the explicit group learning and analysis of the social, economic and political system and how it should be changed. Though it is not explicitly mentioned in the Ganz and Wageman model, ideological development can be included, or located, at the intersection of narrative and strategy. What the group’s values call the group to do now and how the group believes it can achieve this purpose are related to the group’s understanding of the system and how it should be changed. The relationships of these elements and how they intersect is diagramed in Figure 3.1 below.
The Ganz and Wageman model characterizes leadership team structure as consisting in the following elements: 1) real teams, 2) the right size, 3) the right people and 4) clear norms about group work. For the leadership team to be a ‘real team’ means that it is not a team in name only, it means that it is: a) bounded, one can define who is on the team and who is not; b) stable, the team exists for a significant amount of time, and; c) interdependent, the team members depend on each other to accomplish their shared goals.

The right size for leadership teams tends to be small though Ganz and Wageman do not offer a specific number. The right people depends on a combination of their skills, experience,
background and the specific role they are taking on. Ganz suggests that a team with a diverse set of life experiences, networks and repertoires of collective action is particularly important in developing effective strategies (Ganz 2000 1005). COs which elevate issues of race and gender suggests that it is important for leadership team members to share the same demographic background (race, gender, and class) as the constituency they are working with and that they should be rooted and integrated in a community which shares that background (Delgado 1986).

An effective leadership team structure also includes clear norms about how a group works together. Though specific norms differ across teams, all the norms should foster commitment and address the following: a) support; b) accountability; c) celebration d) decision-making process; and, e) meeting preparation, chairing and other roles. Norms of support includes offering assistance in tasks and also that tasks are designed with an opportunity to learn and teach others. Accountability is about how group members hold each other responsible, it includes norms about clear roles, transparency and what should be done if someone arrives late or a task is not done. Celebration refers to how people and the group are acknowledged for the work they do, whether its applause at meetings, awards or any other way. Norms about decision-making includes rules about majority voting or consensus, decision-making criteria and how proposals and alternatives get presented and discussed. Meeting preparation and chairing includes norms about who and how the agenda gets created, how the meeting is chaired, if the chair rotates, and other roles such as time keeper or note taker.

**Where Ganz and Wageman Meet Mintzberg and Scharmer**

An underlying premise of the Ganz and Wageman model is that interdependence is key to effective leadership teams. While their model does not explicitly address how leadership teams
fit into organizational structures, if one were to take their interdependent premise to its logical conclusion one can imagine an organizational structure where every part is made up of teams interdependent with themselves and each other. This structure can be described as a decentralized structure or networked, if these teams are also interdependent with other similar teams in a network. The structural components which the Ganz and Wageman model focus on can be taken to be a theory of the components of a leadership team which are key to creating an effective decentralized or networked structure. If as Ganz and Wageman suggest effective teams result in greater leadership development then leadership development occurring in organizations with effective leadership teams, should create feedback loop effects which result in their organizational structure evolving towards an ecosytematized structure. The Ganz and Wageman model of leadership team structure can be taken to hold the seeds of the leadership team structure of ecosystematized organizations.

ORGANIZED ANARCHIES

Another organizational theory perspective I will draw on comes from research by James March and Johan Olsen et. al (1972) on alternative organizations such as free schools, health clinics and crisis centers. This research tells the story of ‘organized anarchies’ which are organizations that have ambiguous divisions of labor and coordination mechanisms. Organized anarchies are characterized by: 1) ambiguous or inconsistent goals and ideologies; 2) unclear or fuzzy technologies; 3) fluid participation of members; 4) confusing histories; and 5) unpredictable environments (March and Olsen qtd in Schwartzman 97-98). I draw on this model because some of these characteristics resonate with my case study and with my experiences with COs.
March and Olsen develop a model to describe decision-making in organized anarchies which is a powerful alternative to the linear rational decision-making model implied by Mintzberg’s structural types and Ganz and Wageman’s effective leadership teams. Rational decision-making models assume that decision-making occurs by a rational process where members select an outcome which ranks highest in terms of their goals and objectives. In practice, as the organized anarchies research demonstrates, it is difficult to find examples of decision making processes which follow this model. March and Olsen describe decisions as after-the-fact constructs produced by participants and observers which explain more about people’s ability to make theories after the fact than about goal-oriented decision-making processes. According to March and Olsen, decision-making processes are loosely coupled with the outcomes or organizational actions they produce. March and Olsen use a metaphor of a garbage can to explain decision-making processes, they describe a garbage can as a receptacle which mixes problems, issues, feelings, solutions and participants. The issues discussed in decision-making processes, and the decision result, depend less on the nature of the problem than on the timing of the joint arrival of problems and solutions and the existence of other decision making processes. Helen Schwartzman’s work on meetings suggests that the form of meetings generates the mix of problems and solutions in the garbage can, meetings she suggests are the ‘can’. This is why Schwartzman says the meeting form is central for understanding the loose connection between decision-making processes and the outcomes or organizational outcomes they produce (Schwartzman 214).
The way the meeting form brings together loosely coupled decision-making processes and outcomes functions in a similar way to bring together loosely coupled formal and informal organizational structures. Mintzberg’s structural types, Ganz and Wageman’s leadership teams and the organized anarchy model are all ideal types of these formal and informal organizational structures. In the next chapter I will explain the ethnography of meetings approach which I will use in my case study to interpret how meetings function to merge these formal and informal structures. My case will show how in practice organizations embody degrees and mixtures of the elements of all of these models.
Leadership development and organizational structure cannot be understood independent of the context in which they emerge. This is because they are concepts which are practically accomplished in social interaction that cannot be taken for granted and studied like concrete things. This perspective, which draws on Helen Schwartzman’s (1989) work on meetings, suggests that understanding leadership development and structure requires understanding meetings, which are the main context where these concepts emerge.

Meetings are a particular form of social interaction or communicative event. A ‘communicative event’ is any social interaction which has a defined beginning and end. Communicative events can be broken down into several components, including who the participants are, what the setting is, what the interaction is supposed to be about, whether the tone is formal or informal, etc. ‘Event components’ and how they relate to each other give shape or form to communicative events which in turn influences the function or outcome of these events in social systems. For community organizations, leadership development is one of the outcomes they aim to achieve through meetings, other outcomes include things like an action plan or commitments to participate in future events.

Meetings, a type of communicative event, are focused interactions of three or more people who agree to get together for purposes related to the functioning of an organization, such as to make decisions about collective action (Schwartzman 7). The event components of meetings are
Figure 4.1
MEETING EVENT COMPONENTS

- **Participants** – who is interacting at the meeting as speakers or listeners, the relationships and responsibilities of these individuals to each other and to others in the organization, other organizations and the constituency.

- **Channels and Codes** - channels for communication include speaking, writing, singing, etc. The codes, which may not be shared, include linguistic, musical, etc.

- **Frame** - processes which signal the beginning, ending and continuation of the meeting. The interpretive context for evaluating the significance of the event, such as “this is serious” or “this is work”.

- **Meeting Talk** -
  - **Topic and Results** - specific issue, concern or focus of the meeting, for example to make a decision. Also includes the results participants expect from the meeting such as the meeting should produce a decision.
  - **Norms of Speaking and Interaction** - Processes which develop and maintain a focus of discussion such as turn-taking rules and processes, the presence or absence of a meeting chair, decision rules, etc.
  - **Oratorical Genres and Styles** - forms of speech such as jokes, prayers, songs, testimonials.
  - **Interest and Participation** - how participation and interest is maintained at meetings through the use of sanctions, rewards or other devices.
  - **Norms of Interpretation** – processes through which individuals make sense of meetings (for example: post-meeting debriefs) and how they relate it to other communicative events.
  - **Goals and Outcomes** – individuals particular goals (for example: to elect someone to an office) versus what the meeting actually achieves in terms of the team, organization, and community.
  - **Meeting Cycles and Patterns** – relation of meeting to other meetings.

(adapted from Schwartzman 67-69)

described in Figure 4.1. Understanding how event components influence particular outcomes first requires analyzing how the components are brought together in the initiation and planning of a meeting. This analysis answers the following questions: how is a meeting called or called off; who participates; what is the setting; what is the agenda; who chairs the meeting and how; how do meetings get called to order; how are meetings related to each other; and, what are the rules and norms for ordering and regulating conversation? Answering these questions requires the

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9 This draws on an approach called the ethnography of speaking (see Dell Hymes 1974).
negotiation and acceptance of a set of social relationships or structure which gives someone a right to do these things. Participants’ understanding of these relationships and structure is drawn upon by meeting participants to make sense of what happens in meetings.

An analysis of how a meeting is initiated and planned is necessary to understand meeting event components and how they interact in meetings to influence particular outcomes and which sets of event components have more influence on particular outcomes than others. Approaching the analysis of meetings from this perspective avoids biases which give priority to certain event components, like tasks and results\(^{10}\), and obscure the importance of others like setting or style of speech. This analysis reveals how the meeting form often influences the goals of individuals and an organization in ways that may be unintended or unanticipated (Schwartzman 86). My case study will demonstrate how, leadership development, a goal of individuals and community organizations, and in turn structure, is influenced by the meeting form.

The ethnography of meetings approach treats meetings as a unit of analysis. It requires observing and analyzing transcripts of meetings, meeting settings, formal and informal interviews with participants and other text artifacts. This analysis includes answering the questions above about how a meeting is initiated and planned and how event components interact over the course of meeting. This is the approach I use in my case study in the next chapter. Appendix C lists the meetings which I observed and recorded, interviews conducted, interview questions, and text artifacts.

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\(^{10}\) Texts such as Robert’s Rules of Order, which was developed to enable individuals to attend to the “task at hand”, is an example of common American cultural assumptions which view meetings as tools for accomplishing tasks like decision-making (Schwartzman 81). That the form of meetings influences goals such as leadership development suggests that though cultural assumptions might view meetings as about accomplishing particular tasks; particular tasks, such as leadership development, are in fact about meetings (Schwartzman 40).
CHAPTER 5

THE BLOCK REBELLION
City Life and the Bank Tenant Movement

It was gloomy and the rain poured down on the night of the block rebellion. On the streets of the Four Corners Neighborhood in Boston the energy was electric, like a New Orleans jazz funeral a procession of nearly one hundred people marched and sang alongside a brass band playing “We Shall Overcome” interjecting chants of “What do we do when the banks attack? Stand up fight back!” The march converged in front of a foreclosed home that was mostly boarded up. Tina took the bullhorn: “You can’t take our house and board it up, you can’t just shut us out and expect us to go away, all the money we put aside and then give it to them, and then they want to take all of that and shut us out, no more of that... we gonna fight!” Behind Tina, silhouette films projected on the windows depicted families acting out the final 72 hours after receiving an eviction notice. In one window a woman packed, in another, children played. Roger, who lives in the home, described the event at a meeting a few days later: “We came together as a family, it was a necessary rebellion because there are over 65 houses in the area in foreclosure, this was not an accident but a calculated attack...when the bank gets bailed out people get thrown out...this wasn’t just a rebellion, it’s a movement that made the community realize that we are dedicated, this is not a fly by night organization, we are in it for the long haul!”

As Tina and Roger explained the block rebellion drew attention to the many foreclosed homes in the neighborhood and the dedication of residents to stay in their homes and fight eviction. The goal of the block rebellion is to stop evictions from many homes at once. It is part of a larger strategy which combines public protest with legal defense to pressure banks to sell the homes, at
the real value, to the residents or to a non-profit which can rent it to the residents or sell it back to
them. The story of the block rebellion is a window into the story of the group which organized it,
the story of who they are, how events like this happen, what it means for them and what they are
accomplishing. I will use the story of the block rebellion to explain more than just how this
group stops evictions from post-foreclosed homes; I will explain how through this work the
group develops leadership and what about the group’s structure enables them to do this.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF CITY LIFE

The block rebellion was organized by the Bank Tenants’ Association which is part of City Life /
Vida Urbana. City Life was founded in the Jamaica Plain neighborhood of Boston in 1973 by
political activists influenced by the civil rights, feminist and anti-Vietnam War movements. It
started off as an explicitly anti-capitalist organization which to become a member of you had to
apply and study. The first issues they worked on were around opposing urban renewal, stopping
evictions of long time residents, and organizing parents to play a positive and unifying role in the
struggle against school segregation.

In the late 80s and early 90s they changed their membership rules and became the mass
mobilization CO which they are today. They are still an individual membership organization, but
now to become a member you simply fill out a membership form and pay fifteen dollar dues,
though they have a sliding scale. They are also no longer explicitly anti-capitalist, however they
do describe their organizing approach as “radical.” In their mission they say that they fight for
“racial social and economic justice and gender equality by building working class power...to
effect systemic change and transform society.” Since the late eighties their work has mainly been
around organizing tenants to fight displacement, though they have also continued to work with parents around education issues, and created a homebuyers counseling program. Their tenant organizing work has mainly been to organize tenant councils to pressure landlords to sign collective rent contracts and to improve housing conditions.

In 2007 a City Life tenant leader came to City Life with a notice from a major bank announcing that they owned the building where he lived and that he had to leave. Supporting him and others to stay in their homes led to City Life launching a campaign to stop evictions from post-foreclosed homes. Eviction defense has been the campaign’s main organizing strategy to stop displacement of tenants and owners. They carry out this strategy through tactics they refer to as the “sword and shield”. The shield involves informing residents of their legal rights to stay in their homes, connecting them with free legal services and engaging in ongoing case work, all of which can drastically slow down the legal eviction process. The sword involves encouraging residents to stay in their homes and organizing blockades, vigils and other public actions to exert public pressure on the banks. These tactics combine to pressure the banks to sell the homes back to the residents at the current real value or to a non-profit bank, Boston Community Capital, which then resells the home back to the residents or rents to them.

After foreclosure all residents become tenants of the bank, which is why the group organized by City Life to stay in their homes calls themselves the Bank Tenants Association. Because foreclosure evictions have disproportionately affected low income and working class communities of color, the majority of the Bank Tenants’ Association (BTA) are low income and working class blacks and Latino/as, many of whom are immigrants from Jamaica, Haiti, El
Salvador and the Dominican Republic. They come from the neighborhoods across the city including Roxbury, Dorchester, Mattapan, Hyde Park, Roslindale, and East Boston. There are approximately 100 active members of the BTA. I define active members as individuals who regularly, at least once a month, participate in meetings, actions and events. The campaign has a contact list of over 600 people, all of whom who have participated in BTA activities within the last two years. The BTA meets three Tuesdays every month and usually has about 60 – 80 people in attendance, approximately 10 of whom are there for the first time. BTA members canvass foreclosed homes once or twice a month on weekend afternoons, and regularly participate in vigils, protests and blockades. A large number of volunteer lawyers, mainly from Harvard legal aid bureau, also regularly canvass.

BTA members who regularly take on tasks like canvassing and are the most active among the members are referred to as ‘leaders’ by the organizers, described below and by many other BTA members. The organizers invite the leaders with the most interest to join the BTA Leadership team. The Bank Tenants’ Association-Leadership team (BTA-LT) meets twice a month of Friday evenings and engages in strategic planning and political discussions. The BTA-LT has 15-20 members; their demographic reflects that of the Bank Tenants’ Association (see appendix B for BTA-LT demographics chart).

City Life has two full-time and six part-time organizers staffing the campaign, they refer to themselves as the organizing team. The organizing team (O-team) meets on Mondays in the early afternoon. Nancy, one of the full-time organizers, a black female of Jamaican origin, was a bank tenant herself, and after becoming more involved accepted an offer to become a staff member.
George, the other full-time organizer, is the organizing director and supervises all of the organizers on the O-team. George is a white male, has worked with City Life for slightly over a decade and comes from a background of labor organizing. Four of the part-time staff work over 10 hours a week, they are a black male and female, John and Rose, who have experience in the disability liberation and civil rights movements, a white male, Damian, who has experience with anarchist organizations and labor organizing, and a Latina female, Janet who used to do homeownership counseling and recently joined the O-team. Damian is a Spanish speaker and works with a satellite Bank Tenants' Association (BTA) group in East Boston, which is a Latino immigrant community. The East Boston group is run autonomously from the BTA group which is the focus of this paper. The other part-time staff work around five hours a week and include a black male who was a bank tenant, a white male who has experience in labor organizing and a white female. Most of the O-team members are college educated and range in age from 35 – 60 (see demographics chart in appendix B for more information). O-teams activities include: meeting with residents and talking about their cases, working on public letters or preparing for a vigil or blockade; organizing groups of BTA members to canvass foreclosed homes; calling BTA members to follow up about their cases or invite them to a meeting or event; preparing for events including press work and other logistics; and finally what they spend the plurality of their time doing: preparing for and participating in meetings, which I turn to next.

BUILDING A MOVEMENT MEANS BUILDING A MEETING

The three types of meetings mentioned above - Bank Tenants’ Association (BTA) meetings, Bank Tenants Association-Leadership team (BTA-LT) meetings and organizing team (O-team)
meetings are the major events through which City Life is experienced and understood as an organization. Figure 5.1 shows the meeting schedule of a typical week at City Life.

Figure 5.1 City Life Weekly Meeting Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
<th>Sunday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organizing team (O-team) Meeting</td>
<td>Bank Tenants’ Association (BTA) Meeting</td>
<td>Bank Tenants’ Association Leadership Team (BTA-LT) Meeting*</td>
<td>Canvassing*</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*these meetings happen twice a month

Meetings are also one of the major events through which goals like leadership development are accomplished. Analyzing how these meetings are planned and play out provides the context for explaining members’ experience and understanding of City Life and how City Life accomplishes its goals like leadership development. An analysis of how meetings are planned and play out involves looking at the meeting event components described in Chapter 2 and how they interact. This analysis answers the following questions: how is a meeting called or called off; who participates; what is the setting; what is the agenda; who chairs the meeting and how; how do meetings get called to order; and, what are the rules and norms for ordering and regulating conversation? Organizing a meeting requires answering these questions which in turn requires the negotiation and acceptance of a set of social relationships or structure which gives someone a right to do these things. Below I will explain how these questions are answered for City Life meetings and in the process begin to describe City Life’s structure.
Organizing Team (O-team) Meetings

The O-team meetings happen every Monday after staff meetings, it is assumed that O-team meetings will happen every week at the same time. After staff meetings the O-team takes about a ten minute break before starting the O-team meeting. George facilitates the meetings, he usually sits down at the table after the break and waits for all of the O-team to reconvene at the table before he signals the start of the meeting. A few times he started the meeting by sitting silently for a few minutes after the O-team reconvened and then saying: “are you guys ready?”. George also sets the agenda which usually includes reflection on past meetings and events, planning for future ones and political discussions. The amount of time spent on each of these varies from week to week, the meetings typically last 2 – 3 hours. The political discussion component usually lasts 30 – 40 minutes, though sometimes if discussion about future events takes too long time it is left off entirely. The setting for the O-team meetings and for the other types of meetings is in City Life’s office which is located in “The Brewery”, an old industrial building in Jamaica Plain which was rehabilitated and converted into a small business complex. O-team meetings happen in the center of the office, O-team members sit around the tables in more or less of a circle, see Figure 5.2.

Figure 5.2 Organizing Team (O-Team) Meeting Setting
Bank Tenants' Association (BTA) Meetings

BTA meetings happen three Tuesdays a month. The other Tuesday is a general tenant organizing meeting where other tenant issues, in addition to BTA issues, are discussed. A handful of additional members who work on those issues attend the tenant organizing meetings but not the BTA meetings. The structure of tenant organizing meetings is largely the same as that of BTA meetings. John, a part-time staff member, coordinates weekly phone calling which reminds BTA members and new contacts about the BTA meetings. O-team members chair different parts of the BTA meetings. George creates the agenda which draws on input mainly from the O-team meeting, though suggestions raised at BTA and BTA-LT meetings also make their way onto the agenda. Meetings usually last around 2 hours, a typical agenda might go like this: 1) Rose goes around and asks everyone to introduce themselves (25 min); 2) George invites a BTA member to the front to explain the ‘sword and the shield’ (10 min); 3) John talks about upcoming events and taking volunteers (15 min); 4) Mary asks for donations (5 min); 5) John divides the meeting into two, new people go outside into the hallway with John to get an orientation about their rights while returning BTA members stay inside the office where they engage in a political discussion chaired by George and/or Nancy, also in the second half lawyers talk to BTA members who need to speak to them one-on-on in the office cubicles (40 min); 6) John then comes back inside with the new people, and they do a short evaluation of the meeting; and 7) the meeting closes with a song or a chant. The seating arrangement for BTA meetings is diagramed in Figure 5.3, below. Most of the O-team members sit at the front of the room, with the exception of Nancy who often sits at the sign in table, George takes notes throughout the meeting on butcher paper on the easel. BTA members who speak sometimes comes to the front of the room and sometimes stand up and speak from their seat. A Spanish interpreter also sits in the front of the room and uses wireless
equipment to interpret the meeting, the Spanish speakers listening to her interpretation, around 8 people, usually sit near each other in the back. Volunteers also provide childcare in the side room, pictured on the lower left.

**Figure 5.3 Bank Tenants’ Association (BTA) Meeting Setting**

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**Bank Tenants’ Association-Leadership Team (BTA-LT) Meetings**

BTA-LT meetings happen twice a month on Friday evenings. Members of the BTA are invited to BTA-LT meetings by members of the O-team, usually by George or Nancy. John coordinates the phone calls to remind BTA-LT members about the meetings. To date, George has mostly created the agendas and chaired the meetings, though recently Nancy has chaired a meeting and BTA-LT members are being asked to chair sections of the meeting. The meetings usually last around 2
hours. The agenda usually includes prioritizing and making decisions about upcoming actions and events, reflecting on past actions and events and engaging in political discussion. The BTA-LT sits around the table in the center of the office (see Figure 5.4). Like at the BTA meetings, George takes notes on butcher paper on the easel throughout the meeting. Two or three Spanish speakers from the East Boston group usually attend and the East Boston organizer interprets for them. Different BTA-LT members often prepare a home cooked dinner for the entire group.

Figure 5.4 Bank Tenants’ Association–Leadership Team (BTA-LT) Meeting Setting
These descriptions of how City Life meetings are planned and play out will be the context for my explanation of how members experience and understand the organization, their leadership development practices and their organizational and team structures. The above description already suggests some of what this analysis will reveal, for example: the role of the O-team in convening meetings gives it a lot power to set the parameters of discussion and to potentially dominate decision-making. However, the power of the O-team cannot be understood apart from its relationship to the BTA and BTA-LT and the meeting contexts where decisions are made. An analysis of these meeting contexts and how they relate will show how at times the BTA-LT and BTA significantly influence decision-making processes and outcomes.

EVALUATING LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

From the perspective of the meetings described above, I now turn to an analysis of City Life’s leadership development practices. City Life defines leadership development as helping others help themselves. This approach was described in an O-team meeting when Nancy, a member of the O-team who was once a bank tenant facing eviction, was complaining that the O-team was getting away from this approach to leadership development. She said “when do we go from one model to the next? [Now] we meet with a family and tell them what we are going to do, it’s going to take them to be involved, if you want something bad enough…” she then goes on to describe her own experience first getting involved in the organization “we used to have them in here, I remember my case, I was up here calling everyone I knew for days, training what it means to do a blockade”. The discussion that followed was about how they could work with a particular bank tenant in a way where that would help them help themselves. City Life’s concept of leadership development is not much more specific than this basic premise which is why I
developed the framework in Chapter 2 to flesh out this concept and how it can be evaluated. The block rebellion will be my window onto this analysis. The block rebellion is a useful event for explaining leadership development because it involved many members and demonstrates both strengths in their leadership development and areas for improvement. My evaluation of the block rebellion is an evaluation of the leadership development practices which occurred during the event itself, during the preparation that led up to it and during the debriefing that followed it. Below I describe the leadership development practices observed for each leadership development indicator, after the explanation of each leadership development practice a table summarizes my evaluation of the practice and how form of meetings influences it.

**Supportive Relationships**

One of the ways that supportive relationships can be observed is in the number of people who take on meaningful roles and how much support they get to successfully fulfill these roles. At the block rebellion members of the BTA-LT took on many roles including MC, press contacts, speakers, chant leaders, police contact and food preparation and serving. The role of MC was taken on by Tina who gave the speech quoted at the start of the chapter and as her speech suggests she executed her role brilliantly. Though she had never MC'ed an event like this before, she did have extensive informal training thanks to her participation in BTA meetings.

Throughout BTA meetings there are many times when participants give speeches similar to Tina’s. Roger’s quote at the beginning of the chapter is from a speech that was given during a section of a BTA meeting when participants were evaluating and reflecting on the block

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1 This approach follows the way the CO Mothers on the Move in New York thinks about leadership development, as described by Celina Su (2005).
2 The observation that meetings can be thought of as trainings comes from Bob Moses’ (79) reflection that mass meetings in the civil rights movement served this function.
rebellion. His speech was rousing and inspiring, and the group responded with applause and cheers. It is a good example of a type of speech that is common in BTA meetings. These speeches often tell the story of an individual’s struggle to stay in their homes and then connect this struggle to the struggle of the entire group, stressing the importance of the group and its power to win their fight. I call these speeches ‘narrative speeches’ because in the same way that Marshall Ganz (2009) explains and teaches public narrative, these speeches tell “the story of me, us and now”. Narrative speeches also sometimes happen during introductions, explanations of the sword and the shield and the second half of BTA meetings.

Tina’s active participation in the BTA and BTA-LT have given her exposure and practice in narrative speeches. The regularity of BTA meetings, once a week, is especially important in giving members practice in this style. Though Tina is well versed in speaking she had never called upon and introduced speakers. Throughout the rally part of the block rebellion she looked to George, one of two O-team members who were present, and asked questions like who the next speaker was. Many other leaders who took on roles did the same, for example when meeting with reporters they would notify and update George.

The roles BTA-LT members took on at the block rebellion were negotiated at their meeting the night before the block rebellion. Like most BTA-LT meetings to date, George chaired the meeting and set the agenda. An hour into the meeting he turned to the block rebellion, he started by laying out the plan that he had developed along with an artist who volunteers with City Life and a few BTA-LT members. This explanation identified most of the key roles which needed to be taken on. George also brought up another issue that the group would have to decide on:
whether or not during the event they should trespass into vacant units of a foreclosed home to project the silhouette films described at the start of the chapter. During the discussion that followed Roger, who lives in the home that has the vacant units in question, said that they should trespass because they needed to make a strong statement. He also talked about how his wife was uneasy about the event and was having cold feet. His wife was not present, though she normally attends BTA and BTA-LT meetings. Others weighed in on the trespassing issue often going off on different tangents. George would often make comments which would bring the conversation back to the trespassing issue, or relate what someone was saying to one of the roles. For example, when one of the BTA-LT members, Henry, was talking about how years ago he had started a neighborhood association to address crime in the neighborhood of the block rebellion, George asked if he would be a speaker at the block rebellion and tell that story, Henry agreed. Henry and others who volunteered for roles asked what went into those roles and the group discussed what they thought. For example, for the role of MC they discussed the sort of things that the MC might say between speakers and how to get the crowd riled up.

Describing the block rebellion at an O-team meeting George said that the event was in part a success because of all the roles people took on and how solidly they executed them. His comments did not mention his own role in negotiating their roles or the support he offered at the event. In part his comments point to his and the organization’s explicit leadership development goals which are to help leaders perform roles on their own. George’s comments also point to his assumption that the work he is doing with the BTA-LT is advancing his leadership development goals. While the examples I explain demonstrate that City Life is achieving some of its leadership development goals, I also recognize the role George and other O-team members play
in doing this and try to explain how they do it. Despite the fact that that people took on many roles and performed them quite well, the fact is, had George not performed the role he did, the BTA-LT would not have taken on the roles they did and performed them so successfully. Part of what allows the negotiation of roles which occurred, and the learning process which the BTA-LT underwent in taking them on and performing them, has to do with how George chaired and held the space at the BTA-LT meeting. George facilitated the role negotiation process. He did this by listing the roles, then sitting back and listening as people told stories and got off on tangents. He then built off of those stories to bring the conversation back to the roles. If City Life is to achieve its goal of leaders actually taking on and performing roles for themselves they will have to understand how the space is held in this way and be able to train members to do it. The next section on interpersonal connections will expand on how the space is held in City Life meetings as this is especially important to that leadership development practice.

Table 5.1 Supportive Relationships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sites of Observation</th>
<th>Evidence of Deep Leadership Dev.</th>
<th>Evidence of Superficial LD</th>
<th>Influence of Meeting form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Many leaders take on tasks at block rebellion</td>
<td>Tina’s powerful narrative speech, others executing roles well</td>
<td>Leaders check in with George because they are dependent</td>
<td>BTA meetings as training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leaders check in with George for support</td>
<td></td>
<td>How George chairs meetings and hold’s space allows for learning in role negotiation process</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Interpersonal Connections**

One of the things City Life is best at is facilitating the creation of deep interpersonal connections between their members. One site where these connections can be observed in countless side conversations before and during BTA meetings where members can be seen taking a genuine interest in each other’s well being, for example when a member asks about another’s sick relative. Humor or joking around is another sign that connections are being made. For example in one BTA meeting Kevin, a BTA-LT member, walked in late and was not paying attention when John, who was about to lead a chant said “Kevin, What do you do when the banks attack?” Kevin responded by saying “what? I don’t know”, over a chorus of laughter John said “you were late that’s what, no, I was saying what do you do when the banks attack” to which a chorus responded with “Stand up fight back!”. Kevin is an active member, known for his sense of humor, that John called him out by name in front of 80 people could have been a cause for embarrassment but because he and John, like many City Life members have a personal connection John knew he would not take it personally. This kind of joking not only suggests that interpersonal connections exist, it also helps create the space which facilitates these connections to be made.

Another example of interpersonal connections was shown when Roger’s wife described what the event meant to her at the BTA-LT meeting after the event. As mentioned above she had cold feet before the event, at the meeting she explained “it is easy to get excited when you are marching in front of someone else’s house when it’s in front of yours its completely different”. She said that what really made a difference for her was that another BTA-LT member called and left 3 messages and that Kevin brought her flowers. Finally she said that “seeing all those people there in the rain gave her the energy to get up out of bed and join and I love everyone here”. The
presence of these kinds of interpersonal connections are what makes Roger’s comment, quoted at the start of the chapter, that we came together as a family, ring true. In fact City Life is described as a family by many members, it is something that Rose often repeats in her introductions which I describe next.

The introductions which Rose chairs are a key component of how the space is held in BTA meetings to facilitate the forming of interpersonal connections and the “family” of City Life. Rose usually begins BTA meetings by welcoming everyone and saying that many people walk in the door feeling like a victim, feeling like they are the only one going through this, but looking around they realize that they are not alone, that all these people are going through the same thing and that at City Life you find a family and you get your voice back. She then moves around the room pointing to each person asking them to introduce themselves. As mentioned above BTA meetings are attended by 80+ people so this takes about 25 minutes. Most participants only say their name, address and status of their case, for example in foreclosure and waiting for a notice from the bank. However some BTA members, either because Rose asks them or on their own volition, introduce themselves and give a narrative speech describing their personal fight to stay in their homes and how it is connected to the struggle of everyone else and why together with City Life they will win. In telling these stories people at times get emotional, sometimes crying even. When this happens other BTA members offer encouragement by shouting words like “its ok” or touching them on the shoulder. Rose or Nancy often say something about how this is part of getting your voice back. Every person introducing themselves, hearing how many other people are going through the same thing they are, and the stories people tell, all creates a space which allows people to connect, listen and dialogue on a deep level. The way that the form of the
meeting, through the introductions, creates this space, shows how meetings create the ‘family’ that people understand City Life and the BTA to be. In this way BTA meetings actually constitute the BTA and City Life itself, BTA and City Life meetings are the BTA and City Life.3

Another site where space is created for interpersonal connections is the second half of BTA meetings. As mentioned above in the second half of BTA meetings the group is divided in two, new people go out into the hallway with John for an orientation on their rights, and returning members engage in political or other discussions chaired by George and/or Nancy. During one BTA meeting the discussion during the second half was about how going through foreclosure makes you feel. Nancy explained that the group talks a lot about strategy and politics but that going through this experience also brings up a lot of emotions and that the group can look for things in these emotions to make it stronger. Nancy laid out ground rules for the discussion, she said that people should: “limit the amount of time, respect others and feel ok about sharing because what we say in here stays in here”. One woman got teary eyed as she explained that she used to cry and blame her husband and that she was so scared that when someone knocked on her door she told her kids to be quiet and not to answer. Now, she said, when “they sent police to my house to intimidate me and asked for my name, I said no problem because I got roaches and they need to resolve these issues and I have attorneys, and I’m just grateful for an organization that gives me a voice, not matter what I’ll spread the word so other people can feel strong and powerful like I do now.” This sort of emotional exchange, which can be observed in all the different types of City Life meetings, points to the deep interpersonal connections between City Life members.

3 City Life meetings constitute the organization similar to how anthropologist Fred Meyers (1996) describes the egalitarian Australian aboriginal group, the Pintupi, as constituting the Pintupi polity in meetings under a rubric or values of ‘relatedness’ and ‘individual autonomy’.
Another aspect of interpersonal connections which are facilitated during the second half of meetings are spiritual connections. These can be observed in the second half of the monthly tenant organizing meetings, where Rose chairs a faith and justice small group which talks about how to involve faith communities in City Life’s work and how members connect their spirituality with their work with City Life. Spiritual connections can also be observed in side conversations where, for example, someone might say to someone else that they prayed for them. Also, in narrative speeches during BTA meetings and in comments made at BTA-LT meetings people often mention God. In addition to emotional and spiritual exchanges, cultural exchanges are also common among City Life members. As the membership come from diverse backgrounds, many of them are immigrants, they often have conversations sharing things about their home countries. The cultural, spiritual and emotional exchanges described above are all evidence of the deep interpersonal connections between City Life members and ways in which the form of meetings facilitates this.
**Table 5.2 Interpersonal Connections**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sites of Observation</th>
<th>Evidence of Deep Leadership Dev.</th>
<th>Influence of Meeting form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BTA Meeting</td>
<td>John joking with Kevin in front of BTA meeting</td>
<td>BTA-LT meetings and BTA meeting creates space which constitutes City Life as family: people feel like they can joke like Kevin and John; and Roger’s wife bonds with other BTA-LT members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BTA-LT Meeting</td>
<td>Roger’s wife describes receiving several supportive phone calls and flowers when she had cold feet before the block rebellion</td>
<td>How Rose introduces everyone (80+ people) creates sense of family and solidarity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BTA Meeting Introductions</td>
<td>In introductions people share personal and emotional narrative speeches</td>
<td>In second half of BTA meeting, Nancy sets ground rules and invites people to share how struggle against eviction makes them feel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second half of BTA meetings</td>
<td>Narrative speeches show emotional exchange and spiritual</td>
<td>BTA meeting brings diverse group together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Side conversations</td>
<td>Conversation shows cultural exchange</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Ideological Development**

In Roger’s narrative speech, quoted at the start of the chapter, he described the 65 foreclosed homes in the Four Corners neighborhood as a calculated attack and noted that while “the banks have been bailed out, people are being thrown out”. Later in his speech he described the situation as “an economic war on the working class”. These comments point to Roger’s systemic understanding of the foreclosure crisis, in other words his ideological development. Systemic analysis or ideological development is something which is explicitly talked about and nurtured in
City Life meetings. In BTA meetings Rose has often said “some people say we are too radical, I don’t think we’re radical enough, radical don’t mean you kick and scream, radical means getting to the root of the issue, if you don’t get to the root of it you’ll never solve the problem”. City Life is radical because the O-team is radical. While their specific understanding of how the system operates and how it should be changed is not the same, they do share an understanding of problems like the foreclosure crisis as being caused by systemic racism and systemic problems of capitalism. In O-team meetings they often create a space to learn from each other and develop their understanding of the systemic causes of problems. This focus of the O-team translates into political discussions which occur in BTA and BTA-LT meetings, as well as workshops and other discussions and activities. As I will describe below, O-team meetings are successful in creating a space where members are able to dialogue and deeply listen to each other and together develop their systemic understanding. BTA and BTA-LT meetings show evidence of this but to a lesser extent. This is in part due to differences, across the meetings, in the way the space is created for these discussions.

At the end of O-team meetings, after past and upcoming events have been discussed there is often a section devoted to political discussion. In one political discussion the topic was about the political implications of a situation where an owner who worked with City Life to get their home back planed on raising rents so much that they would push out their current tenants. The group discussed fundamental issues about a profit driven housing system and how their work relates to this system. In another meeting the group read and discussed a page of a document, written by George, describing City Life’s approach to radical organizing. One of the sections they read, titled ‘Race, class and gender intersections’, says that City Life is conscious of racial, gender and
class issues and engages them. The section describes real estate investment practices which
disproportionately affect working class of people of color as examples of class oppression and
racism and talks about how City Life stands for immigrants’ rights even through this may disturb
English speaking citizens. In the discussion that followed people raised a number of issues about
what it really means to take on these issues in a multi-racial group. In this context the group
discussed a comment which Rose often makes during the introductions of BTA meetings that
“we are all in the same boat”. Rose explained that it means we are all in the struggle together,
while I argued that it could be mistaken to mean white and black people have the exact same
experiences. George suggested that the meaning of this would be different if a white person were
to stand up in front of a mostly black room and say this. John talked about how this comment
“opens layers of listening” which can be used to create a dialogue. John brought up an example
of a dialogue he led in a BTA meeting which he started by showing a cropped picture of a happy
white family on a porch and asked people if the family is in foreclosure, to which everyone
replied no, he then zoomed out and showed that they were surrounded by a City Life rally full of
people holding signs and banners. He said that it stimulated a good conversation about white
privilege and race. Nancy noted that the “discussion was really good” and that she does not
“want to lose it”. The conversation was really good, it created a space for deeper listening and
dialogue and is a great example of the sort of ideological development which is a part of deep
leadership development.

Just as the O-team meetings have political discussion in the second half of their meetings, the O-
team often sets up political discussions in the second half of BTA meetings. In one of these
discussions, George, stood in front of the easel at the front of the room, and began by describing
an editorial written by Henry Paulson which said that it was immoral for residents to walk away from their mortgages. George asked what people thought about this. In the discussion that followed people stood up and made various comments about how the bank bailout was unfair, and about how large as opposed to small banks were responsible for the foreclosures. George added that historically trends in income and housing prices moved together until the banks, with their financial instruments, created a bubble which made housing prices skyrocket. As he made this comment people seemed to lean in a bit and nod their heads, suggesting that they were listening closely. Denise, a black woman, stood up and said that people did not always go to those banks, she talked about how there used to be a credit union in her neighborhood, an all black neighborhood, and that her mother used to deposit $3 there every week after church. Another member, an older black male, said that he knew the exact place she was talking about, Denise then said that those places do not exist anymore. George pointed out that the non-profit bank which City Life works with, which buys back homes and resells or rents them to current residents, is an example of one of one of these banks, he wrote down ‘credit unions’ on the butcher paper, and sat back down. A woman then stood up and talked about how Barney Frank is not doing his job and that she has called his office everyday, which was followed by a chorus of mhms. A young Latino man then said that “because the banks were bailed out with our money they are basically ours”.

The conversation above shows some engagement with a systemic analysis of problems especially at the bigger picture level. The way the conversation jumped around however, suggests that the listening and quality of dialogue, and hence the ideological development, remained at a superficial level. The point where George wrote down ‘credit unions’, appears to have been an
opening for a deeper dialogue because people seemed to be deeply listening and the topic of conversation presented an opportunity for deeper systemic understanding. Della’s comment that credit unions do not exist anymore was not true, yet in some sense what she said is true because many of these banks are not integrated in the community in the way that she describes they used to be. Part of what prevented the conversation from moving into a dialogue at this point, and throughout the conversation, was the meeting setting and channel of communication. As diagramed in Figure 5.3 the seating arrangement in rows can be distracting because it is difficult for people to face each other. Because the group is large, around 40-50 people, it is difficult to hear, especially when people do not project. Sometimes a microphone is used at the front of the room, but the seating arrangement still creates distractions, and not everyone walks up to the front to speak. This setting allows for the O-team, who sits or stands in the front of the room to be heard more easily, which also creates a distance between them and the BTA membership. These factors combine to make it more difficult to create a space where everyone can listen to each other, build off of each other’s points and collectively develop their understanding.

While in the example above the group did not move into the dialogue that was potentially possible, this discussion did create a space where some understanding of the system was developed, especially at a bigger picture level. Roger’s narrative speech quoted at the start of this section is further evidence of the bigger picture systemic understanding which often emerges in the second half of BTA meetings. Narrative speeches, as mentioned above, tell a story of me, us and now; the ideological development or systemic understanding part of the story can be described as the ‘now’ part of the story. For Roger’s speech, this would be the part about the 65 houses in foreclosure being part of a calculated attack and economic warfare. Like many of the
narrative speeches that can be heard in BTA meetings, the systemic understanding which is shown in Roger’s speech stays at the big picture level and does not explicitly connect this picture to the strategy which the group is engaged in. Because the narrative speeches, as described in the interpersonal connections section, are so effective at creating emotional and spiritual connections one can only imagine how much more powerful they would be if they could also communicate the group’s strategy.

The difficulty leaders have in explicitly articulating the group’s strategy can be observed in the first half of BTA meetings when leaders explain the BTA strategy or the sword and the shield. Usually after introductions a leader, who was asked at a previous BTA meeting by an O-team member to explain the strategy, comes to the front of the room and instead of explaining the strategy, tells their narrative speech. Twice after a speech George has asked if they could explain the sword and the shield and they either got the sword and shield mixed up or only explained half of it. George or another O-team member then explained it. The leaders who volunteer to explain the strategy understand the tactics of the sword and shield and how they are used though they may not refer to them as by these names. This understanding is evident from conversations in BTA and BTA-LT meetings and in interviews when asked about it. That they do not explain it at the BTA meetings is in part due to the predominance in BTA meetings of the narrative speech style which focuses on the emotional and testimonial aspects of the story of me, us and now. Leaders need practice and experience in ways of telling their story which incorporate the strategy in order to communicate it.
The focus on the big picture in leaders’ story of now is also related to ideological development which can be observed in BTA-LT meetings. Like O-team and BTA meetings, BTA-LT meetings have political discussions as part of their meetings. BTA-LT members also engage in activities such as lectures, coalition meetings and workshops which also broaden this knowledge. The level of this ideological development can be described as somewhere in between what is observed in O-team meetings and BTA meetings. In the section on reflection I will explain the ideological development of the BTA-LT through their debriefing of the block rebellion.
Table 5.3 Ideological Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sites of Observation</th>
<th>Evidence of Deep Leadership Dev.</th>
<th>Evidence of Superficial LD</th>
<th>Influence of Meeting form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Narrative Speeches</td>
<td>Roger’s speech about 65 foreclosed homes as calculated attack and economic warfare</td>
<td></td>
<td>BTA meetings as training in narrative speeches, narrative speeches as a common style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O-team political discussions</td>
<td>Dialogue and listening about race, class and gender issues in organizing work</td>
<td></td>
<td>Regularity of political discussion create comfort and practice in dialoguing about these issues; personal connections of participants and their demographic and life experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second half of BTA meetings</td>
<td>Discussion of financial system and its relationships to evictions</td>
<td>Conversation jumps around and does not move to dialogue</td>
<td>Setting (chairs in rows) and channel (difficult to hear with so many people) hinders dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanation of City Life strategy (sword and the shield)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Leaders cannot explain the sword and the shield</td>
<td>Predominance of narrative speech style; lack of preparation and practice in explaining how strategy relates to their story; political discussions overemphasis on bigger picture systemic understanding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Solution Development
The block rebellion is a tactic which is part of the larger eviction defense strategy. Developing tactics can be thought of as developing solutions to problems. The plan for the block rebellion was developed by George and a volunteer artist, Irene, though BTA-LT members who live in the neighborhood, such as Roger did give some input. Their input was given in one-on-one conversations with Irene and by participating in a coordinating meeting with a neighborhood association located in the neighborhood of the block rebellion. Despite the inclusion of these BTA-LT members when the plan was presented at O-team, BTA and BTA-LT meetings it was already fully developed and sold to the membership. This planning process hindered opportunities for solution development and leadership development at these meetings. It also explains part of why during the event many of the leaders who took on roles looked to George to asked what came next.

The Tuesday night meeting before the block rebellion was a tenant organizing meeting which, as explained above, happens one Tuesday of the month. In addition to BTA members these meetings include a handful of City Life members who work on tenant issues unrelated to the BTA. For the most part, these meetings are similar to BTA meetings, except that in the second half instead of large discussions they split up into break out groups of about 15 people each. The break out groups include: faith and justice, tenant organizing, and the meeting before the block rebellion a break group on the block rebellion. The layout of these groups at that meeting is diagramed below in Figure 5.5.
While an O-team member usually chairs these break out group meetings, the one on the block rebellion was chaired by Irene. Irene began the break out group meeting by laying out the plan and agenda for the block rebellion and then asked what people thought about it, but no one replied. She then said that they needed volunteers to canvass the neighborhood before the event to invite residents to participate. A few people volunteered. She explained the plan in greater detail and asked for more volunteers for things like speaking, however she still received only a few replies. At one point she said "I don’t want to be the only one talking here." Someone asked if it would help if someone explained the last block rebellion. George who had joined the group shortly after it started explained that they had three rallies which had successfully pressured the banks to sell a number of foreclosed homes back to the owners. A few more comments were
made by participants, for example, one woman suggested that they carry sticks with shopping bags as a prop. Soon the room started to get louder and people started standing up and rearranging their chairs to face to the front and then Rose called Irene to the front because they were about to begin report backs.

The setting, channel and how the break out group meeting was chaired all contributed to preventing the break out group from creating a more successful solution development process. As the diagram in Figure 5.5 shows the break out groups were very close together which made it difficult to hear. Further, no agenda or preparation was done before the meeting. Because people in the meeting had various levels of experience and knowledge of the event and the tactic of the block rebellion itself, it would have made sense to orient people to topic before diving into it. Other things such as introductions could also have been done to help create a space which could hold the dialogue and listening necessary for the solution development process which Irene and George wanted to achieve.

The break out group meeting above is an extreme example of a weak planning or solution development process. The BTA-LT meeting before the block rebellion, where leaders of the BTA-LT took on roles and discussed what each role required is an example of a much more effective process. As explained in the supportive relationships section this is in part a result of the way that George chaired the meeting creating a space allowing for listening and dialogue and drawing out opportunities for learning about and discussing the roles. Even in this meeting however, the solution development process could have been stronger had the group been involved earlier on in the planning process.
Table 5.4 Solution Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sites of Observation</th>
<th>Evidence of Deep Leadership Dev.</th>
<th>Evidence of Superficial LD</th>
<th>Influence of Meeting form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Block rebellion break out group</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of participation in meeting, no contributions to plan</td>
<td>Setting (break out groups too close together) and channel (hard to hear) made it distracting; lack of preparation: agenda, chairing;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O-team meeting before block rebellion</td>
<td>People talked through what roles would entail; tried out different things that MC should say and other scenarios that might occur</td>
<td>No contributions to plan</td>
<td>Plan already fully developed before meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BTA-LT meeting before block rebellion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>How George chairs meetings and hold’s space allows for role learning in role negotiation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Reflection**

In the meetings after the block rebellion, as they do after most major events, the O-team, BTA, and BTA-LT engaged in an evaluation which is a kind of reflection. In the BTA-LT meeting, the evaluation of the block rebellion started with Roger’s wife sharing her story, described above, about how much it meant for her to have the support of others and how they gave her the strength to join the event. Nancy, who was chairing the meeting brought up the press coverage of the event which included an article in the main section of a major national newspaper. Nancy suggested that the article focused too much on the non-profit bank which works with City Life to
purchase homes and sell or rent them back to residents. During the discussion that followed the group discussed how the article highlighted the non-profit bank but not the movement which is making the deals with the non-profit bank possible. They also discussed how they need to practice speaking with the press so that they can frame the message in a way which highlights the movement. This reflection shows ideological development including learning about messaging, the media and strategy. Nancy posing the question about the press coverage and offering a comment, in a way modeling a reflection, was a key to the success of this reflection. Part of what enables her to model reflective practice so well is how regularly and deeply it occurs in O-team meetings.

In the evaluation of the block rebellion at the O-team meeting following the event, Janet, a part time organizer who has little organizing experience, expressed frustration about how George took on too much responsibility for the event, saying “I don’t feel comfortable when we have an event like that and only one of us, one person on the team does all the work repping the organization…let’s divide some of this work…that’s how I feel”. This frustration was caused by the O-team not being included in the planning of the block rebellion, as explained in the previous section. This frustration is also a result of the ambiguity of the roles of the O-team members and how they should work together. In a previous O-team meeting this came up when the group was talking about how they had a large number of events coming up and were discussing how they would be able balance them with their ongoing work. During this discussion Nancy asked “how can we pull this off, what are the roles people need to take on?”. Janet then said that she did not even know what goes into planning the upcoming events they were talking about. At the end of the evaluation of the block rebellion Janet said that she was glad that the event turned out well.
and that she hoped they could learn from it about how to plan better for future events. While no conclusion was reached on how to do this, that the group creates a space where these concerns can be discussed is important and the first step in learning how to address them. This openness to criticism and learning is common to reflections in the O-team meetings.

It is in part because of that openness that one of the major innovations of BTA meetings came out of a reflection in an O-team meeting. When the BTA first got formed the meetings did not split into two. Every meeting the group reviewed their legal rights and the sword and the shield. After one of the members mentioned that they already knew these things, during an O-team meeting, the group reflected on the BTA meeting agendas and discussed what could be done. The idea to split the meeting into two came from this conversation. After trying this out a few times, in another O-team meeting, they reflected on how it seemed to be catching on and decided to continue with it. This example of reflection is also an example of an effective solution development process.

O-team members’ experience in engaging in reflective dialogue allows them to model this process as described above when Nancy posed a question about the press coverage at BTA-LT meeting. At the end of many BTA meetings George or another O-team member leads an evaluation of the meeting. They write a plus sign ‘+’ and a delta sign ‘Δ’ on the butcher paper on the easel, then ask the group how the meeting went, what they liked and what could be improved, and then write down the group’s replies. Examples of responses about what they liked are: lots of people are participating, a particular chant or pictures of an event that were shown. Rarely are many points made about what could be improved. The story of the success of Nancy modeling
reflection in the BTA-LT meeting suggests that this sort of modeling is also necessary in BTA meetings and that it should be consciously practiced in BTA-LT meetings and is a skill which should be transferred to BTA and BTA-LT members.

Table 5.5 Reflection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sites of Observation</th>
<th>Evidence of Deep Leadership Dev.</th>
<th>Evidence of Superficial LD</th>
<th>Influence of Meeting form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BTA-LT evaluation of block rebellion</td>
<td>Dialogue about press coverage, messaging, the</td>
<td>Very few comments made, almost all positive, about number of people, etc.; no evidence of learning</td>
<td>Nancy modeling how to evaluate (constructively criticize)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O-team evaluation of block rebellion</td>
<td>Airing of frustration over ambiguity of roles</td>
<td></td>
<td>Space that is open to criticism and oriented to learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluations at the end of BTA meetings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of modeling how to evaluate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O-team reflection</td>
<td>Based on member's comment that they already know what was talked about in BTA meeting, O-team develops innovation of splitting the second half of BTA meetings</td>
<td></td>
<td>O-team members’ practice and experience in critical reflection; how meeting brings together O-team members’ past experiences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Accountability

In City Life meetings commitments are constantly being made. During every meeting when upcoming events are discussed participants volunteer in front of the entire group for roles which
help carry out these events and day-to-day activities. This creates social pressure to honor these commitments and an expectation that people in the group will hold each other accountable. People nearly always show up and do what they said they would do because they make these public commitments and they are highly committed to the cause. At meetings, people’s efforts are also acknowledged and celebrated by rounds of applause. For example, if someone reports back from an event hosted at their home or on canvassing the entire group will applaud after their report back.

O-team members’ high level of commitment is shown by the fact that they work many more hours than they are paid for. They often do everything they say this will do and more. Evidence of O-team members holding each other accountable can be observed in public commitments made at O-team meetings, as well as regular informal check-ins where they ask each other about how things are going on a particular task. Holding each other accountable requires clarity about their roles. The brief history section above described these roles some of them include: George as a full time organizing director, Nancy as a full time organizer, John as a part time organizer and phone coordinator and Rose as a part time organizer and faith and justice coordinator. As mentioned above, in the section on reflection, Janet and Nancy have suggested that there is some ambiguity about the roles of O-team members. Janet’s frustrations and need for more clarity of roles can be understood as a need for more accountability.

The O-team also has formal accountability mechanisms which include weekly time sheets where they write out the tasks they are doing and work plans which are created and evaluated every 6 months. These evaluations are mainly an opportunity for O-team members to reflect on their
work, the support they are getting and how they can improve it. George as the organizing
director supervises the rest of the O-team, this formal relationship involves him signing off on
their time sheets and meeting with each team member individually during the evaluations. O-
team members informally check in with George on a regular basis both because his is more
experienced and because he is their supervisor.

For the O-team to be held accountable by the BTA and BTA-LT means that they do the tasks
they take on in BTA and BTA-LT meetings, and also that they deeply listen to the membership.
An example of this deep listening is the innovation of splitting the second half of BTA meetings,
mentioned above. An example which shows relatively less listening to the membership is the
planning process of the block rebellion described above. This sort of deep listening can also be
described as how the membership influences decisions made by the O-team. Though the
decision-making rules clearly impact how the membership influences the O-team, as mentioned
in Chapter 2, for analytical clarity I consider the decision making rules a structural component,
which I will describe later, separate from how much decisions are influenced by the membership.
My description of the decision making rules will account for a feedback loop where how
decisions get made can influence how much the membership influences those decisions. In the
planning of the block rebellion for example, if the BTA-LT were involved earlier in the process
of planning events they could have had greater influence on the plan. However, it is important to
note that this is not necessarily the case, one can also imagine a scenario where the BTA-LT is
involved early on and an organizer slowly sells a fully developed plan.
Accountability also involves listening to the constituency and movement. Listening to the constituency can be observed in canvassing. Canvassing was done in the neighborhood of the block rebellion leading up to the event and is systematically done to all foreclosed homes in the five neighborhoods hardest hit by the foreclosure crises. In BTA meetings members volunteer to go canvassing on weekends twice a month. This regular contact creates lots of experience which BTA members can draw upon in understanding how the foreclosure crisis is affecting the community and how to move people to join their struggle. Canvassing involves visiting a house that is in foreclosure, knocking on their door, asking the residents if they were aware that their house is in foreclosure, informing them of their rights to stay in their homes and trying to engage them in a conversation to recruit them to come to the next BTA meeting. The training which happens at BTA meetings, described in the section on supportive relationships, helps members explain residents’ rights and helps members share their story which engages the residents. Questions such as how long they have been living there and if they want to stay also help initiate conversation. Some members are better than others at listening to the residents and engaging them in dialogue. In my experience canvassing with BTA members, some people were naturals while others would just tell the resident their rights, hand them a flyer and leave. I found it helpful to switch off who takes the lead when knocking on each door and use my turn to model asking lots of questions and listening. Little preparation is done with members before they go out and canvass. Standardizing the practice of modeling questions and listening can be done by role playing door knocking with members before they go out and canvass. This could help members develop the skills to deeply listen and engage the constituency when canvassing.
Coalition meetings are sites where accountability to the movement can be observed. This sort of accountability requires that the members of the organization who represent it listen and create a dialogue between the movement and their organization. Leading up to the block rebellion, meetings with a local neighborhood association provided an opportunity for the sort of listening and dialogue. BTA-LT members participated in meetings with the neighborhood association however they did not debrief these meetings at the BTA-LT meetings, further there was no discussion amongst the BTA-LT of how these members should represent the group in these meetings. This makes it difficult to create a dialogue between the neighborhood association and the BTA-LT. In other words for the BTA-LT to be held accountable to the movement. Another opportunity for accountability to the movement came in the BTA-LT meeting before the block rebellion when one of the members discussed how he had helped start a neighborhood group years ago. The sort of grassroots network of people which were probably involved in forming this organization are the networks which form the basis for creating the infrastructure which supports movement building. Being held accountable to the movement means listening to and dialoguing with these sorts of networks\(^4\). That the BTA-LT is surfacing these sorts of networks is promising, however to truly be held accountable to a movement, and to make it stronger, they will have to tap into them. One promising network which City Life is tapping into is a network of labor and community organizations who share radical organizing principles. The O-team, along with this network, has convened a Radical Organizing Summer Institute. This Institute is organizing ideological development workshops which will engage their membership in multi-issue listening and dialogue.

\(^4\) An example of organizations held accountable to movements in this way is COFO, as described in Chapter 3 it was an umbrella civil rights organization founded in Mississippi in the early 60s. This organization drew upon the grassroots network developed by activists like Amzie Moore and Medgar Evers who had been organizing NAACP committees and other activities for decades before COFOs formation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sites of Observation</th>
<th>Evidence of Deep Leadership Dev.</th>
<th>Evidence of Superficial LD</th>
<th>Influence of Meeting form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commitments are honored and acknowledged</td>
<td>High level of commitment to the cause, people work more than paid hours and volunteers volunteer many hours</td>
<td></td>
<td>Commitments are made in front of entire group, creates social pressure to honor commitments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O-team meetings</td>
<td>Frustration, lack of clarity of roles</td>
<td>Frustration, lack of clarity of roles</td>
<td>O-team meeting is a context to air concerns that is open to criticism and learning but there is no one-on-one context to clarify roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canvassing</td>
<td>Deep listening and dialogue with constituency, this experience informs their understanding of the problem</td>
<td>Some people do not engage in listening and dialogue, they hand a resident the flyer and leave</td>
<td>There is a regular opportunity to canvass, and many people participate; BTA meetings as training; however, there is also a lack of modeling or practice in door-knocking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalition meetings</td>
<td>Convening multi-issue network to engage in listening and dialogue / ideological development</td>
<td>Members participate in meetings but do not debrief thoroughly with the rest of group</td>
<td>Debriefing and planning how to represent organization is not built into the meeting agenda</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SUMMARY OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

A scan of the two central columns in the tables above reveals City Life’s deep leadership development strengths and areas for improvement. Comparing these strengths and areas for improvement across the indicators reveals patterns which tell a story of key practices that enable and inhibit deep leadership development. These key practices are explained below and summarized in a table at the end of this section.

Holding Spaces that “Open a Layer of Listening”

A key practice which enables deep leadership development is how City Life creates and holds spaces that allow for deep listening and dialogue. BTA meeting introductions, for example, bring people to the same level which allows them to connect with each other and to find their own voice. Being on the same level does not mean that their experience of foreclosure is the same, it means that while they may have walked in the door feeling inferior or embarrassed about what they are going through, events like the introductions help them realize that they are not alone and just like everyone else in the room they have a voice that they can use to fight to stay in their homes. Being on the same level means everyone having their voice, and using it in a larger struggle. Another example of holding spaces for deep listening and dialogue is discussions in the second half of meetings about how people’s struggles make them feel and about the social, political and economic system. In these discussions people share and learn from each other’s strengths, experiences and knowledge. In O-team meetings growth and innovation occurs when a space is held for practicing constructive criticism and an orientation to learning about how to improve their work and how it is connected to larger systemic issues. The setting, how the
meeting is chaired and who participates are all key factors which enable the creation of these spaces.

**Training through Stories**

Narrative speeches function as training, they model and support others in “finding their voice” and advance ideological development. When people hear narrative speeches throughout meetings they are hearing what it means to “find your voice” and are encouraged to do the same. Meetings give people chances to practice these speeches and learn how to effectively deliver them as Tina’s speech in the block rebellion demonstrates. The ideological development element of these speeches means that through these speeches people are also learning about and getting practice in communicating how they understand the systemic causes of the foreclosure crisis and how their struggle connects to it. The regular opportunities for use of this speech style gives people comfort and practice in it.

**Collectively Commit to and Celebrate their Work**

Taking on tasks in front of the group and acknowledging individuals achievements, often through applause and cheers, is part of the culture of City Life. This gives people support and creates accountability within the group. Taking on meaningful tasks supports people’s development of skills and knowledge needed for the fight to stay in their homes and organizing in general. Accountability is created because these tasks are taken on in front of the entire group which many consider a family that they are deeply connected to. Celebration further supports and encourages people to take on and accomplish tasks and engender City Life members’ high level of commitment.
Modeling and Coaching

Many people in City Life engage in activities that are new to their experience, like canvassing or reflection. When modeling and coaching are built into these activities is when they are most effective. The O-team members’ because of their experience in these activities are the ones who do most of this modeling and coaching. One of the key experiences which O-team members’ draw on, when modeling and coaching reflection, for example, comes from experiences of reflection in O-team meetings. Though there are examples of leaders modeling and coaching, like in narrative speeches, there are many opportunities to build in more of this.

Table 5.7 Summary of Strengths of City Life Leadership Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Practices</th>
<th>Evidence of Deep Leadership Dev.</th>
<th>Indicators of Deep Leadership Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Holding spaces that “open a layer of listening”</td>
<td>“People find their voice”</td>
<td>Interpersonal Connections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BTA Introductions</td>
<td>Story about foreclosure makes them feel</td>
<td>Interpersonal connections / Ideological Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political and emotional discussions in 2nd half of meeting</td>
<td>Innovation of second half of meetings</td>
<td>Reflection / Solution Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O-team constructive criticism and orientation to learning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training through stories: narrative speeches</td>
<td>Someone their story join the emotional with the political</td>
<td>Ideological development / Interpersonal connections / Supportive relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment / Celebration</td>
<td>People volunteer for tasks, the group applauds to acknowledge hard work</td>
<td>Supportive Relationships / Accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modeling and Coaching</td>
<td>BTA-LT reflection on block rebellion on media messaging and movement</td>
<td>Reflection / Supportive Relationships / Ideological development / Solution development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Key Areas for Improvement

Key areas for improvement in City Life’s leadership development can be observed when they enact the exact opposite of their strengths, when they do not hold the space, when narrative speech styles inhibit their ability to develop leadership, when they are not collectively committing and not modeling and coaching. These practices are summarize in table 5.8.

Table 5.8 Summary of Areas for Improvement of City Life Leadership Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Practices</th>
<th>Evidence of Superficial Leadership Development</th>
<th>Indicators of Deep Leadership Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not holding spaces that open layer of listening</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BTA block rebellion break out group</td>
<td>People do not contribute to plan</td>
<td>Ideological Development/ Solution Development /</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not flexible with speech style</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sword and shield</td>
<td>People cannot communicate strategy</td>
<td>Ideological development / Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasks taken on individually</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block rebellion planning</td>
<td>Ambiguity of roles, frustration</td>
<td>Accountability / Solution Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Modeling and Coaching</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Canvasser hands out flier and leaves, wasted opportunity to listen and dialogue with constituency</td>
<td>Accountability / Support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Now that City Life's leadership development practices have been explained, their organizational structure can be revealed by looking at these practices through the lens of the organizational theory explained in Chapter 3. First, I explain City Life's coordination mechanisms, then their division of labor and overall organizational structure, and finally their leadership team structure. Looking closely at moments when deep leadership development was occurring, and moments when it was not, reveals the components of structure which enable or inhibit deep leadership development.

Coordinating Mechanisms

City Life mainly coordinates its work through a combination of mutual adjustment and direct supervision. As explained in Chapter 3, mutual adjustment is coordination through conversation. Direct supervision is when one person takes responsibility for the work of another. These two mechanisms are like poles on a continuum. Where the coordination mechanism which City Life is using sits on this continuum varies from one situation to situation. A key issue in developing supportive and accountable relationships is finding a balance between these two poles. Coordinating too heavily through direct supervision can create dependency and too much mutual adjustment can make it difficult to hold people accountable.

Direct supervision and mutual adjustment can be observed in the BTA-LT meetings when the group plans for upcoming events. An example of this occurred during the role negotiation

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5 This study of structure does not address the structural requirements imposed by City Life legally being a 501 (c) 3. While this formal structure matters it is the merging of this structure with the informal structure that comes out in my analysis. A limitation of this study is that it does not tease out this formal structure and its influence. For background on the 501 (c) 3 legal status and its influence on social movements see: The Revolution will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex (2009).
process at the BTA-LT meeting before the block rebellion. Direct supervision was used when George, the supervisor of the O-team and the most experienced organizer, laid out the roles that needed to be taken on; however, BTA-LT members also gave input into how roles should be executed which was mutually adjusted to by George, and other BTA-LT members. The roles of BTA-LT members in the block rebellion were negotiated through a conversation which danced back and forth between the poles of direct supervision and mutual adjustment which for the most part found a balance. This balance is in part responsible for the successful execution of these roles during the event. That leaders looked to George as much as they did during the event for guidance and affirmation can be explained by the coordination at times leaning too heavily towards direct supervision.

The innovation of the second half of BTA meetings is an example of mutual adjustment and direct supervision between the O-team and BTA. The suggestion to change the format of the meetings was made by a member in a meeting. This suggestion being taken up in the O-team meeting shows mutual adjustment between the O-team and BTA. It also shows direct supervision because the O-team developed the solution and then implemented it by setting the agenda and chairing the second half of the meetings. The balance of direct supervision and mutual adjustment that was achieved in developing this innovation explains its success and suggests that greater mutual adjustment with the O-team, for example BTA members being more involved in setting agendas would result in further innovations and learning.

The O-team itself also shows examples of mutual adjustment and direct supervision when they negotiate their roles in O-team meetings and in informal check-ins about day-to-day work. That
O-team members have expressed frustration over a lack of clarity about their roles suggests that this is an area of coordination which could be improved. In interviews O-team members suggested that they felt like they could use more constructive criticism about their work. This suggests that there may not be enough space for direct supervision and mutual adjustment for each individual. One way this could be addressed is to create a regular one-on-one meeting between George, the supervisor of the O-team, and O-team members to check in about their work plans and goals, work through issues and concerns, and give constructive criticism.6

The O-team also shows evidence of two additional coordinating mechanisms: skill standardization and process standardization. Skill standardization can be seen in how O-team members chair meetings, manage phone calls and engage in case work (meeting one-on-one with a resident in a foreclosed home and finding out about their situation, encouraging them to fight to stay in their home, working on a public letter with them, following up, etc.). The case work process is also an example of coordinating according to a standardized process. Skill and process standardization however, are not commonly used by O-team members. The evaluation of City Life’s leadership development suggests that these mechanisms need to be used more. When these mechanisms are not used they make it more difficult to practice modeling and coaching. An example of this is how checklists, an important tool for process standardization, are not used for planning actions which are similar to each other. The O-team has learned a lot about what it takes to make these actions a success, a checklist would help transfer this knowledge and clarify tasks which need to be coordinated and how they should be divided up. The division of tasks which these checklists might clarify is part of City Life’s division of labor.

6 The School of Unity and Liberation, a CO intermediary based in Oakland California, has a manual called Support and Accountability: SOUL’s Supervision Model which lays out a model of how these meetings could be conducted and gives great insight into how they can be constructive and supportive.
**Division of Labor**

In City Life, like in most COs, the roles of organizers, leaders and members basically describe how tasks are divided up in the organization. SOUL\(^7\), a CO intermediary, defines the role of an organizer as ensuring the growth of the organization by developing members to lead the process of building and activating the membership, developing campaigns and building the organization. Gary Delgado notes that a crucial part of activating the membership is supporting their ideological development (1986 81). Day-to-day at City Life this translates into the case work described above, and preparing and following up on meetings, actions and events. There is some specialization within these roles, John for instance coordinates the phone calling while Rose is responsible for the faith and justice work; however, as described above the organizer's roles are somewhat ambiguous (I will come back to this issue in the section on 'team structure'). Leaders, according to SOUL, take initiative in solution development, gain the trust and loyalty of the membership and are actively involved in the organization. The BTA-LT members are considered the leaders in City Life and the BTA, and for the most part their role fits this description. In BTA-LT meetings, leaders plan for and take on roles at actions and events like the block rebellion. BTA leaders are the most active members. Members are people who meet the membership criteria, paying dues for example, and actively participate in organizational activities. BTA members are those who regularly attend BTA meetings and participate in canvassing, actions and events.

Another key aspect of an organization’s division of labor is its flow of authority. As described in Chapter 4 an individual organizational chart does not capture the actual flow of authority or decision and rule making. The explanation of how the individuals in City Life coordinate, mainly

\(^7\) [www.schoolofunityandliberation.org](http://www.schoolofunityandliberation.org) (resources: free training resources).
through meetings, suggests that a meeting organizational chart which depicts the hierarchy of meeting contexts explains more about an organization's actual flow of authority than an individual organizational chart. Compare the individual organizational chart, Figure 5.5 to the chart depicting the hierarchy of meeting contexts, Figure 5.6.

Figure 5.5 City Life Individual Organizational Chart

```
Executive Director
Organizing Director
Organizer PT
Organizer PT
Organizer PT
Organizer PT
Organizer PT
BTA Leadership Team
BTA
```

Figure 5.6 City Life Meeting Organizational Chart

```
Staff Meeting
Organizing Team Meeting
BTA Leadership Team Meeting
Faith and Justice Committee Meeting
BTA Meeting
Other Break Out Group Meetings
```

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8 This chart comparison follows Schwartzman’s comparison of similar charts for a mental health center (216-219).
9 Staff meetings include O-team members, the Executive Director and two other part-time staff. They are a space where the O-team reflects on the week and discusses how they work as a team, I did not include analysis of these meetings because I did not have access to them. They are nonetheless an important site where my conclusions about team structure, discussed in the next section could be addressed.
In the individual organizational chart, the organizing director, George, sits above the rest of the O-team; however, any power he may have over decision making in the O-team is based on his relationships with the rest of the O-team, and it is difficult to separate this power from the meeting contexts in which it is created. This is why the meeting organizational chart, which groups the entire O-team together, more accurately displays power and control over decision-making in the organization.

The organizing team is the actual leadership team of the BTA, it sets the majority of the strategy and is the main engine mobilizing the membership to achieve it. Though members of the BTA-LT are involved in solution development, the planning for the block rebellion and many other examples demonstrate that much of the strategic direction and solution development actually comes from the O-team. The O-team however wants the BTA-LT to be the leadership team as their name suggests. Nancy explained this explicit goal of the O-team when she said: “there should be some kind of democracy, that’s why we formed this group we don’t just want to decide”. Nancy said this in a BTA-LT meeting during a decision-making discussion about an upcoming action. That the O-team values democracy and wants the BTA-LT to actually lead the BTA explains why they set up decision-making discussions and invest energy in getting input from the BTA-LT. The example of decision-making discussions in the BTA-LT meetings also shows how meetings are such an important form for merging formal and informal structures. The formal structure, according to the ideology of the O-team, is that the BTA-LT is the leadership of the BTA and the informal structure is that the O-team leads the BTA. That the O-team calls the BTA-LT meetings, sets the agenda and chairs the meetings means that the O-team sets the parameters of discussion and influences decisions made at the BTA-LT meetings. That these
decisions are about upcoming BTA actions and activities suggests that that the O-team, through its influence of the BTA-LT meetings leads the BTA. The same can be said for how the O-team influences the BTA meetings themselves.

The O-team’s influence over decision-making suggests that they fit the description of an oligarchy. An oligarchy is “a self-perpetuating leadership group that dominates decision making via its control over knowledge, resources and communication” (Osterman 633). That the O-team is self-perpetuating is suggested by how they recommend new hires to the executive director, such as Nancy who went from an active leader of the BTA to becoming staff. The O-team also, has more knowledge than the membership about foreclosure issues because of their advanced political discussions and simply by devoting more time to the issues. Finally, the O-team controls resources (the organization’s budget and volunteers) and communication (phone calling and e-mails). Though the O-team is self perpetuating and controls knowledge, resources and communication it does not completely dominate decision-making. An oligarchy is an ideal type and the degree to which the membership influences decision making can be thought of as the degree to which City Life does not fit the description of an oligarchy. The examples of mutual adjustment mentioned in the previous section show that BTA-LT and BTA members influence decisions. The BTA-LT for example influenced the BTA through negotiating roles for the block rebellion, which is why the BTA-LT meetings appear above BTA meetings in the meeting organizational chart (Figure 5.6). The BTA also influenced the O-team and BTA itself by suggesting to change the meeting format. This influence counterbalances the O-team’s influence on decision-making and prevents negative consequences which may result from City Life being
an oligarchy. This analysis shows that in order for the O-team to advance its goal of the BTA-LT leading the BTA and having more control over decision making, they have to be conscious of which decisions come up in which contexts and how meeting contexts influence each other.

A Simple Centralized Structure with Seeds of Decentralized & Networked Structure
The previous sections on coordination and division of labor explain how City Life’s organizational structure can be described as a simple centralized structure with seeds of decentralized and networked structures. City Life is mainly centralized because the O-team mainly dominates decision-making. That the BTA-LT and BTA also influence decision-making, at times much more so than others, shows seeds of a decentralized structure. These moments are also when deep leadership development can be observed like in the innovation of the second half of BTA meetings and the negotiation of roles for the block rebellion. This suggests that moving towards a more decentralized structure would enable deeper leadership development. Their structure is simple because they mainly coordinate through direct supervision and mutual adjustment. As mentioned above, there are only limited examples of process and skill standardization; however, these examples show that greater coordination through these mechanism, checklists etc., could also enable deeper leadership development.

10 Paul Osterman (2006) explains that though COs (he talks about the IAF in the Southwest) may fit the description of an oligarchy they can avoid its negative consequences which are demobilization and changing the goals of the organization. Osterman shows that COs can avoid these consequences by enacting a culture of agency and contestation. City Life confirms this hypothesis because they have a high level of mobilization and its goals such as leadership development and stopping evictions from post-foreclosed homes have not changed. City Life also has a culture of agency, shown by how members “find their voice”, and a culture of contestation, shown in narrative speeches which talk about fighting the banks.
Other seeds of decentralized structure include the autonomous bank tenant organizing effort in East Boston. This effort which includes a small core of East Boston leaders and members of the East Boston Bank Tenants’ Association which meet regularly and have actions and events. It has a simple structure, where the O-team member responsible for the East Boston group primarily coordinates through direct supervision and mutual adjustment. Process and skill standardization could also support the growth of this group and the development of deeper leadership. I describe this effort as a seed of decentralized structure because with more support it could grow and possibly be replicated in other neighborhoods developing City Life into a fully decentralized structure.

City Life also shows seeds of a networked structure through their coalition work, however they do not yet coordinate according to these relationships. City Life’s work with the Radical Organizing Summer Institute is promising because they engage multiple issues and constituencies. That the BTA-LT is getting involved in planning the Summer Institute suggests that there is potential to increase their network coordination. Another potential avenue for future network coordination is with grassroots networks like one in the Four Corners Neighborhood discussed by a BTA-LT leader at the meeting before the block rebellion. Nurturing these seeds of a networked structure would result in City Life growing the capacity to evolve into an ecosystematized structure.

**TEAM STRUCTURE**

One of the key components of the division of labor explained in the previous section is the leadership team. Looking at how the leadership team does leadership development, through the
lens of effective leadership teams explained in Chapter 3, reveals how the team’s structure enables or inhibits deep leadership development. As I explained in the previous section, the O-team is in fact the leadership team of the BTA; however, because the BTA-LT aspires to lead the BTA I will also look at them through the lens of effective leadership teams which will suggest what it would take for them to achieve this.

**Real Team: O-team**

The O-team is a ‘real’ team, in other words they are stable, bounded and mostly interdependent. The O-team has worked together for many years. That they are paid staff and highly committed to their work ensures their stability as a team. There are eight people who are considered part of the O-team and two other staff who sometimes participate in meetings. No one else participates in these meetings or is considered part of the team. Their stability and boundedness combined with the regular once a week meetings allow them to develop comfort and practice in holding political discussions, and to be open to criticism and learning. Stability and boundedness also give them time and space to share experiences and develop deep interpersonal connections.

Interdependence means depending on each other to accomplish their shared goals. The O-teams most effective leadership development work seems to happen when they are most interdependent. The practice of holding the space in BTA meetings depends on how the O-team works together to chair the meeting. From Rose’s introductions to John’s section on legal rights to the discussion about how foreclosure makes you feel chaired by Nancy and George, together they hold a space which allows for interpersonal connections, supportive relationships and ideological development. The frustrations aired about how more O-team members were not involved in the planning and execution of the block rebellion is an example where the O-team
was less interdependent and suggests that roles should be clarified and the O-team should focus on how to make them more interdependent.

**Real Team: BTA-LT**

BTA-LT is not a ‘real’ team though they are a stable group that meets regularly. As with the O-team, this allows for comfort and practice in political discussions and learning which enables interpersonal connections and ideological development. Unlike the O-team, the BTA-LT is not clearly bounded, it is not clear who is on and who is off the BTA-LT. This creates ambiguity in the roles of BTA-LT members and makes it difficult to create supportive relationships amongst each other and between them and other BTA members.

The BTA-LT is only somewhat interdependent. The block rebellion is an example where they were more interdependent than usual. The way they negotiated their roles the day before was key in making this event successful. The success of the event and Roger’s wife being encouraged to come out, is evidence that interdependence can advance the development of supportive relationships and interpersonal connections. Part of making the BTA-LT more interdependent is clarifying their purpose and goals. If they want to be the real leadership team of the BTA it is especially important that they consider what this means and determine what they need to do to accomplish it.

**Right Size and Right People: O-team**

The small size of the O-team and that their demographic reflects that of the BTA membership enables them to engage in political discussions and critical dialogues where they share their experiences and listen and learn from each other. These dialogues result in reflection, ideological
development and interpersonal connections. The discussions they have about what it means for a multi-racial group to explicitly address the disproportionate impact of foreclosure on people of color probably would not happen, or at least would be much different, if the O-team was not primarily people of color themselves. The O-team draws on their life experiences in planning for and chairing political discussions at the BTA and BTA-LT meetings and in other discussions such as the faith and justice break out group. The O-team’s diverse life and organizing experiences, including civil rights, disability liberation, labor organizing and anarchist organizing, combine to form a broad set of tactical repertoires which they draw upon in order to develop effective strategies (Ganz 2000 1005). An example of this is how a member of the O-team who was active in the disability liberation movement drew on his experience blockading movie theatres and other public accommodations in developing the tactic of chaining himself and others to homes to stop evictions.

**Right Size and Right People: BTA-LT**

The BTA-LT is relatively large, 15-20 people, which makes it at times difficult for each member to listen and dialogue with each other. The BTA-LT brings together a wide diversity of skills and experience which reflects the diverse constituency they aim to lead; however, because they are not bounded and there is no criteria to decide who is on and who is off they may be missing opportunities to include other people who would make a meaningful contribution. It may be helpful for them to consider the kinds of skills needed to lead the BTA and evaluate if they have gaps and who could fill them.
Norms: O-team

Though the O-team does not have explicitly defined norms they nonetheless implicitly share many norms about group work. Commitment on the O-team is very high, in O-team meetings members are constantly taking on roles and also celebrating their achievements. Support and accountability are norms which are shared but which could be stronger and more explicit. Having more clearly defined roles is necessary to both offer support and hold someone accountable. As mentioned in the section on coordination mechanisms, a one-on-one context for George to check in with O-team members could allow these roles to be clarified. This context could also allow for norms of support and accountability to be explicitly followed. Key to support and transferring and developing skills is the practice of coaching and modeling which could be built into these check-ins and many other day-to-day activities.

All decision-making processes at O-team meetings are consensual. This seems to work well for the O-team despite the fact that they do not have clearly defined decision-making process rules. Though their consensual decision-making processes work well, the frustrations caused by the block rebellion, which was not planned by the entire O-team, suggests that decision-making rules about which decision gets made by whom should be more clearly defined. When they do make decisions together O-team members listen to each other and engage in dialogue which allows for critical reflection and creativity to inform the discussion and decision. An example of this is the innovation of the second half of BTA meetings which came out of one of these discussions. The effectiveness of these processes is in part related to George’s skill in facilitation. George always takes the role of meeting chair and sets the agenda, his ability to hold the space allows for effective decision-making and the sort of political discussions and critical reflection common to O-team meetings. The norm of George always chairing and setting the
agenda makes it difficult to transfer this skill to other O-team members. Rotating these roles, and building in coaching and modeling from George, would allow for this sort of skill to transfer and develop leadership in the process.

**Norms: BTA-LT**

Many of the norms of the O-team are similar to those of the BTA-LT. Commitment is very high, tasks are constantly volunteered for and their completion is regularly celebrated. Similar to the O-team support and accountability could be stronger. Coaching and modeling are especially important to support BTA-LT members in developing skills together with the O-team. Coaching and modeling are also important norms to support the BTA-LT members in developing the leadership of other BTA members. Developing the leadership of the BTA is an implicit role of the BTA-LT, clearer norms about coaching and modeling built into the BTA-LT’s day-to-day activities could clarify this role and support them in doing it.

Similar to the O-team in the BTA-LT there is a need to transfer and develop skills in decision-making facilitation, chairing meetings and creating agendas. For the BTA-LT it is especially important to clarify which decisions get made by the BTA-LT versus the O-team in order to support the BTA-LT to actually lead the BTA. The hierarchy of meeting contexts and how they relate should be considered in developing rules about which decision-making processes should occur where. If the BTA-LT is to lead the BTA it will be necessary for discussion and dialogue about planning events and other activities to originate in BTA-LT meetings. This will also enable more supportive relationships and expand their capacity to develop solutions.
SUMMARY OF CITY LIFE’S ORGANIZATIONAL AND TEAM STRUCTURE

Table 5.9 summarizes the organizational and team structural components which enable and disable deep leadership development. This summary suggests that the key to deep leadership development is small interdependent teams and moving towards and beyond a decentralized organizational structure. The explanation of these structural components suggests that the context of meetings, where these structures are enacted, importantly influences how structure enables leadership development. The meeting context brings together the right people and is the space that allows for them to share experiences and develop leadership. How meetings relate to each other also importantly influences structural components like decision-making.

This analysis can be looked at as a guide of the structural components which if built upon can enable the exponential expansion of City Life’s capacity to develop deeper leadership. This expansion would occur through meetings which would have to answer who calls the meetings, who sets the agenda, and so on. One can imagine the structure enacted through these meetings as characterized by small interdependent teams that are decentralized and networked with other teams coordinating according to broad grassroots and organizational networks all working towards building a stronger movement. This future potential exists. Groups like City Life and the grassroots and organizational networks they are connected to have the seeds of it. It is just matter of nurturing them, I hope this study can help them in this effort.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5.9 Summary of City Life Organizational and Team Structural Components</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organizational Structure</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Balance Between Mutual Adjustment and Direct Supervision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurturing Seeds of Decentralized and Networked Structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographic Reflects Constituency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diverse Life / Work Experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norms:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Celebration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Consensual Decision-Making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Enables Deep Leadership Development</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over Centralization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Skill and Process Standardization</td>
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<tr>
<td>____</td>
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<td>____</td>
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<tr>
<td>____</td>
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<tr>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disables Deep Leadership Development</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Explicit Norms of Support / Coaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Rotating: Meeting Chair and Agenda Creation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclear Which Decisions Get Made By Whom</td>
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<tr>
<td>____</td>
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<td>____</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

One of the goals of this study was to create rigorous tools to help organizers work more effectively. One of the tools I developed is a framework for understanding and evaluating deep leadership development. I showed how systematically paying attention to listening and dialogue in particular sites uncovers evidence of whether self, relational and systemic knowledge is being developed. This framework fleshes out what City Life and so many community organizations mean by helping others help themselves.

So much of leadership development work revolves around meetings, yet we know so little about how meetings influence the outcomes of this work. This study has shown how meeting components like the setting, participants and speech style, and how these components come together in the planning and execution of a meeting, all influence leadership development outcomes. The systematic approach to looking at how meeting components influence outcomes is another tool which helps understand deep leadership development. This approach demonstrated the following key practices which advance deep leadership development in City Life: holding a space for listening and dialogue, training through stories, broad commitment and celebration and coaching and modeling. My analysis also showed that superficial leadership development occurs when they do the opposite of these practices: not holding spaces, not being flexible with speech styles, taking on tasks individually and not modeling and coaching.

1 These tools could be disseminated by organizing networks and intermediaries such as the School of Unity and Liberation (SOUL) in Oakland and Enlace Institute in Los Angeles.
Applying organizational theory and theories of effective leadership teams to my analysis of City Life’s leadership development practices revealed that the structural components which enable them to develop deep leadership is their organizational structure evolving towards a decentralized and networked structure. Other enabling structural components include finding a balance between direct supervision and mutual adjustment and teams acting interdependently. Structural components found to disable deep leadership development include: over centralization, not finding a balance between direct supervision and mutual adjustment, a lack of process and skill standardization and teams not acting interdependently. This approach to analyzing structure is another tool which can help organizations get a deeper understanding of the way their structure operates that goes beyond what can be learned from looking at organizational charts.

The other main goal of this study was to help City Life improve their leadership development and structure. I will do this through a series of conversations with the O-team and BTA-LT members and by holding a workshop\(^2\) with the BTA-LT. In these conversations I will present some of my findings and ask what resonates with them and what they see as most important and useful to their work. These conversations will be informed by Ed Schein’s approach to process consultation. The goals of process consultation are to empower the group you are working with, gather information on help needed and involve them in problem solving and determining a role to take (Schein 2010). A key element of this approach is what he describes as humble inquiry which emphasizes the importance of asking questions in the right way, this includes asking lots of “and then what, and then what” questions. The trust that I have built with the O-team and

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\(^2\) In Appendix A is an introductory activity which I will conduct in the workshop to introduce the idea of leadership development and structure in an interactive way that creates an experience to drawn upon throughout the workshop.
BTA-LT members by working with them for over a year and a half, is an important foundation for these conversations which allows for constructive criticism and learning\(^3\).

**FUTURE RESEARCH**

Though this study focused on leadership development, I would argue that structure can be revealed through an analysis of any one of an organization’s goals. My hunch is that City Life’s structural components which enable deep leadership development also enable them to achieve other goals such as movement building and policy victories. This could be tested through a similar analysis which also looks at City Life through the lens of these other goals.

One important question remains as to whether the findings in this study are idiosyncratic, in other words do they only apply to City Life. On the one hand the background of the group members and the political moment in which they operate are important conditions influencing their effectiveness. On the other hand my organizing experience with STOP, a community organization in Chicago, and a federation of community councils in Venezuela\(^4\) suggests that practices which enable leadership development and frustrations over issues like unclear roles play out similarly across organizations and contexts. A promising area of future research would be to compare variations in structures and leadership development outcomes across organizations to determine if there are patterns in particular structures which enable particular outcomes. Based

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\(^3\) One important lesson about constructive criticism I have learned from my participation with City Life is that the people are most open to receiving criticism if you can first point out something they did well and then explain how in another instance, where things did not go as well, what inhibited them was that they did not do whatever it is that enabled them to do that first thing well.

\(^4\) Forthcoming is a paper I have written titled: “Innovations in Participatory Democracy: the Venezuelan Community Council Movement” which describes many of the same practices seen in City Life.
on anecdotal evidence from my experience in Venezuela I will share a couple of examples of what this analysis might reveal.

**The Community Council Movement**

The Community Councils I worked with in the Summer of 2009 are located on the west side of Caracas in a neighborhood called Gramoven. Like many other poor neighborhoods of Caracas, Gramoven is in the mountains, lacks decent housing and other infrastructure such as running water, and suffers from historic disinvestment. Throughout the past decade, the community has been organizing in response to the Chavez administration’s call for communities to take advantage of constitutional reforms and policies which invest in communities and empower organized communities to control development.

Community leaders have been organizing a number of organizations to influence development in housing, education, healthcare and other issue areas. Community Councils are organizations which bring together these various organizations in a 150-300 family area to plan and execute community improvement projects. Gramoven is one of the first communities to bring together nearly 40 Community Councils to form a federation of Community Councils or a macro Community Council which they call the Parochial Government. The Parochial Government (PG) has an extraordinarily high level of participation, hundreds of people participate weekly in working groups, meetings, and events. They work on projects ranging from affordable housing and small business development to creating a domestic violence shelter.

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5 While one can argue that the political context in Venezuela is responsible for this massive participation. It is telling that in the community that neighbors Gramoven there are very few community councils and they only have a
The PG has eight committees that meet weekly made up of representatives from the Community Councils. These committees include: housing, water, food, gender equality, economic development, health, culture, and communications. They also have a committee called ‘evaluation and control’ which brings together all the committees every Monday to discuss concerns, give updates and present proposals. Decisions are made by consensus or majority voting processes.

Each committee has a spokesperson who calls the meetings and creates the agendas, in some committees the spokesperson always chairs the meetings while in others they rotate this role. The spokespeople, nearly all of whom are volunteers, take on the role of organizer as understood by community organizations in the US. Similar to City Life meetings, in the PG and Community Council meetings the way the space is held brings everyone to the same level allowing for listening and dialogue that results in deep interpersonal connections and ideological development. The committees function autonomously taking on relevant issues. For the most part their structure can be described as simple decentralized structure. Decentralization enables the high level of participation and many leadership development opportunities in the PG.

Surprisingly, the PG does not have a leadership team. This can disable deep leadership development because spokespeople lack a regular context to listen, dialogue and learn from each other. My attention was drawn to this issue when one of the spokespeople showed me a meeting attendance tracking sheet he had developed. The sheet had a list of the Community Councils that fraction of the participation. This suggests that factors other than the political context are enabling Gramoven’s massive participation. My hunch is that these factors include the leadership development practices and structural components which enable them.
are a part of the PG, the government institutions relevant to his committee and a line next to each. At each meeting he puts an x next to the Community Councils and government institutions present to mark their attendance. This simple sheet allows for a quick visual way to see who is pulling their weight and who is slacking. Other committees could use this sheet but do not because there is no context to talk about and share innovations. This example points to the value that greater interdependence and increased mutual adjustment between committees could bring. The value of these structures was shown in the way City Life, in an O-team meeting, developed the idea of splitting the second half of BTA meetings.

The story about how decentralization can enable deep leadership development but should be done in a way that still promotes interdependence is the sort of story that cross organization comparisons might tell. These comparisons might also shows that while in the U.S. many believe that the American political context makes community organizing here unique and idiosyncratic, much of the same issues are being confronted abroad, and there is a lot to learn from transnational exchanges. Finally, in an age of globalization if building the movement requires tapping into and coordinating through the global ecosystem of organizations, networks and future formations then it is necessary to learn how structures operate across organizations and countries and what enables them to be effective.
A. WORKSHOP ACTIVITY: BALLOONS LEADERSHIP AND STRUCTURE

This activity requires at least 10 people. It should take around 20 – 30 min. It is a good start to a workshop on leadership and structure because it gets energy moving and creates an instructive collective experience which the group can think back to throughout the workshop.

SETTING
Find a large open space with no obstructions on the floor. Arrange chairs in a large circle, each chair should be arms length apart. Put 20 inflated balloons in the center.

INTRODUCE ACTIVITY
To get started we are going to do an activity to get our energy going and to think about the things we are going to talk about today in a different way.

These balloons represent leadership development practices. In one or two words when you hear leadership development what sort of things come to mind? What do you do to develop leadership?

As people call out ideas ask them to write them down on a balloon and throw it back into the center of the circle. After at least 10 ideas have been written down ask everyone to stand and push the chairs back. Explain that the objective of this game is to keep all the balloons in the air.

ROUND 1
In round one we have a dictator. Assign someone to be the dictator. Explain that the rules of the round 1 are that people can only move where the dictator tells them to, for example the dictator

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6 This activity is based on a workshop developed by the School of Unity and Liberation in their manual: Youth Organizing for Community Power: Organizing Skills Training Manual.
can point to someone and say move forward, or move back, or move to the side. If the dictator does not tell you to move, you cannot move. Ask everyone to pick up all the balloons, on the count of three throw them in the air and remember that they have to try to keep them in the air and only the dictator can tell people to move. After 3-5 minutes end Round 1.

**ROUND 2**
In Round 2 everyone can move. Ask everyone to pick up the balloons, on the count of three throw them in the air and keep them there. After 3-5 minutes end Round 2.

**ROUND 3**
In Round 3 the group is divided into smaller groups of 4 to 5 people. Ask the groups to split up the balloons. On the count of 3 throw them in the air and keep them there. After 3-5 minutes end Round 3.

**DEBRIEF QUESTIONS**
What happened in the three different rounds?

Did one work better than the others? Why?

What do you think this exercise is trying to show?

**SUMMING IT UP**
This exercise is a metaphor for the relationship between structure and leadership development. How you worked as a group, your structure, influenced your ability to keep the balloons in the air, leadership development. It is important to understand how these are related because as an organization we are trying to hold ten times as many balloons in the air and we have to figure out which round or mix of rounds will help us do that.

**MATERIALS**
20 colored balloons
10 Felt Tip Markers
# B. CITY LIFE DATA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race / Origin</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Organizing Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>George</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Bachelors</td>
<td>Labor organizing, various left groups, nearly 10 years with CLVU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Black / Jamaican</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Bachelors</td>
<td>Was a BTA leader, fought eviction from her home, started volunteering with City Life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>eventually became staff organizer; Volunteered with youth working on incarceration issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rose</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Black / Alabama</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
<td>Civil rights movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
<td>Disability liberation organizing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janet</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Latina</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
<td>Anarchist movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damian</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White / Italian</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Bachelors</td>
<td>Union organizing; green party; anti-corporate globalization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Bachelors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

They sometimes participate in organizing team meetings:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cathy</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Bachelors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kim</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerald</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Table B.2 City Life Leadership Team Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Number of People</th>
<th>15 – 20</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male: 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female: 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race (Non US Origin)</td>
<td>Black: 15 (2 Jamaican, 1 Haitian)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White: 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Latino: 3 (El Salvador)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>35 – 65 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizing Experience</td>
<td>participated in neighborhood associations, youth programs, and church fundraisers and events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORGANIZER</td>
<td>LEADER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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C. METHODOLOGY

Table C.1 Meetings Observed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meeting Type</th>
<th>Number of meetings recorded*</th>
<th>Estimated total number of meetings attended**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bank Tenants' Association</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank Tenants’ Association Leadership Team</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizing Team</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canvassing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Boston Meetings</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalition Meetings</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actions / Events***</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*detailed notes were taken including quotes
**this occurred over the course of one and half years
***this includes the block rebellion, vigils, blockades and other events

Formal Interviews of City Life O-team: George, Nancy and one 5 hour part-time staff.

City Life O-team Interview Questions:

1. What is your background (race, age, born and raised, ethnicity, education)?
2. How did you get into working with City Life and social movement work?
3. What other networks, organizations or campaigns have you been actively involved in?
4. What do you do with City Life? what is a day-in the life at City Life like for you?
   Do you have a supervisor/supervisee? What is that relationship like? How often do you meet? What do you discuss?
5. Do you have a defined political ideology? How do you see it relating to your City Life work?
6. What do you think City Life is best at?
7. What area do you think City Life needs to improve in most?
8. What is your long term vision for City Life?
Text artifacts

- Meeting Agendas
- Newspaper articles distributed at meetings
- Flyers used when canvassing
- Flyers for actions and events
- Public letters written by members to banks, government officials and community members
- Signs held at events
- Chant sheets used at events
- City Life website
- Document about City Life’s radical organizing model
- Press coverage of City Life events (newspaper articles and local TV news)
WORKS CITED


