

MOBILIZING STRUCTURES AND CULTURES: A CROSS-NATIONAL  
COMPARISON OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

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Maite Tapia

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# MOBILIZING STRUCTURES AND CULTURES: A CROSS-NATIONAL COMPARISON OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

Maite Tapia, Ph. D.

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In this dissertation, I conduct a cross-national comparison of three community organizations in the US, UK, and Germany and show how these models of collective representation have been able to sustain their original goals of mobilizing people and building power for social change. Based on participant observation, interviews, and archival analysis, I show, first, how the community organizations emerged in each context. Here, I emphasize the political opportunity structure as well as the strategic capacities of the founders. Second, I show that despite being embedded in very different institutional contexts, each organization has a strong capacity of mobilizing its members. To account for this similarity, I argue that the organizations develop a similar “hybrid logic of organizing” combining elements from a bureaucracy and from a social movement within their structure and culture. Differences in terms of membership growth, however, come to the forefront as well. Being embedded in a different context is not a sufficient explanation, but I argue it is important to understand the mechanisms of creative borrowing. Each organizer had to creatively adapt the model to make it work within the context. Finally, I illustrate under which conditions an organization can maintain its vitality and its capacity to mobilize its members over time. Again, I show the importance of agency or corrective mechanisms that come into play in the form of reflection and deliberation between the members and the organizers to make sure the organization sticks to its original mission. This

dissertation contributes to the theoretical debates on the role of alternative forms of collective representation, the development of organizations, and the factors affecting their relative success.

## **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

Maite Tapia was born in 1981 in Bruges, Belgium. Before coming to the US, she graduated in Law at the University of Ghent (Belgium), pursued a Master in European and International Law, and a Master in International and European Relations at the University of Parma (Italy). After her studies she worked at the Institute of Labor in Bologna (Italy), focusing on European labor relations. She entered the MS/PhD program in August 2007, majoring in international and comparative labor. Between 2011 and 2013 she was a visiting Ph.D. student at the MIT Sloan School of Management.

To my family and Jason

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION: A CROSS-NATIONAL COMPARISON OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

We are in the midst of many battles. Over the last year we have witnessed a proliferation of new movements: from the Arab Spring, to the occupation of the squares in Spain by the *indignados*, and more recently the Occupy Wall Street movement. It has been a challenge, however, for these movements to maintain their vitality and remain sustainable over time. At the same time, traditional forms of collective representation, such as trade unions, have lost their grassroots base, suffering a continuous decline in membership, not just in the US and the UK, but even in strongholds like Germany. On some occasions, they have been portrayed as special interest groups, locked into highly bureaucratic organizations that lost the power to act. In this dissertation, I conduct a cross-national comparison of three community organizations in the US, UK, and Germany and show how these alternative forms of representation – lying somewhere between a social movement and a full-blown bureaucratic organization – have been able to sustain their original goals of mobilizing people and building power for social change.

Community organizing has been defined in many different ways (e.g., Milofsky 1988; Marwell 2007), but in general, it refers to a process and strategy of engaging people and communities to build political power with the goal of improving the living and working conditions of the people within those communities.



Community organizations operate mainly at a local level by confronting, negotiating, and working with public and private actors (Orr 2007a). These organizations should be distinguished from trade unions in that they can't negotiate a collective bargaining agreement with the employer. That being said, they do "bargain" in the broader sense of the word, or negotiate with policy makers or employers. Finally, community organizations aren't political parties or lobby groups, but work *with* the community to hold political actors accountable for their actions.

### ***Why focus on community organizations?***

Almost two centuries ago, the French philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville was awestruck when he observed the high levels of "associationalism" and civic participation in the United States. According to Tocqueville, the weakness of a decentralized state brought with it a strong civil society, as opposed to the European system, in which a strong state perpetuated a weak civil society. In *Democracy in America*, he wrote that "Americans of all ages, all conditions, and all dispositions constantly form associations. They have not only commercial and manufacturing companies, in which all take part, but associations of a thousand other kinds, religious, moral, serious, futile, general or restricted, enormous or tiny" (de Tocqueville 2002 [1835]: 181). In a similar vein, about one hundred years later, Arthur Schlesinger called America "a nation of joiners" (1944). Contemporary scholars, however, have taken contrasting positions on the matter. Concerns about the decline of civic engagement in the United States have been the topic of many highly contested scholarly debates. While some have highlighted a decline in American civic

engagement since the 1960s (Putnam 1995, 2000; Skocpol 1999), others have indicated the surge and importance of local grassroots organizations in American cities, illustrating their fundamental role in reinvigorating American democracy and equality from below (Fine 2006; Orr 2007b; Swarts 2008).

If we now switch the lens to Europe, powerful traditional anchor institutions, on the one hand, such as trade unions, political parties, and (Christian) faith organizations, have been suffering from a weakened grassroots base. Trade unions suffer a continuous decline in membership, churches remain largely empty, and political parties inspire little trust and confidence in their citizens (Visser 2006; European Commission 2011). These institutions, once perceived as the backbones of society in addressing and articulating the people's interests, have in many cases become bureaucratic structures unable to mobilize their constituents (Turner 1996; Wills 2012). On the other hand, over the last three decades, new forms of civil society organizations have emerged, taking on new roles under the framework of "activating the welfare state" or helping to build a "Big Society" (Alcock 2010; Eick 2011). In the UK, for example, Heery, Abbot and Williams (2010) point out how civil society organizations are becoming increasingly active in employment relations while the traditional trade unions are losing ground. In Germany as well, civil society organizations have been increasingly involved in labor, poverty, or even security issues – previously a concern of the traditional welfare state actors – and leading therefore to critical debates about their function in society (Mayer 1994). Compared to the US, however, most of these "new actors" have focused on advocacy and servicing rather than organizing or mobilizing people.

In this dissertation, I compare a similar model of civic engagement in the US, UK, and Germany that focuses on organizing and mobilizing its members, rather than advocacy or servicing. More specifically, I focus on three community organizations affiliated with the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) – a network of community organizations that started under Saul Alinsky in 1930s Chicago. These IAF organizations did not simply “emerge” in a new context but are the result of explicit strategies to diffuse this organizing model across different settings. Although community organizing is commonplace in the US, it is a rather new phenomenon in Europe and as such, these organizations are quite different from the service-oriented civil society organizations described by Heery et al. (2010) or Mayer (1994).

Over the last decade, studies on community organizing in the United States have proliferated, covering a broad range of topics (Wood 2010). Scholars have examined the policy impact of community organizations (e.g., Hart 2001; Speer 2002; Osterman 2002), the importance of social capital in building power (e.g., Warren 2001; Orr 2007b; Swarts 2008), and the role of religious actors within the organizations (e.g., Wood 2002; McRoberts 2003). Although this American style of organizing has spread to other countries, most studies have been limited to community organizing within the American context<sup>1</sup>, and comparative analyses have been restricted to cases within the United States (e.g., Swarts 2008; Ganz 2009; for exceptions, see Warren 2009).

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<sup>1</sup> Studies on community organizing outside the US have mainly highlighted the potential for trade unions to work together with those organizations. Please see, for example, Holgate and Wills (2007) on coalitions between unions and a community organization in the UK, and Tattersall (2006) on community unionism in Australia.

By conducting a systematic comparative analysis of London Citizens (LC)<sup>2</sup>, the Greater Boston Interfaith Organization (GBIO), and the German Institute for Community Organizing (DICO) – all affiliated with the IAF – I expand this body of research and examine the relative success of community organizations as well as their impact on established institutional structures. This comparative analysis will further our understanding regarding the impact of the context on community organizing and the role these organizations play in the US, the UK and Germany.

I am particularly interested in the following questions: how can I explain the organizations' sustained mobilization capacity? Here I don't refer to uninterrupted or permanent mobilization, but rather the capacity of an organization to mobilize its members when necessary. In other words, when an action or a meeting takes place, it gets its members out. In terms of sustained mobilization capacity, I focus on two dimensions: member mobilization and membership growth over time. Furthermore, which factors explain the differences and similarities across the cases? Does the mobilization capacity differ, considering the distinct national contexts, or is it rather similar due to the direct propagation of a similar American IAF model? Are there strategic or tactical differences, and how do these factors relate to the mobilization capacity?

But first, to really understand how these organizations function, it is important to take a step back and comprehend how they came into being. I examine therefore how and why this type of community organization emerged in each setting, and,

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<sup>2</sup> I use the London Citizens, although the organization started out as The East London Citizens Organization, or TELCO. The organization expanded to the West, the South, and recently the North of London, and its umbrella name became London Citizens.

consequently, I examine what accounts for their sustained mobilization capacity.

### *My Argument*

To understand the emergence of the community organizations in each context, I show how critical both the political opportunity structure and the strategic capacity of the founders were in creating the space and building these alternative models. I expand on the classic notion of “political opportunity structure,” emphasizing how the change from an open to an apparently hostile political setting actually provided an opportunity – rather than a threat – for these organizations to emerge. I operationalize hostile political climate by examining whether there is a perceived hostility within the political setting towards particular constituencies, especially in terms of access to policymakers or resources (Meyer and Minkoff 2004). Organizational formation or mobilization is assumed to be less likely when there is a perceived hostility towards these groups than when there is a perceived openness towards these groups. In addition, I link the external structure to the actual organizational formation by emphasizing the strategic capacities (biography, network, and organizational context) of the founders. While the founders were confronted with different challenges, I illustrate how in each case the institutional context as well as the presence of key actors explain why the organizations emerged when they did.

My goal is to explain what accounts for their sustained mobilization capacity, focusing on member mobilization and membership growth. Member mobilization, or the organizations’ ability to mobilize their constituents, is a fundamental source of power and key to their success. Indeed, since these community-based organizations

are non-bargaining actors, they rely on powerful grassroots mobilization to fight for social change (e.g., Osterman 2002; Swarts 2008; Warren 2001). Based on my interviews, participant observation, and newspaper articles, I examined members' participation in actions, meetings, trainings, or campaigns and was struck by the stark similarity across the cases: despite being embedded in very different institutional and socio-economic contexts, each organization has a strong capacity of mobilizing its members. What accounts for this similarity? Here, I show that the organizations share a similar "hybrid logic of organizing," combining bureaucratic and social movement approaches in their structure and culture. I show how this hybrid logic of organizing is likely to lead to a strong mobilization capacity and is dynamic and flexible enough to adjust to different institutional contexts.

Second, I examine membership growth. Organizational growth and decline is an important element of an organization's development over time (Kriesi 1996). Here I encounter significant differences between the cases. While the community organization in London has grown exponentially, doubling in membership over the past decade, the one in Berlin has had a much more moderate growth rate, while the Boston organization has actually declined in membership over the past 10 years. How can I explain these differences? Being embedded in a different context is not a sufficient explanation and I show how the organizations are the result of "creative borrowing" by the organizers. Their creativity and resourcefulness is, however, bound and shaped by the external context in which the organization is embedded. As a consequence, I show how in these three cases temporal, geographic, and strategic differences affect membership growth.

Finally, I illustrate under which conditions an organization can maintain its vitality and its capacity to mobilize its members over time. While there are structural forces that will push the organizations towards greater conservatism – abandoning its original goals in favor of organizational maintenance – I show how agency comes into play in the form of reflection and deliberation between the members and the organizers to ensure the organization stays focused on its original mission.

To summarize, I illustrate why the organizations emerged when they did, emphasizing the importance of the change from an open to a rather hostile environment as well as the strategic capacities of the founders. Furthermore, I explain what accounts for the organizations' similarities, in terms of their strong mobilization capacity, and what accounts for their differences, in terms of membership growth. I show how all three organizations adapt a similar model of organizing that travels across contexts and encourages member mobilization. In addition, I explain that the differences in membership growth can be attributed not just to a different context but also to the organizers' creative adaptation of the model. Finally, I show how the organizations over time are able to stick to their original mission of mobilizing members by emphasizing the deliberation and reflection that takes place between the members and organizers.

### ***Methodology***

I conduct a cross-national comparison of community organizations in Boston, London, and Berlin. I selected these cases based on the following reasons: First, the three organizations are all affiliated with the same IAF network, which is the oldest network

of community organizations in the US and the only one that has such a strong international presence. Second, all three of the organizations were created during the same time frame, the 1990s, and all are set in a global city. Third, the organization in London and the one in Berlin are the only IAF organizations in Europe. And although there are many IAF community organizations in the US, I selected the organization in Boston because it shares many characteristics with the other American IAF affiliates and could therefore be considered a representative American model. In addition, the organizations in Boston, London, and Berlin are part of the same regional IAF network, or METRO IAF, and have collaborated on campaigns, albeit on a limited scale.

My data collection is structured around three different methods: participant observation, interviews, and archival analysis, increasing the validity of my findings (please see Appendix for more details). First, as a participant observer I was involved in the activities of GBIO, London Citizens, and DICO, generating field notes and documenting my direct experiences (Whyte 1943). I have spent 2 summers in London with London Citizens, six weeks in Boston working with GBIO, and six weeks in Berlin with DICO. I attended internal meetings of GBIO and London Citizens and participated in intensive training sessions (3-5 days) of the three organizations. Second, I conducted “structured and focused” interviews, or in other words ask a set of standardized, general questions while focusing on the specific research objective, to enhance the systematic comparison of my cases (George and Bennett 2005). I have conducted between 30-40 interviews with key actors at each site, including the director, lead organizers, and members of the organizations. To understand more about



the “organizing environment” I interviewed trade union representatives, organizers from other organizing networks, and scholars as well. Finally, I use archival documents to construct a historical record based on written documents. In addition to the internal organizational reports, I coded and analyzed over 600 newspaper articles that have been published on the organizations between 1997 and 2012.

During the process of data collection and analysis, I adopted the “grounded theory” approach developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and refined by Corbin and Strauss (2008), collecting and analyzing the data simultaneously, rather than sequentially. I conducted “constant comparisons,” going back and forth between my codes, renaming and modifying my concepts. In addition, I used “theoretical sampling” or, in other words, the direction of my data collection is determined by ongoing interpretation and emerging conceptual categories, rather than a priori hypotheses (Suddaby 2006).

Through systematic case study analysis (Yin 2003) and process-tracing (George and Bennett 2005), I try to identify the underlying causal processes that explain the emergence, the relative mobilization capacity and development of these three organizations. Finally, my data analysis occurs at two levels: Since my research design is based on a small-N case study approach, I combine cross-case comparisons and within-case analysis, trying to identify causal variables through process-tracing.

Finally, considering the independence of my case studies, in statistical studies, if a correlation is the result not of the hypothesis but of learning or diffusion from one case to the others, then the additional cases do not provide substantially new info and there are fewer degrees of freedom than the researcher thought. In case studies,

process-tracing can inductively uncover linkages between cases, taking learning and diffusion processes into account. Process-tracing can allow the researcher to estimate how much of the variance in outcome is explained by learning or diffusion and how much is explained by other variables. A lack of independence can be useful to test whether the lessons in an earlier case played a causal role in a later one (George and Bennett, 2005, chapter 1).

To a certain extent, the three organizations in my study can be regarded as independent cases. There are no direct linkages in terms of resources or people between the three cases. The three organizations have taken on the IAF principles but have not learned any particular practices *directly* from one another. *Indirectly*, however, the European organizations have learned from the American IAF organizations. As such, I consider the American organization GBIO as the original IAF model. In that case, I would expect that the GBIO is more likely to follow the IAF principles than the European organizations. Indeed, as I will show, the European organizations have learned from the US model and have deviated from it where necessary. As a consequence, the European organizations were able to innovate, e.g., by diversifying their membership. This lack of independence among the case studies has therefore uncovered the learning or adaptation processes.

### ***Overview of the chapters***

Chapter 2 draws on the literature within social movement, industrial relations, and organization studies and builds a theoretical framework to explain the emergence and success of similar organizations across different countries. I show the importance of

linking institutions with agency, or more specifically, the importance of the external environment in which the organizations are embedded as well as the strategic capacity of the key actors.

Part two focuses on the dynamics of diffusion, or how the organizations emerged in each context. I describe the history of IAF community organizing and its vast spread in chapter three, and zoom in on the diffusion of the IAF model to Boston, London, and Berlin in chapter 4.

Part three contains the three in-depth case studies, illustrating in more detail how the IAF organizations function in each context and what the challenges are. Chapter 5 illustrates how the Boston organization maintained its capacity to mobilize members over time, and the mechanisms that come into play when the organization has been tempted to drift away towards servicing rather than organizing its members. Chapter 6 focuses on the community organization in London, showing how it has been able to grow exponentially over the past two decades. Chapter 7 describes the founding process of a community organization in Berlin, emphasizing how the structure and the culture of IAF organizing are created from the outset, as well as the challenges in finding the right translation of the IAF principles.

Part four, provides a comparative analysis of the three cases and evaluates community organizing within a broader context. Chapter 8 illustrates how adopting a hybrid logic of organizing encourages member mobilization. The development of a mobilizing structure and culture accounts therefore for important underlying similarities across the organizations, despite being embedded in different contexts. On the other hand, important differences in terms of membership growth come to the

forefront as well. Here, temporal, geographic, and strategic dimensions explain the differences across the cases. Chapter 9 evaluates the role of community organizations and their potential as a driver for social change.

## CHAPTER 2

### BUILDING A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: ORGANIZATIONAL EMERGENCE AND SUCCESS

The rise and fall, the success or failure, the growth and decay of an organization can be considered outcomes of an organizational transformation process. In order to persist over time, an organization must be able to adapt to a changing environment. Not only external changes but also internal pressures, such as membership decline, must be surmounted. Indeed, in order to survive and grow, an organization is constantly challenged to overcome these internal and external pressures.

This chapter is divided into three parts. First, I examine the literature on organizational emergence, emphasizing the political opportunity structure and the strategic capacities of the founders. Next, I focus on member mobilization and membership growth, illustrating the importance of a hybrid logic of organizing, accounting for the similarities of my cases, and mechanisms of creative borrowing, accounting for the differences. Finally, I show, according to the literature, what the potential challenges are for these types of organizations to remain sustainable over time.

#### ***Organizational Emergence***

To fully comprehend how the organizations function, it is important to take a step back and understand how they came into being. Over the past three decades, over 50

new IAF organizations have emerged in over 20 US States as well as abroad. What accounts for this vast spread of similar organizations? How and when were these organizations created, and what were some of the challenges? I emphasize the importance of two factors: the political opportunity structure and the strategic capacity of the lead organizers.

Arthur Stinchcombe, in his seminal paper *Social Structure and Organizations*, coined the term “liability of newness”: new organizations fail more easily than old ones, especially new organizational forms (1965), because they have to invest in education, in new roles; they have to build new trust relationships with strangers, and they do not have a base of customers or social resources for support. I show, however, how London Citizens, GBIO, and DICO have been able to emerge, co-exist with the established institutions, and be relatively successful. According to Thelen (2004), institution building is the result of “strategic interactions.” In explaining the emergence of distinct national systems of vocational training, Thelen argues that coalitions will be built and key actors will mobilize to support a particular institutional configuration (31). While Thelen focuses on one dominant practice within national systems, vocational training, I look at alternative arrangements that have emerged next to the main models of representation. Trade unions, especially in Europe, are still the dominant form of collective representation, with community organizations therefore representing alternative ways of organizing workers and citizens. Considering the historical circumstances, I show how shifts in the political settings led to an opening in the civic engagement sphere.

In line with political opportunity structure theory (McAdam 1982; Tarrow

2011), I describe how an opening in the institutional context allowed the organizations to emerge, or how changes in opportunity translated into organizational formation. The political opportunity structure theory takes into account the specific historical and institutional contexts in explaining the emergence of social movements and shows why people mobilize during certain historical periods rather than others, or why mobilization is more intense in some countries than in others.<sup>3</sup> While Eisinger (1973) was the first to use the political opportunity framework, explaining why, during the 1960s, some American cities witnessed riots and others didn't, the concept "political opportunity structure" has been widely applied since then to explain the emergence and development of protest movements (e.g., Tilly 1978; Tarrow 2011). As Meyer and Minkoff (2004) point out, however, the concept lacks theoretical clarity, and similar terms have been used to express different factors. As a consequence, one of the questions we need to address is: Political opportunity for whom? Indeed, as my data show, change in opportunities provoked the organizational formation of some while depressing others.

Tarrow defines political opportunities as "consistent – but not necessarily formal, permanent, or national – dimensions of the political struggle that encourage people to engage in contentious politics" (Tarrow 1998: 19-20). Expanding on this "classic" notion of political opportunity structure, I show that for each case, the political context had actually become quite hostile when the organizations emerged, even though "openness" of the government has often been described as a critical factor for opportunity (Eisinger 1973; Kitschelt 1986; Koopmans 1996). To a certain extent, the

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<sup>3</sup> In line with Minkoff (1995), my dependent variable in this section is organizational formation rather than

“community organizing space” was already filled by the labor movement or social movements, and only once these forms of civic engagement had started to dwindle or prove ineffective was space carved out for the IAF community organizations to emerge. In other words, a seemingly hostile political structure might be a threat for some, but an opportunity for others.

While the change in the institutional context proved important, it is not sufficient to explain the outcome. How did these opportunities turn into organizational formation? How can we link the external context to the actual action that took place? The emergence of the IAF organizations in London, Boston, and Berlin is therefore also a story of strong individuals, enriched by their own biography, their networks, and the organizational context in which they were embedded, that shows why they decided at those times to build organizations in these cities. Building on Marshall Ganz’ concept of “strategic capacity” (2000) I show how these leaders’ own personal experiences, as well as their ties to the IAF network or other key actors in the field, explain the emergence of these alternative organizations in their distinct contexts.

### *Process of Diffusion*

It is important to consider the processes of diffusion. These IAF organizations did not simply “emerge” in a new context, but are rather the result of explicit strategies for diffusing this model into different settings. According to Rogers (1995) “diffusion is the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system” (5). Classical diffusion studies focus on

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mobilization.



communication channels, such as mass media or relational networks, as necessary conditions for adopting innovative practices (e.g. Ryan and Gross 1943, Katz and Lazarsfeld 1944, Coleman et al. 1966, Hagerstrand 1967). Within the social movements literature, diffusion has been defined as “normal learning and influence processes as mediated by the network structures of everyday life” (McAdam 1995, 231). Going beyond innovation per se, this literature emphasizes the spread of protest tactics or collective action “repertoires” (e.g., McAdam and Rucht 1993, Giugni 1995, Soule 1997). In the literature, three main questions are posed (eds. Givan, Soule and Roberts, 2011): What is being diffused? Which mechanisms of diffusion can be discerned? What is the outcome of the diffusion process? Concerning the second question, the mechanisms of diffusion, three main pathways can be discerned: relational (through interpersonal networks), non-relational (use of mass media or the internet), and the brokerage mechanism (a third party that links the transmitter to the adopter).<sup>4</sup> According to Tarrow (2006, 2011), these mechanisms lead to different outcomes: diffusion through relational mechanisms will be narrow in scope, but with a high level of trust between the actors, whereas the spread of tactics through non-relational mechanisms can have a much broader and further reach, but will not develop the same sense of trust; diffusion through brokerage will spread rapidly, but the intermediary party has the ability to change the content of the message.

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<sup>4</sup> In the literature the terms transmitter and adopter have been used to indicate the two main actors between whom the diffusion occurs.

### *Diffusion as a Process but not an Explanation*

To what extent, however, does the diffusion literature explain the emergence of community organizations in Boston, London, and Berlin? Even though the mechanisms of diffusion are different – London Citizens is the result of non-relational diffusion, whereas the Berlin and Boston affiliates are both examples of direct, relational diffusion – these differences don't seem to affect the outcomes.

Second, according to Snow and Benford (1999), it is important to specify the role of “agency” in the diffusion process. The GBIO is the result of “reciprocation;” both the adopter and the transmitter actively promoted the diffusion. London Citizens is the result of “adaptation;” diffusion happened through the efforts of an active adopter and a rather passive transmitter. Finally, the German IAF organization is the result of “accommodation,” an active transmitter but a rather passive adopter. But again, while these differences are clear, the types of agency don't seem to affect the emergence or further development of the organization.

### *Sustained Mobilization Capacity*

In terms of mobilization capacity, I focus on two dimensions: member mobilization and membership growth (see also, e.g., Swarts 2008). Mobilization, according to Tilly (1978), refers to “the process by which a group acquires collective control over the resources needed for action” (7), or the ways in which individuals are transformed into a collective actor. Membership growth refers to the change in size, in terms of members and resources (Kriesi 1996). Social movement scholars have highlighted three distinct factors in explaining mobilization capacity: organizational resources,

political opportunities, and framing processes (McCarthy and Zald 1973; McAdam 1982; Tarrow 2011; Snow and Benford 1988).

To explain how a social movement emerges and develops, social movement scholars have emphasized the ability of groups to accrue the necessary resources, illustrating that at least a minimal form of organization is required as a tool for mobilizing (McCarthy and Zald, 1973). The logic of this resource mobilization paradigm rejected moreover Piven and Cloward's thesis that organizations and mass disruption are irreconcilable (1977). According to resource mobilization scholars, however, if social movements become too institutionalized, they manifest only weak conservative tactics. With my case studies I illustrate how the IAF organizations, despite a certain level of institutionalization, still manage to mobilize their grassroots.

The overemphasis on rational actors and the disregard of the broader political and structural environment in which the movement takes place, led to a new paradigm: the political opportunity structure or the political process theory (Tilly, 1978; McAdam, 1982; Tarrow, 2011). This theory emphasizes that social movements do not operate in a vacuum, but rather emerge in specific political and institutional settings. As a consequence, the political system in which the movement is embedded will shape the opportunities for mobilization. In line with Rucht (1996), to examine the institutional context in which the organization is embedded, I focus on the organization's access to policy makers, its alliance structure, and conflict structure.

The emphasis on the external context, however, has often been regarded as too static or missing agency (e.g., Goodwin, Jasper, and Khattri, 1999). The cultural framework, grounded in the symbolic interaction and social construction perspectives

developed by Mead (1934), Blumer (1969), and Berger and Luckmann (1966), came out as a critique to the overly structural and deterministic political opportunity literature. As social movement studies took a “cultural turn,” scholars have shown how movements use symbols, identity, emotions, or other cultural dimensions, which in turn produce solidarity, motivate participants, and thus spur collective action (e.g., Goffman, 1974; Snow et al., 1986; Polletta, 2006; Valocchi, 2008). To examine the organization’s strategies in building a “mobilizing culture,” I focus on the rituals, the use of a certain language, and the role of building a collective identity (Pettigrew, 1978; Meek, 1988; Collins 2004) and the extent to which these factors foster feelings of shared responsibility and commitment, which will enhance members’ mobilization (Kanter 1968; Lawler, Thye and Yoon, 2009).

Although this cultural framework is significant, it cannot be studied in isolation from the broader context in which a movement takes place. Otherwise, as Tarrow (2011) points out, “it risks becoming every bit as deterministic as its structuralist predecessor” (267). Indeed, a dynamism exists between the structural and the cultural dimensions; they are interconnected, shape and reshape each other (Barley and Tolbert 1997).

### *Going beyond social movement studies*

Comparative studies within the industrial relations literature will typically emphasize the differences in practices or organizations across countries. The *Varieties of Capitalism* framework, for example, bundles the coordinated market economies together, with Germany as the prototype, on the one hand, and on the other, liberal

market economies such as the UK and the US. Because firms are embedded in distinct institutional environments (coordinated versus liberal economies), they will behave differently in the US and Germany (Hall and Soskice 2001). In linking social movement studies to institutional theory, Baccaro, Hamann, and Turner (2003) show that in countries in which unions enjoy only weak institutional or political support, unions have a greater incentive to organize their members and shift towards rank-and-file mobilization or social movement unionism. Unions in the US and the UK, for example, emphasize grassroots mobilization and coalition building as a result of their weak institutional position. Unions in countries such as Germany, Italy, or Spain, however, rely on a social partnership approach; their strong institutional position actually prevents them from mobilizing members or building coalitions, which could be detrimental in the long run. In line with Hall and Soskice's *Varieties of Capitalism* (2001), Baccaro, Hamann, and Turner's analysis shows how "the degree and type of institutional embeddedness help account for the strategies unions adopt" (129), showing, in other words, the importance of institutions in shaping behavior. Going back to my cases, considering the distinct institutional environments in which they are embedded, I would have expected strong differences. I would expect it to be more difficult for a new community organization to mobilize its members in Germany, than in the US or the UK.

In comparing international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) – the French *Medécins Sans Frontières*, British *Oxfam*, and American *CARE* – Stroup (2012) shows how the structures and strategies of these INGO's are still closely tied to their original national environments and are driven by the home countries' resources,

institutions, and norms. Consequently, the national origin of each INGO shapes its identity and specific practices, resulting into “varieties of activism.” In the literature on multinational companies (MNCs) mixed results can be found. On the one hand, scholars have shown how core organizational practices of the MNCs are shaped by the host country, reflecting the norms of that foreign country (e.g., Whitley 1999; Maurice et al. 1986). They emphasize the “business system” in which the firm is embedded or the “societal effects” of the local institutions on the firm. Others, however, have illustrated how firm strategies can trump the national institutions. Examining the labor and human resources practices of American fastfood companies, such as McDonalds and Burger King, in Germany and Spain, Royle (2004) finds that despite the national context, the companies were able to pursue a US-based “low-road” model based on not-unionized, low-wage, and low-skilled labor. Royle emphasized the importance of the sectoral “logic” of the fastfood sector, outweighing both the host-country and country-of-origin effect.

Studies, such as the Varieties of Capitalism, use a comparative institutional framework, emphasizing the role of macro-institutions in explaining union or firm behavior. This conceptual framework, however, often overlooks the role of agency and runs the risk of becoming too deterministic. In my study, I illustrate the importance of taking a comparative institutional lens, without, however, neglecting the power of agency or, more specifically, the strategic capacities of the founders. To a certain degree, three very similar IAF organizations have been created, despite the differences in context. To explain the striking similarity among my cases, I cannot turn to the local institutions, but instead, I emphasize the importance of agency, or the

organizations' adopting a similar "hybrid logic of organizing."

*Accounting for the Similarities: A hybrid logic of organizing*

While early institutional theorists focused on the organization as the main institution or locus of action (Selznick 1948), "new institutionalism" locates individual and organizational behavior in a broader social and institutional context as a way to understand their actions (DiMaggio and Powell 1983, 1991; Meyer and Rowan 1977). As part of the development of new institutional theory, the concept of institutional logic emerged, providing a bridge between institutions and actions (Thornton and Ocasio 2008). According to Friedland and Alford's seminal essay, "society is composed of multiple institutional logics which are available to individuals and organizations as bases for actions" (1991: 253). Institutional logics are then defined as "the socially constructed, historical patterns of material practices, assumptions, values, beliefs, and rules by which individuals produce and reproduce their material subsistence, organize time and space, and provide meaning to their social reality" (Thornton and Ocasio 1999: 804) or put more simply, society comprises different institutional orders, such as the state, the market, civil society, and family, and each order consists of material practices and symbolic systems available to individuals and organizations. As recent studies have shown, organizations will often draw from multiple logics. Whereas some scholars have pointed to potential conflicts resulting from competing logics, e.g., the tensions that derive from nonprofits' attempts to combine for-profit business practices and social services (Cooney 2006), others have shown how competing logics can co-exist, e.g., the logic of medical professionalism

and business in the Alberta health care system (Reay and Hinnings 2009).

I show that the IAF organizations share a similar “hybrid logic of organizing,” combining bureaucratic and social movement approaches. This logic is noticeable in the organizational structure that they adapt – the IAF organizations fall somewhere between full-blown bureaucratic organizations and social movement organizations (SMOs) – as well as their organizational culture – the IAF organizations foster a relational culture, strengthening member commitment, as well as a more pragmatic culture, strengthening member accountability (Table 1). By adopting this hybrid logic the organizations are able to transcend to a certain extent contextual differences.

I don’t mean that social movements can’t be pragmatic or that bureaucratic organizations can’t be ideological. I tried, however, to construct conceptual categories or ideal types that would be helpful in analyzing my cases. Based on the literature of institutional logics, I argue that the logic of civil society (what I more narrowly call the logic of social movements) in most cases is characterized by an emphasis on its mission. A bureaucracy, as defined by Weber (1947), relies on formal rules, functional specialization, professionalization, and hierarchy. The logics of bureaucracy and social movements are ideal types and are not always contradictory but can be complementary.



Table 1. Hybrid Logic of Organizing

	Logic of Bureaucracy	Logic of Social Movements
Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Office; paid staff</li> <li>- Hierarchy</li> <li>- Consultancy contract IAF</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Volunteers</li> <li>- Grassroots networks</li> <li>- Part of IAF network</li> </ul>
Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pragmatic; strategic</li> <li>- Rules and procedures</li> <li>- Accountability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Values; Mission</li> <li>- One-to-one relationship</li> <li>- Commitment</li> </ul>

*Accounting for the Differences: Mechanisms of Creative Borrowing*

In his article on the transnational diffusion of the “Gandhian repertoire,” Sean Chabot (2000) explains how its spread in the US was blocked by sentiments of ‘hyper-difference’ on the one hand, or ‘over-likeliness’ on the other. The former refers to exaggerating the differences between the cultural and environmental context, whereas the latter concerns underestimating these differences. These obstacles, however, were overcome by the employment of ‘intellectual dislocation’ and ‘creative relocation’. The adopters recognize that the repertoire can be relevant in other settings as well (dislocation); at the same time, they realize that the adaptation needs to be translated or reinvented to fit the new context (relocation). These processes occurred as well in the adaptation of the IAF model. The organizers couldn’t just take a carbon copy of the model and plunge it in each context, but they had to be creative and resourceful to make it work.

The strategic decisions that the organizers make, however, are bound by the realities of the external context in which the organization is embedded and, as a result, important differences come to the forefront. I will illustrate specifically how

temporal, geographic, and strategic differences have influenced the development of each organization. First, community organizing started in the US in the 1930s; in Britain and Germany, however, not until the 90s. As a consequence, it is much more deeply rooted in American society, since it has a longer tradition. This temporal difference sheds light on two important consequences: first, the organizers in the UK and Germany learned not only from US successes; they learned from the mistakes as well, enabling them to innovate and not merely imitate. In a sense, however, being away from the “mother ship” has allowed the IAF organizations in the UK and Germany to develop in their own way, without being stuck to the traditional IAF model, and has been translated moreover into a much more diverse membership base in London and Berlin than in Boston. Tapping into diverse types of organizations instead of limiting themselves to faith-based groups has partly contributed to membership growth in the UK and Germany. In addition, the issue of competition comes into play. In the UK and Germany, these IAF organizations are unique. And as population ecology theorists have shown, organizations that can establish a niche for themselves are more likely to survive than organizations that can't (Hannan and Freeman 1977, 1989).

Second, in terms of geographical differences, the organizations are based in very different political structures, which have an impact on their development and success. All three organizations have organized and campaigned at a local, borough level, but the organization in London, in particular, has been able to take advantage of its geographic location. Indeed, being located in a small country with a highly centralized government structure, has allowed the organization to influence national

policymaking. Finally, strategic leadership decisions play a key role as well.

Membership diversification, for example, is not just a function of the temporal or geographic dimensions, but in each case, the organizers still had to make the strategic decision to diversify its membership group.

In sum, these temporal, geographic, and strategic dimensions will shed a light on the differences, especially in membership growth, between the three organizations.

***How remain sustainable? The presumed evolutionary trajectories of a social movement***

Finally, I emphasize the *sustained* mobilization capacity of the organizations. As many scholars have argued, social movements tend to go through different stages:

emergence, coming together through protests and demonstrations, bureaucratization or formalization, and, finally, decline (Blumer, 1969; della Porta and Diani, 2006).

Decline may occur due to success or failure in achieving specific goals, repression of the movement, or cooptation (Miller, 1999). Indeed, sticking to the original mission is particularly problematic for social movement, political, or “collectivist” organizations (Michels 1959; Rothschild-Whitt 1979).

Robert Michels’ “iron law of oligarchy” (1959) represents the classical approach to the sociological study of organizational transformation. According to this model, over time, leadership oligarchization, processes of bureaucratization, and goal displacement occur, transforming a social movement organization into a conservative,

accommodative and highly bureaucratic structure.<sup>5</sup> In his study of the German Social Democratic party, Michels argued that “[t]he party, ... is not necessarily identified with the totality of its members, and still less so with the class to which these belong. The party is created as a means to secure an end. Having, however, become an end in itself, endowed with aims and interests of its own, it undergoes detachment, from the teleological point of view, from the class which it represents. In a party, it is far from obvious that the interests of the masses which have combined to form the party will coincide with the interests of the bureaucracy in which the party becomes personified” (Michels 1959: 389).

This theory has triggered a plethora of studies, with most scholars emphasizing the internal or external *structures* to explain the conditions under which the Michels model does or does not occur. The seminal work of Lipset, et al. (1956), *Union Democracy*, describes the internal democracy of the International Typographical Union (ITU) as a marked exception to Michel’s “iron law”. The authors emphasize the internal structure, the institutionalization of a two-party system, as the main factor in explaining how union democracy arose and was able to persist over time. They support Michels’ iron law and consider the ITU a deviant case. Voss and Sherman (2000), on the other hand, show that even when an organization has become bureaucratic, it can still break out of its conservatism, using radical, disruptive tactics. The authors focus on the internal union structure as well – a crisis within the local union, resulting in a change in leadership; the presence of activists with social movement experience; support from the international union – to explain how to “break

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<sup>5</sup> When using the term conservative or conservatism, I refer to an organization’s abandoning of its original goals in

out” of organizational conservatism.

Another structural analysis disproving Michels’ model is that of Dieter Rucht (1999), who links protest events to the structural characteristics of new social movement groups in Germany, arguing that although the results support Michels’ iron law (movements are inclined to become bureaucratic and centralized over time; formal groups tend to use more moderate forms of action than informal groups), forms of protest are not determined by the organizational structure. There is no indication of an “iron law”, and Rucht concludes that informal, decentralized groups may use more moderate tactics than formal, centralized groups. It is not clear, however, which variables and causal mechanisms explain how an organization is able to overcome this propensity.

Mayer Zald and Patricia Denton’s study on organizational change, examining the transformation of the YMCA from a social movement to a service organization (1963), specify four primary structural factors under which organizational adaptation is most likely to occur successfully: 1) when the organization has a federated structure with decentralized, autonomous chapters; 2) it has broadly defined goals and rules; 3) it has a low development of professional ideology; and finally 4) it is dependent upon paying clientele. Sheldon Messinger (1955), for example, describes how, over time, the leadership of the Townsend movement deflects from its original mission of social change in order to survive as an organization. Philip Selznick (1943) recognizes as well the tension between pursuing certain goals and the organizational adaptation in order to survive. In line with Michels, the author argues that organizations are likely to

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favor of goal maintenance (cfr. Michels 1959; Leach 2005).

undergo processes of bureaucratization. While Selznick argues this is the general tendency, he concludes by stating – without specifying though – the possibility of “counter-pressure” or “techniques for blocking the bureaucratic drift.”

Finally, whereas according to the Michels’ model, a social movement will always evolve towards greater conservatism, several scholars have shown that other transformation processes are possible as well. One of the key articles, by Zald and Ash (1966), shows that bureaucratization, tactical conservatism, or oligarchization are not predetermined, and a movement may become more radical rather than less depending on an inclusive or exclusive membership structure. In a similar vein, Kriesi (1996) argues that, over time, at least four possible transformations can occur: the organization can institutionalize, becoming a party or interest group; it can commercialize, transforming into a service-oriented organization; it can turn into a club or voluntary organization through the process of involution; and finally, it can radicalize, developing into an exclusive mobilizing organization. The direction of the goal transformation can be determined by internal factors, such as the movement type and the sources of revenue.<sup>6</sup> Kriesi adds, however, that these structural data are not optimal and, as a consequence, explain the goal transformation to only a limited extent.

Thus, much of the literature has emphasized structural factors, such as the type of movement and membership requirements, to illustrate the specific direction of

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<sup>6</sup> Instrumental movements, or movements that are inclusive, focus on specific collective goods, are not concerned with collective identity, and require only a low level of member commitment, tend to institutionalize. Subcultural movements, or movements that are exclusive, identity oriented, and maintain intense levels of member commitment, are more likely to commercialize or become clubs or voluntary groups. Finally, countercultural movements, or movements that are exclusive, identity oriented, often in stark conflict with authorities, and maintain intense levels of member commitment, are more likely to radicalize.

change, or the evolution, from a social movement into an either more conservative or a radical organization. Limited attention has been given to the *process* of organizational change or, as Minkoff and McCarthy argue, “the ‘black box’ processes within social movement organizations” (2005: 289).<sup>7</sup> I focus, therefore, not just on the external and internal structure, but on the intentional creation of a mobilizing culture within the organization, drawing attention to the internal processes of decision-making and change.

### *A brief summary*

The political opportunity structure as well as the strategic capacities of the founders are critical to explain why the community organizations emerged when they did. The dwindling of the labor movement and social movements allowed for a shift in the political setting, creating an opportunity for these new community organizations to emerge. In addition, the founders, enriched by their previous experience and networks, were able to take advantage of this opportunity and create the organizations.

Furthermore, despite the different contexts, these IAF organizations act very similar in terms of their capacity to mobilize members. The development of a hybrid model of organizing, combining elements from bureaucracy and social movements in their structure and culture, encourages member mobilization and, in addition, this

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<sup>7</sup> An important exception, however, is the study by Paul Osterman (2006), emphasizing agency and a culture of contestation that is created within the organization to show how a mass-membership organization can have an oligarchic leadership structure while avoiding the negative consequences of goal displacement and loss of membership commitment. Osterman uses a community organization in Texas, the Southwest Industrial Areas Foundation (SWIAF), as his exemplar. SWIAF falls under the same national umbrella organization, the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), as my three case studies. Osterman, however, focuses on the internal organizational processes, without paying too much attention to the external environment, whereas I draw links between the internal and external processes.

model is flexible enough to function across distinct contexts. Nonetheless, differences, in terms of membership growth, come to the forefront. While the context partly contributes to these differences (temporal and geographic dimensions), it is important to take into consideration the strategic dimension, or the mechanism of creative borrowing. Each organizer had to creatively adapt this model in the context to make it work.

Finally, starting with Robert Michels, the literature has shown how over time an organization focused on mobilizing members is likely to transform into a more conservative organization. Scholars mainly emphasize the importance of the structure, such as the movement type or the funding sources, to indicate why and how an organization drifts from its original mission of mobilizing to becoming, more often than not, a service provider. Here, I try to identify the underlying processes, such as the development of a mobilizing culture, to explain how these organizations are able to stick to their original mission of mobilizing, remaining dynamic and sustainable over time.

In the next chapters, I provide a historic overview of IAF organizing and explain how the IAF model diffused to Boston, London, and Berlin.



## CHAPTER 3

### A HISTORY OF IAF COMMUNITY ORGANIZING

With the 2008 election of President Barack Obama, “community organizing” has become the new buzzword. Its roots, however, go back to 1930s Chicago when Saul Alinsky founded his first organization the Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council (BYNC). Over the past decades, Alinsky himself, often portrayed as a radical, has been the subject of many studies and heated debates. In 1969, Hilary Rodham Clinton wrote her senior thesis on Alinsky at Wellesley College; more recently, right-wing Tea Partiers have used Alinsky’s writings *Reveille for Radicals* and *Rules for Radicals* as strategic and tactical rulebooks for grassroots organizing; and in January, 2012, Republican Presidential candidate Newt Gingrich praised his campaign as one based on “American exceptionalism” as opposed to one based on the “radicalism of Saul Alinsky.”

Today there are over 6,000 community organizations in the US, ranging from local organizations affiliated with one of the leading national networks to independent organizations (Orr 2007b; Warren and Wood 2001). There are at least four US national networks of congregation-based community organizing, the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), the Pacific Institute for Community Organization (PICO) national network, the Direct Action and Research Training Center (DART), and Gamaliel. The IAF of Saul Alinsky is the oldest, and the founders of the other three had ties with IAF or with Saul Alinsky before starting up. In addition, there are secular-based networks such as the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) and the Center for Third World Organizing (CTWO), both recruiting dues-paying

individual members.

In this chapter, I go back to the roots of IAF organizing and provide a historic overview.

### ***A History of US community organizing***

Saul Alinsky has often been considered the “modern” father of community organizing. Focusing on skill capacity and leadership building, Alinsky’s “Iron Rule” was “never do for others what they can do for themselves” (Alinsky 1971). He aimed to address the powerlessness of poor urban neighborhoods by organizing people around their interests and working *with* them rather than *for* them (Furbey et al. 1997). In 1939, when the Congress for Industrial Organizations (CIO) under the leadership of John L. Lewis was trying to organize the meatpacking district in Chicago, Alinsky founded his first organization, the Back of Yards Neighborhood Council (BYNC) as a platform to support the workers.<sup>8</sup> The BYNC was revolutionary bringing together the CIO and Catholic priests from the neighborhood in order to help organize the workers. When Alinsky died in 1972, Ed Chambers took over and built a more modern, institutionalized community organization network, the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF). The first three modern IAF groups were the Citizens Organized for Public Service (COPS), in San Antonio, Texas; Baltimoreans United in Leadership Development (BUILD), in Maryland; and the Queens Citizens Organization (QCO), in Queens, New York. Leadership development and training are at the heart of the effort to organize the communities and to work on such issues as health and housing. Today there are 56 IAF affiliates organizing in 22 US states, as well as in Australia, Canada, Germany and the UK. The member organizations include faith-based organizations,

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<sup>8</sup> The twelve square-mile area located on Chicago’s southwest side, commonly known as “Back of the Yards,” suffered from social disorganization, poor housing, and juvenile delinquency. BYNC was created in response to these growing social issues.

trade unions, schools, universities, immigrant societies, parent associations (IAF 2012).

### *Saul Alinsky and the IAF Origins*

Born in Chicago in 1909 and growing up in a close-knit Jewish community as a child of Russian Jewish immigrants, Alinsky was exposed to the traditions of self-organization and mutual care (Cutler 1996). This model of Jewish self-organizing, which contrasted sharply with the settlement houses emerging at the time, was a key influence in shaping Alinsky's political vision (Bretherton 2009). Whereas the system of communal self-help encouraged leadership development and mobilization among the people, the settlement houses were run by highly educated upper and middle-class white people servicing the poor, rather than effectively addressing the roots of the socio-economic problems. Alinsky's background as a sociology student and his focus on urban ethnography as a fundamental research method made clear that transformations of communities can be done only through interacting with the people, living in the places they live, and developing an account of their relationships (Bretherton 2009). This method of urban ethnography was developed by Ernest Watson Burgess and Robert Ezra Park at the University of Chicago in the 1920s. Burgess' zonal hypothesis showed how social disorganization, rather than human genetics, is the cause of such slum life features as disease and crime. As a student and graduate student, Alinsky took Burgess's courses and spent large amounts of time in the "field," studying organized crime and Al Capone's gang on the West side of Chicago (Horwitt, 10-33). Alinsky's experience as a "participant observer," developing detailed pictures of people's lives, their relationships, and their communities, laid the groundwork for future IAF organizing. In 1926, Alinsky started working for Clifford Shaw at the Institute for Juvenile Research and was sent to

Chicago's Back of the Yards during the late 1930s. The Back of the Yards was a poor, mainly Polish and Catholic neighborhood, located right behind the union stockyards, or America's most centralized meatpacking industry. Although Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* (1906) had exposed the horrible conditions of the slaughterhouses, apart from some federal legislation, little had changed by the end of the 1930s.

Under the powerful leadership of John L. Lewis, the CIO was now directly involved in organizing Sinclair's infamous meatpacking industry.<sup>9</sup> Inspired by the structure and tactics of the labor movement, Alinsky founded the BYNC. Similar to local union representatives, all the delegates on the council were representatives of specific groups, clubs or churches from the neighborhood. Successful sit-down strikes and demonstrations led by the industrial trade unions had taught Alinsky to use the public stage to pressure decision-makers.<sup>10</sup> Although the BYNC was initially part of Shaw's project, Alinsky continued the work with BYNC independently from Shaw, envisioning place-based, neighborhood organizing complimenting workplace-based, union organizing. Alinsky believed that "organized poor people might wrest a higher standard of living as a matter of right instead of waiting passively for the crumbs of charity."<sup>11</sup> In working with Catholic priests and labor leaders, and using labor techniques such as picketing, boycotts, rent strikes and sit-downs, Alinsky was able to organize slum communities.

As a result of this success, money came in from philanthropists, such as Marshall Field III of the Field retailing business, as well as from the Catholic church, thanks to the crucial relationship with Chicago's auxiliary Bishop Bernard J. Sheil. In 1940, Alinsky set up the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) with a diverse board of

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<sup>9</sup> The CIO was formed in 1930 and "remade" the labor movement (Fantasia and Voss 2005). The CIO was a militant industrial model of unionism opposed to the sole existing craft-based, conservative model, the American Federation of Labor (AFL). Thanks to the birth of the CIO, union membership had spiked by the 1940s.

<sup>10</sup> For example, Lewis' leadership was critical during the GM sit-down strike in Flint, Michigan, in 1936-37.

<sup>11</sup> *New York Times*. October 9, 1966. "Making Trouble is Alinsky's Business" by Patrick Anderson.

trustees, including Democrats, Republicans, Catholics, and important Chicago businessmen. Alinsky's goal was to organize "natural" areas or neighborhoods, addressing the industrial working and living conditions of those neighborhoods, hence the name Industrial Areas Foundation. Alinsky called this one-man organization a "foundation" to give the institute more clout and respectability in the eyes of the business community and potential funders (von Hoffman 2010). Newspapers throughout the country proclaimed Alinsky's success: the Chicago Daily Times called Alinsky's achievements as "the Miracle of Democracy"; the New York Herald Tribune editorialized on "Democracy in the Jungle"; other headlines would state "How Czechs and Poles and Germans and Irish Learned to Work Together" and trumpet "Democracy at Work: Cleaning up Chicago's 'Packingtown' Slums" (Horwitt 1989, 102-105). Alinsky became a public figure, feeding the press interviews, focusing on concepts such as "democracy" and "unity."

#### *First Attempts to Diffuse the BYNC Model*

BYNC's success, with the sense of "joint responsibility for the common welfare" was considered a "significant step in the evolution of American democracy."<sup>12</sup> As a result, in 1940, Alinsky decided to spread this model to two more slum communities, Armourdale in Kansas City, Kansas, and South St. Paul, Minnesota. The similarities with Back of the Yards were striking: both were stockyards and packinghouse communities, had strong CIO presence, large immigrant populations, and faced similar social problems such as delinquency and high unemployment. On the other hand, critical elements were missing: strong leadership, an influence comparable to Bishop Sheil's over Chicago, and a strong Catholicism. Alinsky worked from Chicago, traveling to Kansas city and St. Paul to meet with dozens of priests, ministers, and

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<sup>12</sup> *New York Herald Tribune*, August 21, 1940. "Democracy in the Jungle."

others to sell the idea of BYNC's success and its transferability. The meetings would be tailored to these people's self-interests and promoted at the same time as an opportunity to be part of a mission to save democracy. Kansas City newspapers began covering this road to active citizenship, and soon committees on unemployment, housing, and health were formed, similar to those of the BYNC (Horwitt 110-112). Although Alinsky's model of organizing had successfully taken off in these two cities, trouble was looming: key leaders had to resign to join the Navy and work at a defense plant as World War II intensified.

Between the 1940s-70s, Alinsky continued his attempts to replicate the IAF experience in Los Angeles, New York City, the Woodlawn area in Chicago, and Rochester, among other cities. Two prime sources encouraged the diffusion: Alinsky's *Reveille for Radicals* (1946), explaining how to build people's organizations, was a clear effort to spread the IAF vision nation wide. Up until that point, however, Alinsky could refer only to the success of the BYNC and his seminal efforts in Kansas City and St. Paul. Nearly two decades later, Charles Silberman's *Crisis in Black and White* (1964) diffused Alinsky's strategy and tactics on a national scale, using Alinsky's Woodlawn experience as *the* example of how poor black people can take control of their own lives. To a certain extent, these books formulated a model of community organizing in an abstract way – theorization – enhancing the diffusion of the praxis (Strang and Meyer 1993; Tarrow 2006). In addition, throughout the years, Alinsky was able to hire skilled organizers such as Nicholas von Hoffman, Ed Chambers, Fred Ross, and César Chávez to lead the different projects.

In 1947, Alinsky hired Fred Ross – who at that time was organizing Latinos in the *barrios* of Southern California – to be his key organizer on the West Coast. According to Alinsky, the decision-making centers in the United States were located mainly in the North and in the West of the country, in cities such as Chicago, New

York City, and Los Angeles. These places were on the brink of class warfare and thus in urgent need of Alinsky-style organizing (von Hoffman 2010). On the eastside of Los Angeles, Ross set up the Community Service Organization (CSO), organizing mainly Mexican Americans and registering them to vote. As a result, in 1949, Edward R. Roybal was the first Latino elected to the Los Angeles City Council. Ross moved from LA to Northern California to start up more CSO chapters, encouraging civic participation in communities predominantly of Mexican Americans. Near San José he came in contact with César Chávez, at that time a civic-minded young apricot picker who “insisted on reading more than the sporting page or the funnies – he read the whole paper.”<sup>13</sup> Under Ross’s auspices, Alinsky hired Chávez in the early 1950s. For a decade, Ross and Chávez organized Mexican American neighborhoods across California. By the 1960s, thirty-four chapters had been established across the Southwest, characterizing the CSO as the first enduring civil rights organization for the largest urban Mexican American population (Bernstein 2011). In 1962, when Chávez’ proposal to organize farm workers was voted down by the CSO, he resigned from the organization, left Los Angeles and moved to Delano to build up a farm workers movement, or what would become the United Farm Workers Union (UFW). Soon thereafter, Dolores Huerta – the first woman to join the IAF staff – and Fred Ross left the CSO as well, joining Chávez in organizing boycotts and strikes. The Rev. Jim Drake, who would later become the lead organizer of the Boston IAF, the Greater Boston Interfaith Organization, started his career under César Chávez. Drake, a middle-class white guy in his early 20’s, graduated from the Union Theological Seminary and was assigned by the California Migrant Ministry to Chávez for training. Over the years, Drake became one of Chávez’ key organizers and strategists, playing a

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<sup>13</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, July 14, 1987. “41 years in the grass roots: Organizer Fred Ross, 76, still has work to do” by Todd Eisenstadt.

critical role during the famous Delano grape strike of 1965-66.

The Temporary Woodlawn Organization (TWO), created in 1961, became a powerful organization fighting such big players as the University of Chicago and the City (i.e., Mayor Daley). During the 1950s, Woodlawn, located in the Southwest of Chicago, had dramatically shifted from being a predominantly middle class, white neighborhood to a virtually all-black community. The University and the mayor had plans to extend Hyde Park into that area and therefore wipe out part of the black community. TWO mobilized, agitated the residents, spurring them to demonstrate and make their voices heard. Eventually Alinsky was able to transform a real estate issue into a moral issue (Horwitt, 392-393). In addition, while TWO was gaining public attention, the Freedom Riders, traveling mainly through Southern states, came up to Woodlawn, attracting a huge crowd. As a result, von Hoffman, TWO's main organizer, told Alinsky "I think that we should toss out everything we are doing organizationally and work on the premise that this is the moment of the whirlwind, that we are no longer organizing but guiding a social movement" (Horwitt, 401). This decision to latch on to the Civil Rights Movement, however, rather than deepen the organization, left TWO in a relatively undeveloped and undisciplined state. Fortunately, when Ed Chambers took over from von Hoffman in 1962, he was able to re-structure TWO, by, among other things, getting the necessary funding through mandatory dues from the member organizations.

Another famous Alinsky experiment is FIGHT in Rochester. During the early 1960s, many white people in Rochester were shocked by the racial violence and riots in their streets. The black population in Rochester, however, had increased by over 500% in the last decade, with soaring unemployment and a housing shortage as its consequence (Wadhvani 1997). In 1964, a group of clergy invited, or in other words,



paid Alinsky to organize in Rochester;<sup>14</sup> Alinsky famously called Rochester “a Southern plantation transported to the North” and appointed Ed Chambers as his main organizer. Alinsky and Chambers, together with community and religious leaders, established “FIGHT” (Freedom, Integration, God, Honor, Today), and Franklin Florence, a black minister, was asked to be the main leader. One of their main targets was Rochester’s largest employer, KODAK, of which they demanded a training and employment program for the poor black people from the inner-city. FIGHT got broad media attention, as one of its innovative tactics was to acquire KODAK stock to gain access to its annual shareholders’ meeting. FIGHT managed to acquire a tiny fraction of the shares, mobilize massive church and clergy support, and after a couple of years of harsh battles claim victory (for further reading see for example, Wadhvani, 1997; Horwitt 1989).

Other attempts, however, never really took off. During the 1940s and 50s, Alinsky tried to organize Puerto Ricans in Chelsea, New York City. Alinsky, regarded by the funders as an outsider, could not be the lead organizer but rather a “consultant” to the project. Once the Chelsea Community Council was established, issues regarding continued financing, finding talented organizers, and control over the project soon made it very hard to continue. In addition, New York City was a welfare city, spending a huge amount of its budget, in comparison to other cities such as Chicago, on social welfare programs. Funders were not used to donating money to this type of community work instead of to the more classic social work. Finally, within the Chelsea neighborhoods, there were deep divisions among races and classes, precluding the identification of common issues that could bridge those divides.

In sum, under which conditions did the diffusion occur successfully? These examples

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<sup>14</sup> According to Horwitt, clergy from San Francisco, Buffalo, and Kansas City, Missouri also tried to recruit Alinsky at about the same time, but Rochester came up with \$100,000 for a two year contract, and this is among the reasons why Alinsky decided on Rochester (Horwitt, 456-459).

emphasize two important factors: the context in which the organization was embedded as well as the presence of skilled IAF organizers. The projects started to fail when the IAF organizers backed down, or when the context was rather hostile to this type of organizing. In New York City, for example, Alinsky had to stand by the sidelines as a consultant and was not able to take a leadership position. In addition, the city was a welfare city and did not leave any room for a community organization to emerge. On the contrary, cities like St. Paul, Kansas City, L.A., or Rochester were in desperate need of any kind of organizing. But without skillful IAF leadership even some of these projects struggled to survive.<sup>15</sup>

#### *Saul Alinsky versus Modern IAF Organizing*

By the end of the 1960s, organizers Ed Chambers and Richard Harmon convinced Alinsky to set up an IAF training institute, changing the Alinsky-style model of organizing – often resulting in burned-out organizers – into a more sustainable profession. The institute was considered significant in the formation and training of professional organizers, of which there was a real dearth. According to Chambers, transforming the IAF organizing work into a more institutionalized, decent profession was the only way to save Alinsky's insights in the long run (Chambers 2003).

On June 12, 1972, Alinsky died of a heart attack on a street corner in Carmel, California. Ed Chambers took over as national director refining and modernizing the IAF in order to adapt to a changing environment. Ed Chambers had started organizing for Alinsky at the age of 26 in Lackawanna, near Buffalo, NY. Chambers, a Roman Catholic born and raised in rural Iowa, went through theological seminary and nearly became a priest, but instead hitchhiked to Harlem, ending up at a settlement house, the

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<sup>15</sup> While the spread of Alinsky's writings encouraged the diffusion, these did not per se affect the success of diffusion.

Friendship House, and selling Dorothy Day's newspaper, *The Catholic Worker*. In 1957, Chambers was hired by von Hoffman and sent to Lackawanna. After spending two years in this Buffalo suburb setting up the Lackawanna Citizens Federation, Chambers went on to Chicago, organizing the Southwest side. Eventually, during the mid-1960s, he was assigned the lead organizer of FIGHT in Rochester.

Two major differences can be found between Alinsky-style organizing and modern IAF organizing: the degree of engagement and the level of professionalism (Table 2). First, Alinsky was predominantly issue-oriented. He emphasized the people's self interest as a means to identify the issues, and he worked together with religious groups out of pragmatic, rather than vocational, reasons. The hired organizers were supposed to train and coach the volunteer leaders but were then limited to carrying out the will of those leaders. There was a real danger in this, however, that revealed itself with his very first organization, the BYNC. By the 1960s, that organization had democratically decided to transform itself into a white-exclusionist group, doing everything possible to keep the black population out of the community. Similarly, in California, volunteer leaders of the CSO chapters were increasingly middle-class, such as small businessmen and lawyers, and had no interest in using the success of the CSO as the base for organizing poor farm workers. As a consequence, lead organizers Fred Ross and César Chávez decided to leave the IAF organization.

The modern IAF is much more relationally oriented; relationships, rather than issues, are what bring people together. It places a strong emphasis on broad-based organizing, rather than limiting itself to turf-oriented issues, resulting in a significant change in the size and scale of the organizations. Its aim is to build lasting organizations that do not fade away once the issues are resolved. Furthermore, Ed Chambers' theological roots have caused IAF organizing to be grounded in a strong religious commitment. To sustain members' participation, each IAF organization tries

to organize on a platform combining their practical self-interest with a deep commitment to religious traditions and values, or what Mark Warren calls a “theology of organizing” (Warren 2001, 40-72). The organizers themselves are considered organization-builders with a degree of decision-making power as well as accountability towards the volunteer leaders, rather than offstage coaches who blindly carry out the will of those leaders.

Second, Alinsky’s method was to send an organizer to a city and then pull him out after three years and send him to another city.<sup>16</sup> The community organization was supposed to stand on its own feet, guided by leaders of the member institutions rather than outside organizers. In practice, however, these organizations barely survived without close IAF mentoring and had trouble remaining self-sufficient in terms of either funding or personnel (Horwitt 1989). Alinsky’s goal was to create people’s organizations that “determine their own destiny.” But what if the members make democratic decisions that are blatantly wrong in the mind of the organizer? The failure of the BYNC and the missed opportunities of the CSO are clear examples: the BYNC became racially exclusive, and the CSO did not care to fight for the poor farm workers. Today, the IAF vision is to build long lasting organizations. There is a much more systematic and strategic course to it, with a strong focus on training and mentoring. First, on a yearly basis there are intense five and ten-day training seminars offered to clergy and lay volunteers. The IAF organizers worked hard to codify Alinsky’s universal principles of organizing into practical guidelines that communicate what organizing is all about. Among other things, emphasis is put on the dues base system and the “iron rule:” never do for others what they can do for themselves. These practical guidelines are then mixed with organizing stories and

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<sup>16</sup> I use ‘him’ on purpose. Most organizers were men, as Alinsky did not believe women would make good organizers (Horwitt 1989, 288-289).

role-plays to give rookies a sense of IAF organizing. Second, senior organizers will mentor and train the young, rather than just “sending somebody out there and hoping they’re still alive” (interview, IAF national co-director). Young IAF organizers receive substantial mentoring throughout the years, making the profession for many very attractive. Organizing is considered a long-term career, rather than a matter of solving one issue and moving on. It does occasionally happen that organizers are assigned to another IAF chapter, but thanks to the spread of IAF organizations, people no longer have to move geographically as often. For example, in the Maryland area there are now five IAF organizations. Organizers can build experience in another organization without needing to move with their families (interview, IAF national co-director).

Table 2. Key differences between Saul Alinsky’s early IAF and the modern IAF

	Saul Alinsky – Early IAF	Modern IAF
Degree of Engagement	Issue-based Short-term Volunteer leaders lead & organizers follow	Relational Long-term Balanced decision-making between organizers & leaders
Degree of professionalism	Vagabond lifestyle No training; no mentoring	Career path Training; mentoring

In the next chapter, I examine the diffusion of IAF community organizations to Boston, London, and Berlin.

## CHAPTER 4

### DIFFUSION TO BOSTON, LONDON, AND BERLIN

Every organization has to adapt ... there's no point taking the American model ... and trying to plunk it down in England. Some of the basic principles will work, but you have to understand the context in which you're doing it, and you have to do your power analysis, and you have to see what worked in that place may not work here, and you have to think again, ... the same way as the Germans have to think how it will work in Berlin and do it in a different way,... that's the whole point of it.

(Interview with a London Citizens trustee)

When and how has IAF organizing diffused to Boston, London, and Berlin? To what extent does the historical-institutional context, as well as specific dynamic processes, play a role in explaining the emergence of broad-based organizing in these three cities?

During the 1970s-80s, the lead IAF organizers left Chicago and decided to build regional anchors. By that time there were over 100 community organizations in Chicago; many had become too bureaucratic, and a real turf war was taking place. Moreover, the organizations were not having any impact on the city policies (interview, IAF national co-director). As a result, the cadre of IAF organizers – Ernesto Cortez, Arnold Graf, Larry McNeil, and Michael Gecan – split up and went off to Texas, Maryland, California, and New York. In San Antonio, for example, Ernesto Cortez set up Citizens Organized for Public Service (COPS) – arguably one of the most successful IAF affiliates to date – giving a voice to the forgotten working-

class Mexican Americans in the Southwest and establishing moreover an innovative job training program. In Baltimore, Arnie Graf started the IAF organization BUILD (Baltimoreans United in Leadership Development), winning the nation's first living wage bill in 1994. Finally, in New York, IAF's East Brooklyn Congregations (EBC), under Mike Gecan's leadership, built over 2,000 homes for low-income families in formerly devastated parts of Brooklyn, part of the so-called Nehemiah Plan. The successes of these first IAF organizations have been well documented, as they grew organically and spread through the regions (e.g., Gecan 2002; Luce 2007; Osterman 2002; Rooney 1995; Warren 2001).

#### *A brief sketch of my case studies*

The Greater Boston Interfaith Organization (GBIO) was launched in 1996 by the late IAF organizer Jim Drake and long-time Massachusetts' community organizer Lew Finfer. The presence at that time of important clergy in Boston, such as Rev. John Heinemeir and John Doyle, enhanced the diffusion process. Currently, GBIO consists of 53 member institutions, the majority of which are Christian, Jewish, and Muslim faith-based organizations. The organization comprises no more than six paid organizers of a total staff of 11. It is typical for an IAF organization to rely on only a small number of paid organizers while at the same time work with a large pool of active, volunteer leaders of the member institutions. Among GBIO's accomplishments is its role in the passage of Massachusetts' Health Care Reform. During 2005-2006, GBIO was one of the principal members of the coalition "ACT!," Affordable Care Today, ensuring that Massachusetts' universal health care legislation would become

law. Another example is the statewide campaign concerning affordable housing. In 2000, organizing and legislative advocacy led to the creation of a \$100 million Housing Trust Fund. Their main goal, however, to build affordable houses failed. In 2003, GBIO was involved in a nursing home campaign to improve the working and living conditions of (mostly Haitian) nurses, leading to the creation of a bill of rights for the mostly immigrant nurses throughout the state (GBIO 2012). But again, the main goal of unionizing the nurses was not achieved.

London Citizens (LC), launched in 1995 by Neil Jameson, is the oldest and largest broad-based community organizing association in Britain, a unique alliance of over 130 institutions such as religious congregations, schools and student associations, and trade unions. One of LC's greatest achievements is the living wage campaign. Targeting hospitals, banks, and universities, the campaign resulted in huge gains for the city's low-wage workers. Compared to GBIO and DICO, London Citizens is a huge organization with about 30 paid organizers; the organization expanded from the original East London Citizens to West, South, and recently North London Citizens networks. In addition, it is setting up new organizations in other cities across the UK.

Finally, IAF community organizing diffused to Germany through the efforts of Leo Penta, a long-time American IAF organizer. In 1999, "Organizing Schöneeweide" (OS) was created in the southeast borough of Berlin, representing 16 groups consisting of schools, community gardens, a senior center, and a group of "independents" or people who are not affiliated with any group. One of its successes has been to bring the main campus of the University for Applied Sciences to Schöneeweide. In 2008, with over 40 organizations, the community organization "*Wir*



*sind da*” (we are there), encompassing the northwestern inner cities localities of Wedding-Moabit, was created. A third community organization in Neukölln, representing over 30 institutions, held its founding assembly on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of January, 2012. These three community organizations, supported by DICO (Deutsches Institut für Community Organizing) and led by Leo Penta, are still relatively small, with only one paid organizer for each. DICO is expanding to other cities, such as Hamburg in the north and Wuppertal in the west of Germany.

### ***Community Organizing in Boston***

It wasn't until the 1990s that an IAF organization was set up in Boston. According to an IAF organizer, this was partly a matter of capacity: IAF organizers couldn't be everywhere at the same time. So only after the IAF established itself more deeply in the regions of New York, Texas, and Maryland could a decision be made to spread the model further. Other factors, however, played a role as well: Boston's long-time history of organizing and the presence of skilled organizers and clergy.

During the 1970s and 80s Boston was an example of a “progressive city;” rather than answering to the business elite or be run by “political machines,” Boston's City Hall, under mayor Raymond Flynn, focused on redistributive policies and opened up government to wider public participation. Drawing upon the legacy of strong social movements in Boston since the 1960s – a powerful student movement, antiwar movement, and a tenant movement – Flynn's administration was able to create an alternative vision for the city. Key leaders, such as the African American neighborhood activist Mel King, and activists belonging to, for example, the statewide

organizing group Massachusetts Fair Share, had a major influence in the administration.<sup>17</sup> In the early 90s, however, many activists had left the administration, and when Flynn left office in 1993, the new mayor, Thomas Menino, shifted back to a more traditional “growth” agenda, focusing on bankers and developers to attract capital. According to Clavel, “what remained was a milder version of urban populism, complemented by the increasing role of nonprofits” (2010: 36). One of the fastest growing and most important non profit organizations was the Massachusetts Association of Community Development Corporations (MACDC), thanks to the financial support from the state and the city.

During the 1990s, when it seemed the logical next step to organize in a major city in the Northeast, like Boston, IAF leaders argued it could not be done: Boston was still over-organized. Too many cooks in the kitchen! The key person involved in community organizing at that time was Lew Finfer, who had been organizing neighborhoods and communities in Massachusetts since the 1970s and, as director of the Organizing and Leadership Training Center (OLTC), had set up community groups in Brockton, Lynn, and Worcester, all cities around Boston. Finfer’s goal, however, was to start a city-wide group in Boston across denominational, class, and racial lines, something that had never been done before. Early in the 1990s, IAF organizer Jim Drake was sent by IAF national director Ed Chambers to Boston to see what could be done. For about one year, Drake acted as a consultant for the several community organizations around the Boston area.

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<sup>17</sup> Since the 1960s, Mel King has been a political leader for Boston’s black population. King ran for mayor in 1983, losing to Ray Flynn. The elections, however, were considered unique as both candidates ran on pro-neighborhood

In 1994, Drake took the decision to work with Lew Finfer and to set up an IAF organization, later known as the Greater Boston Interfaith Organization. This decision was quite unusual in the history of creating IAF affiliates: the IAF would usually act alone rather than team up with an already existing organization. In this case, however, it made sense to collaborate with Finfer, given his already existing network of relationships throughout the state. Furthermore, the presence in Boston of the Rev. John Heinemeier and Father John Doyle, clergy leaders with previous community organizing experience, was critical as well in triggering the process. Between 1996 and 1998, countless one-on-one meetings were held, “assemblies” across neighborhoods were formed, and finally, in November of 1998, these efforts culminated in a founding Assembly attended by almost 4,000 people (Finfer 2004).

Drake’s background as a union organizer made him rather unusual compared to the other IAF organizers. Jim Drake had worked with César Chávez for the United Farm Workers union for 16 years, had gone on to Mississippi to organize the woodcutters, and was eventually hired early 1980s by Ed Chambers as an IAF organizer. Under IAF, Drake started off in Texas, organizing the Valley Interfaith Organization; was then dispatched to the Bronx, setting up the South Bronx Academy of Leadership and the Bronx Nehemiah housing; and finally, headed to Boston and set up the GBIO.

When Jim Drake unexpectedly died in 2001, IAF national organizers Mike Gecan and later Arnie Graf were sent in to supervise GBIO. The relations, however, between the traditional IAF staff and Lew Finfer went sour and, as a consequence,

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platforms, “out-lefting” each other (Clavel: 58). During my interviews, GBIO leaders would still refer to King as a

Finfer was pressured to leave the organization in 2002. Finfer is still the director of the OLTC, which became affiliated with the PICO national network of community organizations. According to a former GBIO member, “Lew was from outside the [IAF] network and really from a whole different organizing methodology. But he’s been around Boston forever and had a lot of relationships and everybody knew Lew and liked Lew. And so they [Jim Drake and Lew Finfer] were a really good team and Jim [Drake] was also, you know, he was IAF but he was not orthodox IAF.”

GBIO’s current lead organizer, Sheri Andes, started off as an organizer for Lew Finfer in Brockton during the mid-1990s. During her time in Brockton, she built up a relationship with the IAF and decided to make a career within that network. According to Andes, “The opportunity to be mentored by people who had done this kind of work for 20 years, the track record that IAF had in making change, the intellectual stimulation I found from being around other IAF organizers, I would say those were the factors that really attracted me.” By the end of the 1990s, Andes had joined the IAF staff and been dispatched to Chicago for about four years to help build a new IAF organization. In 2000, she came back to Boston and worked as an organizer for the GBIO under Lew Finfer and Jim Drake. Eventually, in 2005, Andes became GBIO’s lead organizer.

In sum, an opening in the institutional context as well as the strategic capacities of the founder and key organizers encouraged the diffusion of IAF organizing to Boston. Boston had such a strong organizing culture that the area seemed oversaturated. IAF organizers decided therefore to set up a new IAF

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key figure trying to unite people across neighborhood and race lines.

organization only when the populist movements of the 1970s and 80s began to dwindle. In addition, in the early 1980s, Jim Drake, after almost two decades of working as a union organizer, was recruited by Ed Chambers, then national director of the IAF. Drake began community organizing in Texas, then went off to the Bronx, and finally, in the mid-90s, ended up in Boston, setting up the GBIO. The presence of long-time Massachusetts organizer Lew Finfer, as well as clergy leaders with previous community organizing experience, was critical during this founding process. Eventually, in 1998, their synergistic efforts culminated in GBIO's founding assembly.

### ***Community Organizing in the UK***

In Britain, broad-based organizing didn't fully develop until the late 1980s. If we go back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the British trade unions were based in the communities, playing critical roles in shaping those communities. Communities were "places in which people could walk to and from work, ... places where work, home, leisure, industrial relations, local government and home-town consciousness were inextricably mixed together" (Hobsbawm, 1987: 40). The urban and industrial areas displayed a distinct working-class culture, and trade councils were established in all the major towns and cities. In 1868, activists of the trade unions, grounded in local communities, formed the Trade Union Congress (TUC). This period of "community-based trade unionism" evolved into a "representational community unionism" during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the Labour Party was formed in 1901 (Wills and Simms 2004). The trade unions, through the Labour Party, were represented in local and national

government, working on issues of public policy and the redistribution of wealth. The trade unions were able to shape community life directly through worker representation or indirectly through the political power of the Labour Party. Historically, the labor struggles in Britain, such as the London Match-girls' strike of 1888<sup>18</sup>, the London Great Dock Strike of 1889<sup>19</sup> and the Poplar Council revolt in the 1920s<sup>20</sup>, promoting workplace-based solidarity and community support, were key events leading to the first Labour Party majority in the House of Commons in 1945 (Weinbren 1998). Labour-controlled councils, a new form of local governance, mushroomed.

During the 1960s and 70s, although it was a period of remarkable social movement activism, 'no mass community ... developed' (Twelvetrees, 2002: 6). According to Miller (2001), this failure was linked to the institutionalization and/or bureaucratization of community organization. Lowe (1986) argues that the local, grassroots mobilizations became bureaucratized either once they had met their demands or when the campaigns turned into organizations. Furthermore, in the 1970s, the trade unions' legitimacy greatly weakened: the transformation of the economy, such as the de-industrialization and rise of global competition, and eventually, in 1979, the electoral victory of the Conservative Party, led by Margaret Thatcher, were part of the blame. And although the Labour Party tried to use its control of the local councils, its struggles failed, most spectacularly in London where Thatcher abolished the

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<sup>18</sup> Due to poor working conditions at the Bryant & May's match factory in Bow, London, women and teenage girls, led by socialist activist Annie Besant, went on strike. This led to the establishment of the first trade union for women in Britain.

<sup>19</sup> The dock workers, mainly unskilled, poorly-paid and casual workers, of the port of London went on strike. This resulted into a strong trade union among the dock workers.

<sup>20</sup> During the 1920s, in Poplar, one of the poorest neighborhoods in London, a major tax protest took place. This revolt received wide support from the general public as well as from the trade unions.

Greater London Council in 1986 (Livingstone 1988).<sup>21</sup>

The arrival of community organizing in Britain during the 1980s was thus energized by several factors. First, Thatcherism dismantled the safety nets of the welfare state, eroding the representation of the working people. The policies of the New Right were directed towards economic regeneration at the expense of community or social welfare. Second, the Church of England, acknowledging that it was failing as an institution to support the neighborhoods, became a major initiator of community organizing projects. Its “Faith in the City” report documented the political and economic deterioration of the urban areas, leading to the formation of the Church Urban Fund. The main task of this fund was to assign resources to city-wide broad-based to support projects responding to the decline of these urban areas and to the powerlessness that people felt.

Finally, recognizing the seriousness of the situation, social workers, Neil Jameson and Alan Twelvetrees, and senior clergy were critical in the LC’s creation. Jameson had read Saul Alinsky’s work and decided to go to the US, attending the IAF training course to learn more about community organizing. Even though the American IAF organizers were not interested in hearing Jameson’s plans to implement a similar model in the UK – he was granted a mere ten minutes with one of the national directors – Jameson decided to go back to the UK and start a similar organization. It became clear that the American model of building power and doing politics through the community was not only viable but also necessary. In 1989, the Citizens

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<sup>21</sup> Not all the local councils were abolished, but they were combined with other councils. The Conservative Party had pure political motives, since by doing so, they robbed the more radical inner-city councils of much of their power.

Organising Foundation (COF) was launched by Anglican clergy and Community practitioners such as Neil Jameson and Alan Twelvetrees with the goal of coordinating and promoting community organizing projects. In 1990, Neil Jameson formed the first broad-based organization, Communities Organized for a Greater Bristol (COGB).

Neil Jameson, the founder and lead organizer of Telco has been an active agent in adopting the practice of IAF organizing in the UK. According to *The Guardian* survey of 2003, Jameson is one of the 100 most ‘Influential Public Servants’. He has extensive experience in community organizing, starting in Bristol and later London. Jameson’s leadership, thanks to his past experience and his personal contacts with important clergy and funders, is a major factor in London Citizens emergence and success.

Thus, the political opportunity structure – the dwindling of the labor movement and Thatcherism – created an opening for LC to emerge. In addition, the background and experience of Neil Jameson enhanced the actual organizational formation.

### ***Community Organizing in Germany***

In his classic study *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (Community and Society), the German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies (1887) juxtaposes two social systems, the Community (*Gemeinschaft*), an “organic” system based on ties of kinship, communal ownership and custom, versus Society (*Gesellschaft*), a “mechanical” system based on individual identity, self-interest, and commercial contracts. While treated as binary opposites, the two co-exist and interact in the “real” world. Tönnies’ interpretation of the concept “community,” however, is much broader than the Anglo-Saxon meaning



of “community” in community organizing, complicating its daily use in Germany. Furthermore, since the term *Gemeinschaft* was too closely related to the infamous *Volksgemeinschaft*, used by the Nazi Party as propaganda for German national identity, it had largely gone out of use.

While the term “community organizing” has gained familiarity since former community organizer Barack Obama became president of the United States, it was quite a foreign concept on German soil and rather hard to translate. Some might refer to *Gemeinwesenarbeit*, or community work, while others might employ *Bürgerinitiative*, or citizens group, when rendering the English term. Both German concepts, however, have quite different roots and might explain different things; while the former points towards professionalized social work, the latter is more in line with what we might call a social movement.

Three “waves of reception” of community organizing in a German context can be identified (Szynka 2002). First, after World War II, the profession of social worker became very important in helping to reconstruct the educational and social system within German society. *Gemeinwesenarbeit* – community work – became one subdiscipline under the study of social work but was often discredited as an unnecessary American model. It wasn’t until the late 1960s or early 1970s, however, that Alinsky’s books were translated and brought to Germany, representing the second wave. These books were published by Burckhardtshaus, one of the most important training centers for community workers. In addition, German scholars conducted extensive research on community organizing in the U.S. and developed it further as a field of study (C.W. Müller 1971; Karas and Hinte 1978; Oelschlägel 1982). Germany

was still a divided country under the cold war regime, but political awareness was growing, and West Germany saw the rise of the student movement, the peace movement, and the ecology movement. Community work, however, became institutionalized under municipal programs and was declared dead (Szynska 2002).

The third wave started in the early 1990s, when a group of scholars from Freiburg, in the south of Germany, undertook a comparative study of community organizing in the US and Germany, leading to the publication of the book *Let's Organise!: Gemeinwesenarbeit und Community Organization im Vergleich*. While intellectually they were very strong and had a deep understanding of the theory and works of Saul Alinsky, they did not have the practice. As one of the authors states, "We did an internship [in Germany], but that was watered down. We wanted to know how it could be done right. In Germany it was not as political, not as changing. I felt compelled by the theory, so we went to Chicago and it was totally different." The authors visited different cities in the US, meeting numerous community organizers during their journey. According to one of the scholars, "the IAF was seen as the 'Mercedes-Benz' of the [community] organizations, they had it more together...but when we asked Ed Chambers to come to Germany to give a training, he said we should have our act together; there was this arrogance, but he was right." Upon their return, they invited long-time US organizer Ed Shurna, whom they had met in Chicago, to come to Frankfurt and teach an organizing seminar. Shurna immediately asked Don Elmer, a former disciple of Alinsky, to come along. These two experienced organizers went to Germany and taught a seminar on the principles of community organizing, which eventually led to the creation of FOCO (Forum of Community

Organizing). In the mid-1990s, FOCO signed a contract with the IAF and with organizer Prof. Leo Penta. After about a year, however, the two organizations decided to go their own ways.

Penta, a professor and Catholic priest, has a long history of IAF organizing in the US, starting with the East Brooklyn Congregations (EBC). In 1978, Penta had been ordained a Catholic priest and sent to a parish in East New York. With one of the highest crime rates in the country, and in the middle of the crack epidemic, this part of Brooklyn was decried as an ungovernable wasteland. “It was a survival issue,” Penta tells me. Rather than operate an “emergency room” for the people who were beaten up, it made sense to try to change things systematically by going to the roots of the problem. The churches in East Brooklyn began to organize, and IAF organizer Ed Chambers came in on a regular basis. Eventually, the churches decided to go with the IAF model, formed a “sponsoring committee,” and built up the organization, with Penta and the Rev. John Heinemeir as co-chairs. Consisting of about 36 churches, the EBC worked on issues such as public safety and education and was mainly a poor and working-class organization. Their biggest victory was the building of over 2000 affordable homes, the Nehemiah houses.

Between 1982 and 1985, Penta pursued his doctorate in philosophy in the war-torn city of Berlin. Heavily influenced by the work of the German-Jewish political theorist Hannah Arendt, he learned how to put her ideas, such as the notion of power, into praxis. In 1996, Penta returned to a unified Berlin and decided to start organizing. He began experimenting with the idea of IAF organizing in the borough of Neukölln. Located in the southeast of Berlin, part of the borough was engaged in a new

countrywide welfare program, “Soziale Stadt” or “Socially Integrative City:” an intervention strategy to counter the growing social segregation in disadvantaged neighborhoods. The idea was to create democratic structures by electing local people to a “Quartiersmanagement,” or neighborhood management.<sup>22</sup> Each neighborhood receives a certain amount of money from the city and the state and must then democratically decide which projects to take on. Penta decided to get on board with Neukölln’s neighborhood management, but this experience did not work out. Penta soon realized the limitations imposed when taking government money and being part of a state-like structure; indeed, “Organizing is something you have to do independently.”

Next, Penta went to Schöneeweide, another southeastern borough of Berlin that was struggling. Public life had come to a standstill, and the unemployment rate was at an all-time high. Schöneeweide used to be a very strong industrial municipality. Ever since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, East Berlin factories such as AEG (General electricity company) and an electrical power plant had supported a bustling district of just under 30,000 people: busy traffic in the streets, lively bars and restaurants, and people proud of being part of the neighborhood. This all came to an abrupt end. Once the Wall came down, many companies moved to the West, and the population declined by about half, leaving an image of empty buildings with broken windows behind.

In sum, the IAF principles of community organizing were virtually unknown in Germany. The diffusion was therefore encouraged by the strategic capacities of the

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<sup>22</sup> In some cities in Germany during the 1990s, a more institutionalized form of public participation was introduced. These “neighborhood managements” receive funding from the city and the state and were set up to promote

founder as well as an opening in the institutional context. Prof. Leo Penta, an American IAF organizer, decided to come to Germany and set up IAF organizations, tailoring it to the needs of the local communities. Penta first organized in Brooklyn and then decided to implement a similar model in Berlin. In Berlin, once the Wall came down, after a period of excitement, hope was replaced by fear as the economy in the former East collapsed. The movements from the 1960s and 70s in West Germany were spent, and during the 1990s, in a unified country, new government-tied structures such as “neighborhood managements” were put in place, leaving place for a new community organization to be created.

### ***Conclusion***

In this chapter I described how and when the IAF organizations were formed in Boston, London, and Berlin. While in each case the founders and organizers were confronted with different challenges, there are important underlying similarities that should not be overlooked. The institutional context, as well as the strategic capacities of the founders, provide some clarity (Table 3). First, an opening in the institutional context allowed the organizations to emerge. This differs from the “classic” political opportunity structure theory, in that for each case the political context had actually become quite hostile when the organizations emerged. At the same time, the present forms of civic engagement started to dwindle or prove ineffective and space was carved out for the IAF organizations to emerge. Arguably, the late arrival of these IAF organizations is due to the fact that the “community organizing space” was already

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citizens’ engagement in socially “disintegrated” neighborhoods. They offer structural solutions to local problems,

filled by the labor movement or social movements, but once these movements lost some of their energy, an opening was created for the new organizations to emerge. Thus, shifts in the political settings led to a reconfiguration of the civic engagement sphere.

Secondly, while the organizations were able to carve out a niche for themselves, this would not have been possible without the explicit strategies of the organizers to diffuse this model across different settings.

Table 3. Emergence IAF organizations in Boston, London, and Berlin

	Boston	London	Berlin
Political Opportunity Structure	Transition from progressive mayor to machine politics; dwindling populist movements	Thatcherism; dwindling labor movement	After hope from reunification: desperation; government-tied structures put in place
Strategic Capacity (dependent on biography, network, and organizational context)	Jim Drake: union and community organizer; builds on the presence of skilled clergy and long-time community organizer Lew Finfer	Neil Jameson: social worker; took IAF training in the US; received critical support from clergy in England	Leo Penta: Catholic priest; was an IAF organizer in New York; pursues doctoral degree in Berlin; sets up similar IAF organization there

The next chapters will cover each case study in depth, followed by a comparison of the cases.

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such as cleaning up the streets or investing money in the neighborhood school.

## CHAPTER 5

### ORGANIZING IN BOSTON: STICKING TO THE MISSION

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of May, 2010, more than 1,100 Muslims attended a public action at a mosque in Roxbury, Boston. The 68,000 square foot mosque is a critical member of the Greater Boston Interfaith Organization (GBIO). Massachusetts' Governor, Deval Patrick, was invited to the mosque and asked to give "yes" or "no" answers on a range of issues. In the aftermath of this action, however, then Massachusetts' treasurer, Tim Cahill, released a press statement accusing the governor of "pandering to special interest groups" saying that "Governor Patrick should stop playing politics with terrorism and focus on protecting all the citizens of this Commonwealth."<sup>23</sup> As one of GBIO's member institutions was attacked and labeled as a special interest group, a handful of GBIO's organizers and leaders got on the phone and discussed how they should react. GBIO has had a strong relationship with Governor Patrick for a long time, but the organization also worked closely with then treasurer Cahill. They decided, however, to hold Treasurer Cahill accountable, meet with him in private, and have a public press conference. GBIO showed once again its mobilization capacity: within the span of 24 hours, 25 Jewish, Christian, and Muslim leaders had sat down with Cahill and over 400 Muslims had attended the press conference.

The Greater Boston Interfaith Organization is not, however, your typical successful organization. From its inception, GBIO has encountered a rough pathway:

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<sup>23</sup> Press Release Tim Cahill. May 27, 2010.  
<http://www.masscouncilofchurches.org/Cahill%20Press%20Release.pdf>

important campaigns have failed and internal challenges have caused near-to-death rifts within the organization. But even though GBIO has lost members over time, the organization manages not just to survive, but also to maintain a broad, active grassroots base. In crucial moments like the one described above, the organization is able to mobilize hundreds of members overnight. How can I explain its sustained mobilization capacity?

In this chapter, I illustrate the context in which the organization is embedded as well as the organization's intentional development of a culture of commitment and accountability. Furthermore, when the organization begins to drift away from its original goal of mobilizing members, I show how corrective mechanisms – in the form of reflection and deliberation between the members and organizers – come into play that push the organization back in the right direction.

### ***Allies and Enemies in Boston***

The context structure, or, the organization's access to policymakers, its relationships with important allies, and the presence of potential “enemies” help in part to explain how GBIO has been able to remain dynamic, organize its members, without deflecting from its original mission.

Founded by the English Puritans in 1630, and soon thereafter considered a gateway for Irish, German, and Italian immigrants, Boston has always been one of the most diverse cities in the United States. According to the US Census bureau (2008), Boston is only the 21<sup>st</sup> largest city in the US, while having the sixth largest proportion



of foreign-born residents.<sup>24</sup> Since the 1970s, however, the composition of the immigrant population has changed dramatically. Rather than from Europe, the majority comes from Latin America and Asia.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, due to immigration patterns, Boston has always had a strong Roman Catholic culture. The 2008 American Religious Identification Survey, however, showed a dramatic decline in the Catholic population in Massachusetts from 54% in 1990 to 39% in 2008.<sup>26</sup> The reason, according to the researchers, might be found in the general secularization of American society, as well as the sexual abuse scandal at the turn of the millennium.<sup>27</sup>

In terms of racial and ethnic diversity, GBIO's membership roughly reflects the demographics of the area: 40% of the member institutions are mainly White, 27% mainly Black/African American, 10% mixed in race and ethnicity, and 3% Hispanic (McClenahan 2010). In terms of religious diversity, GBIO is unique among IAF affiliates. Although at its founding, GBIO had considerable Catholic support, Jewish and Protestant participation grew stronger over time. On the one hand, GBIO has been intentionally strengthening Jewish and Black/African American membership by hiring moreover young organizers across the religious denominations. On the other hand, the internal crisis caused by the sexual abuse scandals led many Catholic congregations to drop out of GBIO (interview Catholic member).

The geographical space in Boston offers contrast. On the one hand, it is seen as

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<sup>24</sup> The cities with a larger proportion of foreign-born population are Los Angeles, San Jose, New York, San Francisco, and Houston.

([http://www.cityofboston.gov/Images/Documents/BRA%20Briefing%20Book%20Demographic\\_tcm3-16615.pdf](http://www.cityofboston.gov/Images/Documents/BRA%20Briefing%20Book%20Demographic_tcm3-16615.pdf))

<sup>25</sup> According to the American Community Survey the largest immigrant groups come from China, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Vietnam, El Salvador, Cape Verde, Colombia, Jamaica, Brazil and Mexico (2005-2007).

<sup>26</sup> [http://www.americanreligionsurvey-aris.org/reports/ARIS\\_Report\\_2008.pdf](http://www.americanreligionsurvey-aris.org/reports/ARIS_Report_2008.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> *Boston Globe*. March 9, 2009. "Number of N.E. Catholics Tumbles" by Michael Paulson.

a very compact city that you can get your arms around. In comparison to Chicago, for example, the territory is not huge. On the other hand, Boston is a neighborhood oriented city, historically divided across class and racial lines. The school busing crisis of the 1970s only exacerbated these divisions, pitting neighborhoods against each other.<sup>28</sup> GBIO was unique in its intent to organize on a metropolitan level. According to Father John Doyle, GBIO founder Jim Drake would state “how to make greater Boston greater” as one of his main goals (interview John Doyle). Given Boston’s historic divisions, it was a first attempt to bring people together across denominational, racial, and class lines. This innovative vision of creating a “greater Boston,” transcending spatial and socio-economic boundaries, appealed to many (interview GBIO member).

In terms of access to the administration, GBIO has a very close relationship with the current Massachusetts Governor, Deval Patrick. This positive relationship began very early and has grown only stronger over time. In 2006, when GBIO held a gubernatorial action, inviting all the candidates for governor, Patrick was the only one who showed up. According to GBIO’s lead organizer, Patrick was impressed when he saw the power of some 1,200 people and realized the concerns they had in common. While he was campaigning for office, GBIO advised him on healthcare issues, and although the law hadn’t passed yet, Patrick liked it and made it part of his platform. In addition, two key clergy leaders, one Jewish and the other Christian, have maintained close relationships with the governor, guaranteeing GBIO good access to his

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<sup>28</sup> On June 21, 1974, Federal Judge Arthur Garrity issued an order to desegregate Boston’s schools. Through busing, children from the all-black Roxbury neighborhood would be integrated with the all-white South Boston

administration.

Whereas the relationship with the governor of Massachusetts is considered positive, GBIO experienced quite a rocky start with Boston's "lifelong" mayor, Thomas Menino.<sup>29</sup> An IAF leader recalls, "we used to have a very rotten relationship with Mayor Menino. He called us the Greater Boston *Idiots* Organization". In 2001, GBIO started an ambitious campaign to bring the Nehemiah<sup>30</sup> strategy of affordable housing from Brooklyn to the Boston area. IAF leaders had a vision of replicating that model in Boston, without, however, fully considering the city's geographic and political space. GBIO was still relatively young as an organization and, according to the lead organizer, had not done a good internal power analysis before entering this arena: first, Boston does not have the amount of available land that New York has; in addition, Boston has a long standing tradition of Community Development Corporations (CDCs) focusing on the precise issue of affordable housing. The CDCs and the Mayor considered the Nehemiah strategy a model from New York infiltrating into the Boston context and creating unnecessary competition. Furthermore, GBIO had the support neither of the targeted neighborhood (Mattapan), nor the other key political actors, such as state senators, so it decided to pull out of the process (Harvard Business School Publishing, 2004) .

The failure of the Nehemiah campaign brought important lessons. Rather than targeting the mayor in an adversarial way, GBIO began to build a relationship with

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high schools. The desegregation by busing, although aimed at creating equality, brought enormous controversy, with violent anti-busing demonstrations still vivid in the memories of many.

<sup>29</sup> Thomas Menino has been mayor of Boston since 1993, for five consecutive terms, taking over from "city hall activist", Raymond Flynn.

him, working on issues that were also part of his agenda, such as better healthcare for the residents of Boston. GBIO also started to work with other power players, such as Citizens Bank, and to engage in state-wide action on Healthcare reform. According to GBIO's lead organizer, the mayor began to hear from other key leaders that GBIO was a reasonable and productive organization. Today, as a result of continuing conversation and close relationships with key clergy, the mayor is regularly attending GBIO actions, recognizing the organization as an important power player in the greater Boston area.

In terms of alliance structure, GBIO has been able to tap into the availability of Boston's intellectual capital. For example, the Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) and Harvard University have been important. The JCRC of greater Boston, an agency that aims to pursue social justice through advocacy, organizing, service, and partnerships, has been both a member in its own right as well as a major force in encouraging synagogues to join GBIO. Certain organizers have been bridge builders between the JCRC and the GBIO, hired half time by JCRC and half by GBIO. In addition, a tremendous amount of intellectual wealth is located in Boston. Top universities such as Harvard have pulled people from places like New York City to study, with some remaining after college. For example, the community oriented Harvard Divinity School, as well as classes by the well-known union and community organizer Prof. Marshall Ganz, have had an important impact on Boston's organizing environment and on GBIO. The organization's most recently hired organizer came

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<sup>30</sup> Since the 1980s, the East Brooklyn Congregations, an IAF affiliate in New York, has built 2,900 new houses as part of their 'Nehemiah' housing campaign. Nehemiah (of the Old Testament) was the key figure in rebuilding Jerusalem.

through Marshall Ganz's class on community organizing.

Finally, since community organizations are almost by nature turf war oriented, not only their allies, but potential enemies as well must be considered. According to many of the interviewees, Boston has a very strong charity or social justice culture, resulting in the culmination of thousands of nonprofit organizations across the city, competing for funding and members. The database Guidestar, for example, lists over 10,000 nonprofits in the greater Boston area. In addition, there is a plethora of Community Development Corporations in Boston; the Massachusetts Association for Community Development Corporations (MACDC), a coalition of over 80 member organizations focusing on affordable housing, is one of the biggest players. Even though there are significant differences between the CDCs and GBIO<sup>31</sup>, there has been a certain degree of competition between them. At GBIO's start, many CDCs were part of the organization. Some tensions, however, during the Nehemiah campaign came to the forefront: many of those CDCs were deeply involved into community development but were doing it in a different way. In addition, the CDCs became members of GBIO under Jim Drake's leadership. During that period, the organization was more like a social movement and brought in a wider variety of organizations than the IAF had traditionally attempted. Once the leadership shifted, however, most CDCs drifted away and the organization became less of a social movement organization and more of a traditional IAF organization.

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<sup>31</sup> The CDCs have a different funding mechanism, as most of their resources come from the city, the state, private businesses, or foundations. GBIO, however, does not accept government money and gets funded through membership dues or foundations. As a consequence, only a few CDCs engage in the type of organizing GBIO does, as they are less likely to target the city or the state (interview MACDC organizer). CDCs are moreover mainly single-issue organizations, focusing on economic development through housing. GBIO is a multi-issue organization, in which housing is not the central mission.

Furthermore, what if we look at similar congregation-based community organizations in Massachusetts? In the US there are at least four national networks of congregation-based community organizing – the IAF, PICO national network, DART (Direct Action and Research Training Center), and Gamaliel – which virtually never collaborate. The IAF is the oldest, and the founders of the other three had ties with IAF or with Saul Alinsky before starting up. Of the four national networks, PICO has a presence in Massachusetts. Three of the four PICO affiliates are located not in Boston but in other counties (Lynn, Brockton, and Framingham) and the fourth one is in Boston, in Dorchester. Even though GBIO is spread out over the greater Boston area and created its own space “to do its thing,” there is a sense of constant competition between the organizations. As one of the Jewish leaders mentioned,

It’s a pain in the neck because you could have in one community...an area where it’s PICO and an area that is IAF. The Jews don’t care, they just want to work... so one Rabbi says to another Rabbi are you in this? So you know, I think 20 years from now some of these differences need to disappear. I understand why now, for turf reasons or politics, but it’s hard, it makes it challenging. And it’s not so simple to say ‘oh they should work together for a variety of reasons’ that just isn’t going to happen. It would be like, you know, why [aren’t the] AFL-CIO, Unite-HERE and SEIU working together? Well, that’s hard.

In sum, GBIO’s direct access to city and state authorities and its strong alliance structure have strengthened GBIO’s position as an important power player within the greater Boston area. At the same time, however, the organization faces competition from other non-profit organizations as well as from similar congregation-based networks that have weakened its potential to grow over time.

### *Creating a culture of commitment and accountability*

Following Pettigrew (1979), who writes that the concept of organizational culture, “[a] system of ... publicly and collectively accepted meanings operating for a given group at a given time” (574), must be examined across its many dimensions, I will show how the use of rituals, faith-based identity, and language are fundamental in creating GBIO’s culture of commitment and accountability. This culture, resulting in intense feelings of member commitment and ownership, is what impels members to act (Lawler 2001; Lawler, Thye and Yoon, 2009).

Rituals provide a “shared experience of belonging and express and reinforce what is valued” (Pettigrew, 576). Within GBIO, the one-to-one meeting, storytelling, and roll-call, are important rituals, delineating the social relationships. First, the one-to-one meeting is the fundamental building block of every IAF organization. A one-to-one is a face-to-face conversation between a GBIO organizer and a member with the aim of exploring or strengthening the ties between the community organization and the particular institution. The aim of these conversations is to build a relationship, to understand the other person’s reasons and motivations, and to build trust. These relational meetings are considered the backbone of the organizations and vital for all the member communities. As an organizer explains,

One of the critiques people make is they say, ‘that 30 minute thing [one-to-one meeting] that you people do, it’s so artificial, that’s not how it should work, relationships should be organic and natural’. Yes, in the world it should be, in the ideal situation it happens naturally on it’s own. In our culture...it doesn’t...It takes a little work. And this [IAF organizing] has created a context for that work to happen.

Another important practice is storytelling (see, for example, Ganz 2010).

Stories are a significant part of every training, action, or delegate assembly, fueling anger as well as hope among the participants and reinforcing the urge to act. Although the stories come from the members' personal lives, the organizers will often coach them before the event and go over the lines, pressing them to make the details very specific and asking them "to speak from the gut." The stories are powerful tools, allowing members to be experts, since they have "lived" the experiences. As one IAF leader states, "a story makes something human," and its aim is to move from private pain to public action. GBIO does not want to be portrayed as a professional advocacy organization, talking *for* the poor or uninsured. But GBIO *is* those families, which through the telling of their personal stories bring an authentic voice to the table.

During a GBIO event, "From Debt to Assets," that I attended, Julia told her story. She came to the front of the room with a large empty water bottle. For a long time, she told her audience, this bottle represented her savings. It was empty. She told us how she cried at night, not knowing how to put her children into school. Now, however, thanks to GBIO's financial education program, she opened, for the first time, a savings account, has realistic goals, and doesn't feel like a failure anymore. Her personal testimony was emotional but encouraging, showing how she had been able to change what had seemed a hopeless situation. This story told us much more about power than any organizer's speech ever could.

Finally, before every action, leaders from the member institutions will write down the precise number of people they can turn out. According to one GBIO organizer, setting realistic quotas – rather than broad goals – enhances feelings of achievement, accountability, and concrete commitment. This act is ritualized in the



form of a “roll-call,” emphasizing its value. Members go on stage and publicly announce how many people they will bring to the next event. Usually, within each institution, one or two people will take the lead to make sure that the number is in fact an attainable target. As one leader explains, “What we are accountable for is not our inputs, it’s our outputs. So when I work with this team, it’s not how many calls did you make, it’s how many people committed to come.”

The organizational culture is fostered, as well, by the presence of a strong faith-based identity. Tajfel defines social identity as “the individual’s knowledge that he belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him of this group membership” (Tajfel, 1972: 292). Studies have shown that a strong feeling of social identity with the group will increase the probability of social action and collective protest (Brewer and Silver, 2001; Stürmer and Simon, 2004). The majority of GBIO’s member institutions are faith-based groups, institutions built around certain sets of religious values.

On the one hand, being an interfaith organization has meant that the members agree to disagree on certain issues, which then cannot be taken up by GBIO. For example, in 2003, a controversy surrounding the legalization of same-sex marriage unfolded in Massachusetts, almost causing a rift within the organization.<sup>32</sup> Other issues, such as the Israel-Palestine question, remain very sensitive as well and will never become GBIO’s focal point.

On the other hand, their faith-based identity has pushed the members to act. During campaigns, the congregational leaders will often refer to their sacred texts to

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<sup>32</sup> For more details, see the dissertation of Ann McClenahan (2010).

re-affirm what they stand for, legitimizing and reinforcing their engagement. In meetings regarding GBIO's anti-usury campaign, for example, in which the organization targeted big banks to get them to lower their interest rates, religious leaders would refer to the Bible, the Torah, or the Quran, explaining to their members that their scripture states that usury is wrong, or that taking advantage of the vulnerable by charging exorbitant interest rates is unacceptable. According to one GBIO organizer, "It was incredible to see the reaction of people who were like, oh yeah, that seems like a legitimate argument to me, that makes sense, that grounds it for me."

Finally, language, or the system of vocal signs (Berger and Luckmann, 1966), is an important factor in cultivating GBIO's culture of commitment and accountability. These processes of typification provide "seed beds for human action" (Pettigrew: 575). Like every IAF affiliate, GBIO puts great emphasis on member development and training. During these sessions, IAF organizers will focus on key concepts that determine the organization's ethos. The naming and conceptualization of the terms "power," "leadership," and "organizing" are at the core of the sessions and are the means of combining the people's deep religious values with a strategic pragmatism.

Bringing the message of power, however, is hard work. At first, many members feel uncomfortable with the notion of power, feeling this word has negative connotations. During training sessions, at least one whole day is devoted to explaining the difference between "power over" and "power with," and the importance of making a "power analysis" of every situation. Recognizing the importance of power and

learning how to do a power analysis shows the amount of thoughtful strategy and planning that goes into organizing.

Another concept instrumental to the organization's well-being is that of "leadership," strongly emphasizing that leaders are not born but made. In IAF organizations, the organizers are part of the paid staff, whereas the "leaders" are volunteer members from the member institutions. As Nicholas von Hoffman, an Alinsky disciple, wrote in the 1960s, "organizers train leaders and leaders organize" (1965). The ideal is thus for leaders to take control and ownership of the actions and campaigns. It remains a challenge for IAF, however, not to become too organizer-driven and to make sure the leaders maintain sufficient ownership (Osterman 2002). Relational meetings and training are the main tools to identify potential leaders, and often when an action is planned, IAF organizers will give "young" leaders the chance to take on an important role, for example, chairing a session, as a way to develop their leadership skills.

In addition, a philosophy of shared leadership makes member engagement and commitment more sustainable. According to one IAF leader,

It is not a life sentence,...when my father-in-law passed away, I was kind of a couple of months engaged with that, ...people said 'what can I do for you?' and I said get petitions signed, because I do not have time to do it and that would really make me feel better... And people did. It helps, it feels like it is not all on any one person's shoulder and yet you can bite off as much as you can chew.

Finally, IAF puts great emphasis on the meaning of the term "organizing." An important rule of thumb is that "organizing is reorganizing and disorganizing." There is a need to continuously keep rebuilding the organization; otherwise there is a danger

that the institutions will get solidified, locked-in and exclusive (interview national IAF director). To enhance this dynamic organizing process, IAF affiliates usually don't have large staffs, relying almost completely on voluntary leaders. Leaders need to keep meeting new people and developing new people; in other words, the work is never done. According to one organizer,

We started organizing five years ago; now we're getting thin again. They [the leaders] have to go back to the house meetings again and build their base again, go back to their roots. And it's important for me to help them, not view that as a failure but actually view that as a success; they've gone through this whole cycle now, it's time to start at that stage over again.

As a result, although from the outside there is not much noticeable change, internally there is a constant awareness of renewal; new relationships develop, new institutions are recruited and member institutions that have become less engaged are being 're-recruited'; and the flexible leadership positions allow new people to emerge. In training sessions, organizers and leaders emphasize that maintaining a dynamic and vital organization is challenging and extremely labor intensive. But when the organizers clearly articulate what organizing is and what it is not, and break the organizing process down into digestible pieces, members acquire a sense of practicality; they are involved in the different steps, develop a feeling of ownership and are prone to mobilize in actions or campaigns.

In sum, rituals, a faith-based collective identity, and the use of a certain language have created a culture of commitment and accountability, encouraging the members to act. In this final section, I show how corrective mechanisms come into play when the organization starts to drift away from its original mission.

### *Corrective mechanisms*

Kriesi (1996) argues that as a social movement organization ages, it is likely to undergo one of the following processes of goal transformation. Processes of institutionalization (becoming a party group), commercialization (a service provider), or involution (a club or voluntary group) will automatically occur, and member mobilization will dwindle. According to Kriesi, when trying to understand the direction of the goal transformation, one must consider the organization's sources of revenue. The smaller the share of membership dues, the greater the autonomy the organization will have with respect to its members, and thus the greater the likelihood that the goals do not reflect the concerns of the members. In addition, the greater its share of public subsidies, the more the organization will become entrenched in the established interest systems.

In 2009, GBIO's operating budget was just under \$800,000; about 58% came from foundation grants, 20% from corporate donations, 20% from membership dues, and 2% from individual donations (internal documentation GBIO). Furthermore, IAF affiliates, as a principle, do not take any money directly from government agencies, precisely to avoid being co-opted.

Kriesi adds, however, that these structural data explain the goal transformation only to a limited extent. In this section I will demonstrate how GBIO has been tempted towards commercialization and involution, but when the pendulum has swung too much in one direction, corrective mechanisms have brought the organization back into place.

### *Avoiding commercialization*

In 2005, GBIO launched “Moving from Debt to Assets,” a financial education program for individuals from GBIO’s member institutions. Each course consists of four components: classes in financial education, a peer support group, sessions with a professional financial counselor, and a grant of \$500 at the end of the course. By June 2010, 552 participants, representing 28 institutions, had graduated from 29 classes. Classes are offered in English, Haitian Creole, Spanish, Cape Verdean Creole, and Somali (GBIO 2012). GBIO staff member Joel Schwartz, the Debt to Assets program manager, told me the story of how the program was created.

In 2004, GBIO held a series of house meetings to hear which issues people were concerned about. From the inner city to the suburbs, from Christian to Jewish congregations, or from the working to the middle class, GBIO organizers heard the same thing: many people were drowning in debt, could not pay their bills, and needed to know how to save money. The idea therefore arose to create a program that would help people deal with these issues. This program, however, would not assist everyone, but only the people in GBIO, creating, in other words, a service program as part of GBIO.

Although GBIO is not the only IAF affiliate that provides services to its members, tensions arise. First, IAF is about organizing, not about running programs. It could be dangerous if resources – time, money, or personnel – are taken away from organizing and being put into servicing members (Fine 2006). At GBIO, however, only one person is in charge of the program. Furthermore, among the “graduates,” new

GBIO leaders have emerged; ties to new sections of the Boston area, such as the Haitian community, have been strengthened, because the program has become the “entry point for real involvement into the GBIO.” As a result, the program has actually increased GBIO’s public visibility and key policy makers have attended the so-called “graduations.”

Having in mind the “dangers” of running a service program, its future was discussed during a strategy meeting between the organizers and “primary” leaders. GBIO’s lead organizer stated that there were at least two choices: the program becomes an affiliate of GBIO, in which case GBIO maintains the control, but GBIO can be accused of taking public money (some funding for the program comes from the Attorney General of Massachusetts), or the program becomes something completely separate, in which case GBIO has no control over it, and when the program manager resigns, someone else, with whom they now have no relationship, might take it in a completely different direction. After some deliberation, the team talked about the possibility of making Debt to Assets GBIO’s affiliate, but keeping the budget and books completely separate and giving up the public money.

While only a small part of GBIO’s activities revolve around servicing the members, at the strategy team meetings key leaders and organizers reflect on the dangers and advantages of providing these services. Over the years, Debt to Assets became very successful and, as a consequence, a decision had to be made as to how to incorporate this program within the framework of IAF organizing.

### *Avoiding involution*

According to Kriesi (1996), a social movement organization can become a self-help group, a voluntary organization, or a club, in which case the organization focuses more on intra-group interaction than authority-oriented action. Movements with a strong collective identity, Kriesi argues, are particularly prone to involution, as they tend to focus more on the (re)production of their identity than on collectively acting.

The majority of GBIO's member institutions are faith-based groups, fostering within it a strong faith-based identity. As a result, the goal of the organization could easily turn into interfaith dialogue, rather than public action. Wary of this potential development, GBIO's mission states, "our primary goal is to develop local leadership and organized power to fight for social justice. We strive to hold both public and private actors accountable for their public responsibilities, as well as to initiate actions and programs of our own to solve community and economic problems" (GBIO 2012).

GBIO leaders and organizers consciously combine nurturing deep faith and democratic values with building a powerful organization that has the ability to act. This combination of moral values with pragmatism is what makes the organization work, what makes it effective and sustainable (interview GBIO organizer). As a GBIO organizer states, "I've also worked for an organization that pretty much eliminated power from [its] consciousness. So their mode of improving the community was by holding barbeques and other kinds of events... They were situated in between the white part of town and the black part of town and [this organization] kind of thought that the barbeques were going to solve that situation. So I was frustrated with what felt like immature action without strategy."



Although organizers and leaders emphasize acting, temptations to drift towards becoming a club or a self-help group arise as well. During a strategy meeting, the organizer and primary leaders reflected on the following issue: one of the leaders asked whether GBIO would be willing to have a fundraising table at this leader's fundraising event. According to the strategy team, however, this could create a dangerous precedent, because many member institutions hold fundraising events, and this is not part of GBIO's mission. The team decided therefore that the leader will send invitations only to the institutions he personally knows, and they will not be sent through the GBIO list-serve. Related to this issue, the team discussed what the criteria would be for accessing GBIO's list-serve. After a discussion, the group agreed on two criteria for accessing the list-serve. First, only member institutions from GBIO can use the list-serve; second, it can be used only "if it conforms to GBIO's mission and fits within the relational strategy." In the example above, the leader could ask only those institutions he knows personally to join the fundraising event. In addition, the team decides that GBIO's lead organizer will assess each case and decide whether the criteria for using the list-serve are met. If, however, the lead organizer is not sure whether the criteria are met, an appointed leader will be asked to decide, and finally, in case the leader is not sure, the strategy team as a whole must make a decision.

These examples show how GBIO could have changed over time into a dialogue organization, a self-help group, or a service provider. Organizers and leaders, however, are aware about these potential drifts and therefore take time to reflect and deliberate on past and future actions. By doing this, corrective mechanisms come into play when the organization focuses too much on within-group servicing, rather than

outwards acting. Organizers and leaders refer back to the organization's mission, promoting, in other words, a culture of relationship building combined with concrete action.

### ***The impact and challenges of community organizing in Boston***

Since its creation, the GBIO has encountered many challenges. Critical campaigns at the outset, such as the Nehemiah affordable housing campaign, failed; a change in leadership shifted the organization from a social movement to a traditional faith-based IAF organization, resulting in a loss of membership; and, political issues, such as the legalization of same-sex marriage, almost depleted the organization. Nonetheless, the organization is not just surviving, but has been able to develop a broad, committed active grassroots base. Thus, even though the organization has declined in membership over the past two decades, it is still able to mobilize a large number of people. As the lead organizer states,

We are able to mobilize on a day-to-day, week-to-week, month-to-month basis... We can do 500 to 1000 pretty well. The difference is we can't do 4000 we can do 2000. Our biggest turnout is about 2000. That is the capacity of the organization whereas before we could do 4000. But it is rare that you need 4000. 2000 is a pretty good turnout for Boston. And we pretty consistently can turnout 1200, 1300.

In this chapter, I have shown that the organization's embeddedness in the Boston context partly contributes to this outcome. The GBIO has developed strong ties to policymakers and has an important alliance structure. On the other hand, however, the organization does encounter competition from other nonprofits and IAF-type networks, making it more difficult to retain members and grow over time. Therefore, I

argue it is critical to examine the organization's intentional creation of a culture of commitment and accountability: the rituals, the faith-based identity, and the language they use encourages members to act. Finally, when the organization starts to drift towards greater conservatism, I show how corrective mechanisms in the form of reflection and deliberation come into place, enabling the organization to steer itself back into the direction of its mission: building a powerful organization through relationships and public action.

## CHAPTER 6

### ORGANIZING IN LONDON: SCALING UP THE EFFORTS

In 2005, after four rounds of intense voting, London won the bid to host the 2012 Olympic games. These were the world's first Living Wage Olympics: Everyone employed on the site was paid the London Living Wage, or £8.30 an hour, which is about \$13 an hour, or \$4 more than the country's minimum wage. For London, one of the most unequal cities in the world, trailblazing the first Living Wage Olympics is a small but important step towards the ideal of a more equitable, sustainable society. Policymakers did not take this decision as an act of good will; it was the result of fierce and consistent organizing by London Citizens (LC), Britain's largest community organization. London Citizens, a broad-based organization at the time comprising over 80 diverse local institutions such as churches, schools, and mosques, worked hard to convince the then Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, and Sebastian Coe, the chairman of the 2012 bid, to include an appendix with the bid guaranteeing the living wage, a construction skills academy, investment in local schools and healthcare, and affordable housing on the available land for local people after the games. "If you are well organized, everything is an opportunity, and if you are disorganized, most things are a threat," states Neil Jameson, London Citizens' lead organizer. London Citizens turned these games into a triumph: the living wage was guaranteed, two new construction training academies opened in 2009, two new schools and a health center have been built on the site, and negotiations to construct affordable housing after the

games are underway. Indeed, in the words of a London Citizens' organizer, "Democracy and politics really do work – if you're organized."<sup>33</sup>

In 1996, about 1,300 people from over 30 organizations attended the founding assembly of the East London Citizens Organization (TELCO). Over the past 15 years, the organization has grown exponentially, comprising over 200 organizations and representing over 200,000 people. At the same time, British citizens are becoming increasingly alienated from traditional institutions such as faith organizations, trade unions, and political parties (Wills 2012), and scholars have deplored the demise of social and community life in places like London (Putnam 2007). At a time when civic engagement is at a low point, how has the organization managed this extraordinary growth, and what are some of the challenges related to this growth? In this chapter, I will show the importance of the institutional context in which the organization is embedded, as well as the organizers' particular strategies, focusing on membership diversification and national as well as local campaigns.

### ***Extraordinary growth***

More than any other IAF organization, London Citizens has shown a tremendous capacity for growth in terms of membership and number of organizers, as well as budget. Between 1996 and 2012, the number of member organizations increased from under 50 to over 200. Its fastest growth has been in schools, with over 70 schools signed up as members, or more than one third of its total membership. Over the past

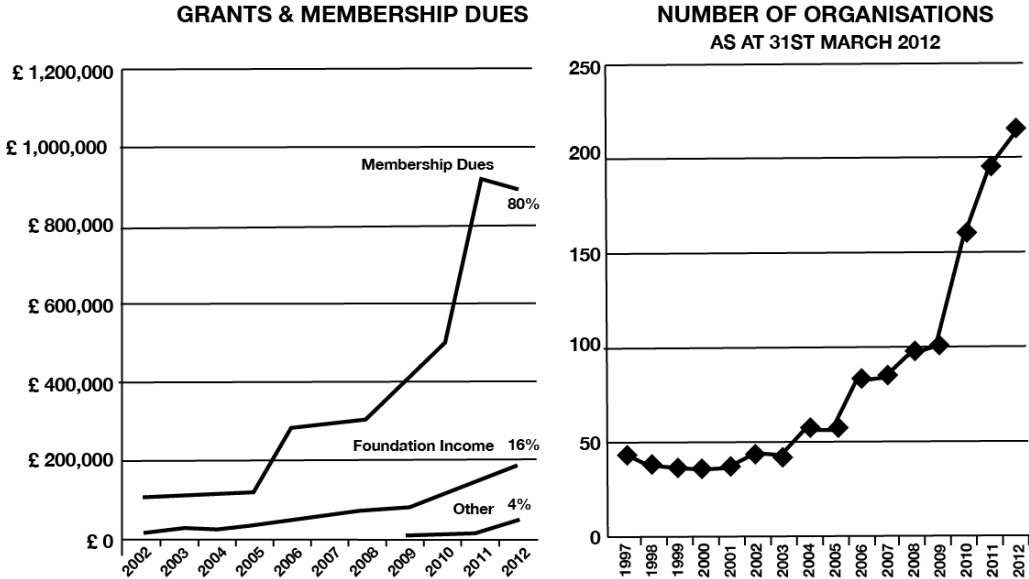
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<sup>33</sup> *The New York Times*. March 21, 2012. "Before Games, Workers Win a Big Event" by Michael Powell. *The New York Times*. April 3, 2012. "The Games Help Londoners" by Neil Jameson. London Citizens. 2012. <http://www.citizensuk.org/campaigns/london-2012-olympics/>

few years, a handful of synagogues has joined as well. Furthermore, the organizers have built chapters in South, West, and North London, as well as in other cities across the UK, such as Milton Keynes, Nottingham, and Birmingham, and they are currently in the process of setting up chapters in Cardiff and Glasgow. The aim is to become a truly national organization by 2015. London Citizens has also expanded in terms of paid organizers, from a handful when I joined them in 2008, to about 30 today. Finally, its budget has increased more than ten fold, from just over £100,000, or about \$150,000, in 2002 to about £1,250,000, or about \$2 million, by 2012 (LC Annual Report 2012). The bulk of its income, about 85%, comes from donations or grants from external foundations, and the remaining 15% comes from its membership dues (Figure 1).

Over the past decade, London Citizens has been transformed from a small organization working with poor, lower class communities in East London to a million-dollar organization encompassing large parts of the middle class across London and the UK. To discover the factors underlying LC's amazing success, I first examine the political landscape of London, the organization's access to policymakers, and its relationship with the trade unions. Next, I explore the strategic dimensions that have contributed to its growth.

Figure 1. London Citizens’ growth over time



Source: LC Annual Report 2012

***London: The Quintessential Global City***

London is a strategic node in the world economy and politics. With over eight million people, a growing international population, and about \$450 billion in GDP, London is the quintessential global city (Sassen 2001; Holgate and Wills 2007). While its manufacturing industry has been in decline, London’s finance and business services are burgeoning; the city consistently ranks first on the Global Financial Centres Index (GFCI 2012). The process of economic transformation and globalization, however, came hand in hand with growing inequality. London has been referred to as a “dual city:” two increasingly separate economies contained within the same geographical area. The city has become extremely polarized, with the highest proportion of households in both the top and bottom income deciles nationally and a poverty rate greater than that of any other region in England (Gordon et al. 2009; MacInnes and

Kenway 2009; Fainstein et al. 2011). Furthermore, London's unprecedented economic growth in the past decades has been built largely on new communities of low-paid workers – often migrants from Eastern Europe, South America, Africa, and South and East Asia – working as cleaners and hotel workers, taxi drivers and laborers. These vital workers are frequently exploited, lacking decent working conditions, a living wage, or trade union representation. Union density in London is amongst the lowest in the UK and declined from 25% in 2001 to just over 20% in 2011 (Brownlie 2011). This number drops into the single digits for the private sector, the retail sector, and even in the public sector due to the widespread use of subcontracting for jobs such as cleaning, maintenance, and catering. In addition, over the past few years, London has had an unemployment rate of over 8%.

Since 2011, white British people were for the first time in the minority in London (ONS 2011). Furthermore, since 2001, there has been a sharp decrease in the number of people identifying themselves as Christians, an increase in atheists, and an upsurge in the Muslim population (over one million people in London identify themselves as Muslim). This burgeoning ethnic and religious heterogeneity, while characteristic of an advanced, modern society, comes with great challenges, with the poorest wards being the most diverse. As Putnam (2007) argued, this growing diversity makes it particularly challenging to forge bonds or build social capital across the communities.

One way to counteract this tendency has been the government's push for a so-called Big Society. David Cameron's "Big Society" was intended to contrast with New Labour's big state by promoting volunteer work and social enterprise to enhance



social inclusion. Even though the concept of “Big Society” did not gain much traction on the campaign trail, when the new coalition government of Conservatives and Liberal Democrats was elected in May 2010, the Big Society agenda was adopted again. In December 2010, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Eric Pickles, announced the Localism Bill, intended to shift power and control from the central government to councils and communities. He argued that, “By getting out of the way and letting councils and communities run their own affairs we can restore civic pride, democratic accountability and economic growth -- and build a stronger, fairer Britain. It’s the end of the era of big government: laying the foundations for the Big Society.” The plan includes setting up a Big Society Bank to encourage social enterprises, promoting civic service for 16 year olds, and training 5,000 community organizers in Saul Alinsky’s tradition. The Big Society idea has evoked the criticism, however, that the increased responsibility laid on the communities and the voluntary sector might disguise the dismantling of the state, budget cuts, and privatization (Alcock 2010; Taylor 2011).

London Citizens, on the other hand, has been successfully organizing these communities for almost two decades. It is a powerful alliance of churches, mosques, synagogues, schools, universities, trade unions, and migrant groups, developing the leadership capacities of its members and working on small local as well as large national campaigns. Its groundbreaking work on the living wage has attracted the attention of the trade unions, as well as policy makers such as the former and current Mayors of London and the leadership of the Conservative, Labour, and Liberal Democrat parties.

### *Allies and Enemies in London*

To be based in London, the capital of a very small country with a centralized government structure, has clear advantages, as LC has been able to influence policy at a city-wide and national level. London Citizens prides itself on the fact that it is the only player in town. Community organizing is indeed a rather new phenomenon in the UK, and so far the organization has not encountered strong competition from other groups. As one of the organizers said, “It is gloriously open in the UK; the ground is fairly fertile, we have an amazing team, people with a raw kind of hunger and energy. If we can keep the show on the road, hopefully by 2015, we can expand, have 5,000-10,000 people in a big assembly with party leaders.” As LC has grown, however, the organizers have become increasingly solicitous of their brand in terms of the profession and craft, guarding, for example, the intellectual property over their teaching material and ensuring that the organizers of the chapters outside London are being trained through their so-called “Guild of Community Organizers.”

LC can take advantage of the enormous intellectual wealth in the city. Many of the young organizers come with a university degree from Oxford or Cambridge, and over the past three years a new Masters in Community Organizing has been established at the Queen Mary University of London. The Masters’ director, Prof. Jane Wills, has been a bridge building figure, as many of the Masters’ participants have interned or worked with London Citizens. Furthermore, through the department of Geography, Prof. Wills has provided the organization with critical research material regarding the Living Wage.

### *Access to Policymakers*

London Citizens' access to key policymakers at the city as well as the national level has grown significantly over the past decade. Starting in 1996 as The East London Citizens or TELCO, it represented a little known small alliance, mainly of churches, mosques, and migrant groups, fighting hard in local campaigns such as supermarket pricing in poor communities or fixing street signs and potholes in local boroughs. Since the launch of the living wage campaign in 2001, however, it has gained considerable traction, capturing the attention of key policy makers.

Drawing from the experience of its sister organization in Baltimore, and especially after hearing of the low pay and dreadful working conditions of their – mostly migrant – member communities, TELCO took on the fight for a living wage to improve the abysmal pay and working conditions for cleaners and janitors in the hospitals in East London; at big financial companies in Canary Wharf; in art galleries, universities, and luxury hotels; and in the 2012 Olympics. London Citizens has used a full battery of tactics, including public assemblies with up to 1,000 people, occupying a branch of HBSC in Oxford Street, attending National Health Services Trust board meetings, and holding big, colorful marches and rallies across the city. Indeed, by mobilizing its diverse membership it is able to confront and pressure key policy makers, gather momentum, and engage in a renewed kind of politics that has brought genuine positive change in the working and living conditions of thousands of people. LC was able to convince then Mayor Ken Livingstone, as well as current Mayor Boris Johnson, to grant a living wage to all Greater London Authority (GLA) staff and contractors. In addition, more than 100 businesses from different sectors, both local

and global firms, have signed up, among others, Barclays, the first Canary Wharf firm to sign up; HSBC; KPMG; Queen Mary University of London; PricewaterhouseCoopers; and Deloitte. As a result, since 2001, the campaign has benefited over 45,000 employees, adding over £210 million to some of the lowest-paid workers (for more details on the living wage, see Wills 2004; Holgate and Wills 2007; Holgate 2009).

In line with other IAF organizations, London Citizens has held Accountability Assemblies, in which it holds the incumbent and candidate policy makers accountable for their past actions and presses them for new commitments. Since 2000, LC has organized four Mayoral accountability assemblies, each one more diverse and with a larger turnout than the one before. In April 2012, for example, over 2,500 people gathered at the Methodist Central Hall, giving the current Mayor, Boris Johnson, as well as the candidates, Ken Livingstone, Jenny Jones, and Brian Paddick, often just two minutes to respond to questions. These are spectacular events, streamed live online, with a lot of show, music, and dance, but also with emotional testimonies of – often migrant – workers telling how they barely make ends meet, of children growing up in overcrowded and moldy houses, and of mothers, whose sons have been stabbed to death, asking for safer streets. As described in one of the leading newspapers, “There was a moment on Wednesday night when the eyes of the three leading candidates for London's mayoralty simultaneously went moist. Barbara, a 34-year-old cleaner of Polish descent who lives in Wood Green, was describing her working day for the Hilton Hotel chain. She gets a net income of £3 for each room that she does and has to clean more than 17 rooms a day with no pay for overtime if she cannot

finish. She survives on just £5 a day for food, clothes and all the basics. ‘I can't afford to have children,’ she told a rapt audience, ‘but a Living Wage would change my life.’” These packed assemblies are a testament to London Citizens’ growth, power, and impact, or as Mayor Boris Johnson put it, “the brilliant and, may I say, ruthless way in which you [London Citizens] bend us politicians to your will, and get us to deliver on the good things that we both believe in.”

London Citizens has developed close relationships as well with the leaders of the three main political parties, Labour, Conservative, and Liberal Democrat. The current Conservative prime minister, David Cameron, praised Boris Johnson’s endorsement of the living wage, calling it “an idea whose time has come.”

Furthermore, in 2010, three days before the national elections, then Prime Minister Gordon Brown, candidates David Cameron of the Conservative and Nick Clegg of the Liberal Democrat party, gathered on stage at London Citizens’ national assembly, pledging to work with the organization after the election and committing to issues such as the living wage, affordable housing, and ending child detention. Even though Gordon Brown ended up losing that election, his speech at the LC assembly was widely acclaimed to be his best of the whole campaign, resulting in the highest hits on YouTube.

Its ties with policymakers have facilitated its growth. London Citizens is increasingly recognized as a powerful organization that can actually make things happen, receiving positive exposure in the press, so that when it recruits institutions, they are likely to join.

*Red Tories, Blue Labour, and London Citizens*

Over the past three years, London Citizens has actually been courted by each of the major political parties. The concept and praxis of community organizing is “where the narratives of Red Tory, Blue Labour and Big Society meet.”<sup>34</sup> The Red Tories, i.e., socially progressive conservatives that promote social enterprises and bottom-up community engagement, as well as Blue Labour, i.e., Labour party members that aim at reinvigorating local communities and strengthening local institutions, share a narrative in which community organizing is central.<sup>35</sup> At the assembly, David Cameron told London Citizens, “I talk about the Big Society; you are the Big Society.” Indeed, the empowerment of local communities is one of the core elements of the Big Society agenda. Ed Miliband, the current leader of the Labour Party, considering the organizing model of London Citizens to be the way to revitalize the dormant Labour Party, hired the American IAF organizer Arnie Graf to help with a voter registration drive, develop a grassroots network, and transform Labour’s bureaucratic culture into a more relational one by addressing the importance of one-to-one meetings between people from the communities and Labour Party members. The living wage was a centerpiece of Miliband’s campaign, recognizing the work that London Citizens has done over the past decade. His brother, David Miliband, has started the “Movement for Change,” a bottom-up initiative built on the insights of London Citizens, which aims to train and develop community organizers within the

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<sup>34</sup> *The Evening Standard*. April 27, 2012. “People Power is the New Force Changing London” by Andrew Neather, and Amol Rajan.

<sup>35</sup> Philip Blond, regarded as one of the most significant thinkers courted by the Conservative Party, commercialized the term Red Tory and is on London Citizens’ board of trustees. Lord Maurice Glasman, who worked with London Citizens for many years, has coined the term Blue Labour. Glasman, a senior lecturer at the London Metropolitan University, has recently been appointed by Ed Miliband to the House of Lords.

Labour movement.

***Too Cozy with Policymakers? The looming threat of cooptation.***

While access to policymakers has given London Citizens significant recognition over the past several years, it has not come without challenges. Even though it would be illegal for LC to become partisan – it is a charity – in everything it does it is intentionally political. But if the organization gets too close to Mayor Boris Johnson, it might damage its relationship with the Labour party, whereas if it gets too close to Ed or David Miliband, it could damage its relationship with David Cameron. The terrain is thus strongly contested, and LC tries to carve out a space in which to be considered independent.

Being too cozy with policymakers, however, presents different challenges. Most importantly, when Prime Minister David Cameron sought advice from London Citizens on how to build his Big Society, LC suggested endowing a community organizing institute.<sup>36</sup> As a result, Cameron promised a £1 million contract to train 5,000 community organizers, later scaled down to 500. After intense debate and hearing the recommendations of the trustees, a vote at LC's annual general meeting was held, with a majority voting in favor of tendering a bid. Even though the organization was mentioned in the request for the proposal, it was “extremely fortunate *not* to win in this case” (Wills 2012, emphasis added). Indeed, London Citizens' proximity to national politics, together with its growth and ambition, has brought the real risk of cooptation. According to many of the interviewees, the

decision to tender for the bid was a very pragmatic one; the sentiment was “If we don’t do it, someone else will and will destroy the craft and the track record we have so far.” The lure of large sums of money, as well as the chance to create a new generation of community organizers across the UK, seemed like a marvelous opportunity, but as one of the members argued, “It is different having a relationship with them or actually being captured by them.” The bid was won by an organization with long government contracting experience, and while cost has been mentioned as one of the reasons LC did not win, according to Neil Jameson, the founder and director of LC, “We teach people to take power...that radical edge antagonizes some people.”<sup>37</sup> London Citizens remains indeed much more powerful by putting pressure on the political parties from the outside, rather than being institutionalized and becoming a mere interest group. Keeping its independence in terms of money as well as relational ties allows the organization to build up a broad-based alliance, mobilize its members, and hold leaders of the political parties accountable for their actions, regardless of whether they’re Red Tories or Blue Labour.

Furthermore, the organization doesn’t shy away from consultancy, helping to increase its budget and to strengthen its ties with policymakers. One of the lead organizers describes this decision: “To withdraw or remain pure is not the right thing to do... it is limiting to think we’re completely independent or a pure model; what is a pure model? Just churches, doing lots of congregational development campaigns, listening to each other and trying to tell the state to build a youth club in the area?”

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<sup>36</sup> LC suggested an endowment because one of the IAF principles is not to accept money directly from the government.



That is limiting.” However, the cleanest way to work with political parties is to focus on specific issues, such as getting people better jobs. The aim for all is to work towards the common good. But when the focus is on the method – organizing – it becomes more complicated. When an LC organizer works as a consultant for Movement for Change, or when LC offers a 2-day training on social action for people from the Conservative Party, the aim becomes much more explicitly to get members of those parties re-elected rather than to work towards the common good.

Finally, their relationship with Mayor Boris Johnson is especially significant. It is not just a cozy and friendly one, but one in which both sides are able to deliver. Issues such as the living wage, jobs, affordable housing, and safer streets are part of the mayor’s agenda, so it has been relatively easy to find common ground. However, LC will not go head to head with the mayor. For example, when LC embarked on an anti-usury campaign in conjunction with other IAF affiliates, the organizers quickly realized that Boris Johnson, a big defender of the City of London, would not be on board. As a consequence, the organization decided to drop the issue for the time and perhaps take it up again during the election campaign of 2015. The mayor is indeed considered a close ally where there is enough synergy and overlap between their interests, so it is not worth the risk of losing his support over this particular issue.

### ***Rocky relationship with the trade unions.***

“There’s definitely territoriality and jealousy, ... South East Regional TUC for example through the whole period in which Ken Livingston was mayor, felt they had, you know hey had a right, this was their

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<sup>37</sup> *The Guardian*. February 15, 2011. “Faith and fairy dust: Citizens UK was a shoo-in for a big society contract - until the urge to control overtook the coalition” by Madeleine Bunting.

relationship with the mayor. Did they do anything? No. Did they win a living wage for the Olympics? No. Did they convince Ken Livingston to introduce the London Living Wage? No. So when London Citizens did it, it shut them up... and so rather than saying Oh God we missed a trick here, let's get on board with these people, they backed off, they undercut them, every chance they could get.”

London Citizens has pioneered the living wage campaign in the UK. While essentially a key issue of the trade unions, the latter did not come on board until 2004, and the relationship between these two types of organizations has been fraught with difficult challenges. The success of the living wage campaign caught the attention of the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU, now Unite), which in 2003 had elected a new Secretary-general and decided to focus on membership growth through organizing new workplaces. Building on LC's success, the union engaged in a campaign to unionize the cleaners at Canary Wharf, culminating in the Justice for Cleaners campaign (for more details please see Wills 2008; Hearn and Bergos 2011; Adler et al. 2013).

While collaborations have occurred, these are often in the form of ad hoc, short-term event campaigns, rather than sustainable alliances, and are often dependent on the support of a few trade unionists rather than part of a comprehensive strategy. Ironically, LC has received more recognition from Unite-Here, the American union for hotel and restaurant workers, than from the UK unions.<sup>38</sup> Hostility between the organizations has been identified along three different lines: territory, religion, and structure (Holgate 2009). First, unions have perceived the community organization as

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<sup>38</sup> Between 2006 and 2009, London Citizens and UNITE-HERE worked together on the hotel workers rising campaign to take the living wage to London's hotel sector by targeting the Hilton group. LC has received small grants from some of the UK unions, but these were dwarfed by Unite Here's generosity.

stepping on their terrain. For example, one outcome of London Citizens' hotel living wage campaign was the creation of the 'London Citizens Workers' Association' (LCWA), a unique attempt to organize London's low-wage migrant workers by providing a voice for this invisible workforce which fuels the city's economic success. The LCWA, a copy of the "worker centers" model in the United States, brought low-wage immigrant workers together and sought to pressure employers for fair working conditions. Although the main purpose of the LCWA was to eventually bring the workers into a trade union, tensions between these two organizations began to grow, as LC was considered a threat to the trade unions rather than an ally. As one of the interviewees argued, "They [the unions] decided that London Citizens had overstepped its boundaries by going off and starting to organize these people and that, you know, it was stepping on their toes." As a result, London Citizens decided to drop this project and shift its focus again towards negotiations with management.

Second, trade unionists have been suspicious of the many religious organizations that are part of London Citizens. However, while LC has many faith communities in its membership, it would argue that it is not a religious organization. Tapping into religious communities has been in part pragmatic, as these are already organized pockets in society. As one of the members argued, "You don't have to believe in faith, you know, I don't, I'm very secular... nonetheless I've hung out with lots of faith people over this period of time and I simply respect that that's where their motivation comes from,... it's a bizarre, bizarre position [being suspicious about working with faith communities] it really really is. Especially if you're trying to talk about organizing people in the migrant communities."

Finally, a very different structure comes to the forefront. LC, as an organization of organizations, has a dynamic structure, in which actions are taken up instantly and unsuccessful projects, such as setting up the LCWA, will be discarded. Attending staff meetings, I was impressed by the lively participation, the energetic brainstorming, and the flexibility that permitted immediate action. Trade unions, on the other hand, have a much more rigid structure, or, as put by a Unison officer, “We don’t have the mechanisms put in place... we’ve got so many layers of bureaucracy and committees and you know a million things that you’d have to get through to make something like that happen.” This spontaneity and direct-action of London Citizens has, however, heightened the tensions between the organizations, as LC is often perceived as taking a “hot shop” approach to organizing (organizing over an immediate grievance and leaving as soon as it is resolved) to get media attention. For example, during my stay in July 2008, a branch of the TGWU was working on a campaign disclosing unfair pay for waitresses. As one of the restaurants was located in Canary Wharf, where LC has done a lot of work on the living wage, LC organized an internal meeting and quickly decided to target Carluccio’s restaurant. Midway through dinner that evening, LC unfolded a big banner of London Citizens and the living wage, resulting in a short article and picture in the *Independent* newspaper. While LC’s flexibility allows for a meeting in the afternoon followed by concrete action in the evening, this type of organizing has not been appreciated by trade unions, which often lobby behind closed doors for months and plan out demonstrations and rallies a long time in advance. In situations like the Carluccio one, rather than being regarded as an ally, LC is perceived as trying to steal the union’s thunder.

Trade unions have thus not always been London Citizens' closest allies. While these three points of contention are significant, they are not always enough to explain the lack of collaboration between the two organizations. While the head of the Unison branch in London, for example, is not very supportive of London Citizens, the opposite is true in Nottingham or Cardiff. In the latter cities, the unions have contributed £20,000 of seed money for setting up a new Citizens organization. The unions play an active role in the new community organizations, attending trainings and meetings, and are part of the core constituency. According to one of the lead organizers, there is a much more constructive relationship between the union and the community organizations in those cities for the following reasons: the unions possess much more power and play a much greater role in Cardiff and in Nottingham than in London, so it would be hard to do anything without having the unions on board; in addition, there are fewer people active in faith-based groups there; and, finally, there are fewer young people in Nottingham or Cardiff than in London. As a result, these new community organizations focus less on schools and faith-based groups than London Citizens.

***Strategic factors explaining LC's growth.***

While the external environment is important to LC's success, I turn now to some of the internal organizational dimensions, as well as the strategic decision-making of the organizers, to further explain LC's extraordinary growth.

### *Institutional and Relational*

To understand LC's extraordinary growth, it is important to examine its internal organizational dimensions. First, in line with other IAF organizations, London Citizens relies upon institutional rather than individual members. The organization has a very broad and diverse membership list, including schools and universities, trade unions, Catholic and Protestant churches, and Muslim congregations. This institutional membership provides the organization with the necessary stability, resources, and legitimacy (Chaison and Bigelow 2002).

Second, the aim is to build relational, institutional power. Their radical tool of the relational, or one-to-one, meetings is the backbone of IAF organizations and vital for all the member communities. The community leaders believe that without these conversations, the relationship with the individual members would be weak and superficial, and the institutions would as a consequence flounder and fail. Its institutional membership as well as its emphasis on relational meetings have been emphasized by Wills (2012) as the critical factor in explaining LC's growth: "a territorial but institutionally networked architecture allows the alliance [London Citizens] to connect islands of social solidarity, and to forge relationships between longstanding leaders within these institutions, creating a new community able to operate at the scale of the city itself" (115). While this might explain part of LC's growth, other IAF organizations have not been able to take advantage of their institutional membership and relational culture to the same effect.

### *Membership Diversification*

One element that stands out, however, is London Citizens' focus on membership diversification. Membership growth is more likely when the organizers can tap into diverse types of organizations instead of limiting themselves to faith-based groups. In the UK, churches are much poorer and emptier than in the US. In addition, even though mosques have started to mushroom in London, they don't have abundant resources. The British organizers, therefore, had to be creative concerning their sources of funding, making them highly diverse from the start. Over the past years, their fastest growth has been with schools, which represent over one third of the total membership. London Citizens' CitySafe campaign, striving for safer streets by promoting so-called safe-havens, has been instrumental in getting more schools involved, since it is in the interests of students, parents, and teachers. The campaign allows for great social action without being too political or controversial. Finally, schools have significant resources in money, staff, and energetic young people that LC can tap into.

In the US, IAF organizations have not been able to engage schools to the same extent. Whereas in the UK, the head teacher has executive power and independence, in the US, the supervisors operate within the bureaucratic and political control of elected officials, and party politics often prevent schools from being involved. As a result, the supervisor will block the principal from any community involvement. In the UK, almost the opposite occurs, with the government trying to push schools to organize. The Inspectorate for Education, for example, rates schools on issues such as community cohesion, student leadership, and parent involvement, making London

Citizens a natural ally.

In addition to membership diversification, LC's capacity and energy to engage in high-profile campaigns is an important factor in its success.

*A campaigning organization?*

Over the past decade, London Citizens has engaged in numerous victorious campaigns. Although the Living Wage Campaign can be considered a core activity, the organization focuses on other issues as well. The campaign "Our Homes, Our London" called for affordable housing through community land ownership. Despite then Mayor Ken Livingstone's 2004 pledge to develop Community Land Trust homes, after three years there was still little sign of progress. London Citizens augmented the pressure and pulled a major, highly visible stunt that was all over the mainstream media. In July 2007, over 100 families camped out in red tents by City Hall, urging immediate action. Even though the Mayor quickly announced a clear timetable for 100 homes through the Community Land Trust in Bow, an area of East London, victory came only in 2012, when LC secured the first ever Community Land Trust housing development agreement.

LC's "CitySafe" campaign was still in the early stages during my visit in July 2008, with many meetings taking place in different neighborhoods across London to discuss how to make inner cities safer for young people. This campaign originated in East London, then expanded to south London, where 16-year old Jimmy Mizen was the victim of a senseless murder in a bakery shop. Since then, LC has established over 300 CitySafe havens (businesses that offer potential victims of crime a refuge) and 62



CitySafe zones, such as malls. Following the 2011 Tottenham riots, North London Citizens (NLC) launched a listening campaign and produced a community-led response laying out the causes, such as high youth unemployment and fraught police-community relations, as well as concrete recommendations to strengthen the community. NLC listened to more than 700 people in the community and hosted three public hearings attended by hundreds of local community members, business leaders, and local councilors. In a similar initiative, 50 days before the Olympics, LC established another 50 city safe zones in 19 London boroughs, reviving the ancient Greek tradition of an Olympic Truce before the start of the Games.

One of the main reasons LC is so heavily involved in campaigning is funding. Although, according to the “IAF mantra,” all the money should be raised by membership dues, this has not been possible, given the poverty of UK churches and mosques. Raising funds has therefore been a key activity over the past decade. The organization must demonstrate its ability to win campaigns to gain legitimacy and recognition from the public and its funders. Since LC started off small, it needed to conduct high-profile campaigns in order to satisfy potential donors or foundations. The latter want to see concrete results, for example, winning a living wage campaign at the University of Queen Mary. Much of the grant money LC receives is linked to carrying out specific projects or campaigns, rather than building the organization by conducting one-to-ones. These actions come at a cost, since less time can be devoted to actual institution building. Although the relational culture underlies everything LC does, the campaigns are what identify it. While I was in London, I noticed how hard it was to strike the right balance between relational power building and action planning.

As one of the lead organizers made clear:

There is a tension in London Citizens. There is a tendency to dynamic action which seems to me often to deplete the organization more than to build it. I need, as West London Citizens organizer, to be much more discerning about what actions we take, how many we do, constantly asking myself is it building the organization or is it depleting it, making it weaker. There is a real problem I think if we got a group of leaders in a church and say we'd like you to turn up for this hotel action [living wage campaign at Hyatt hotel]. They haven't been engaged until now. Are we just using them? Do they then feel used as turnouts? I think that's wrong. We mustn't get to the point where our member institutions feel that they're being used by London Citizens for the benefit of LC. And again it's tail and dog. We are there to serve the institutions and not the other way around.

According to IAF principles, the goal is to organize communities and build power. Working on issues through actions and campaigns is considered a means towards that end. Actions bring people together, give them energy, and make them realize they are not powerless but can actually make changes. But actions also involve time and energy; they must therefore be designed to build the organization and strengthen rather than deplete it. Actions should consist of meetings, trainings, people getting together, forging links between different groups, and building long-term relationships. In addition, they should be followed by evaluation and reflection. Each action should therefore be a teaching opportunity.

London Citizens' fervent engagement in almost daily actions and campaigns, however, sheds light on some of the challenges involved in striking the right balance between institutional development and action. As a way to recruit and retain member organizations, the strategy has been to get into action immediately. This philosophy, however, has come at the expense of organizing and developing the member

institutions internally. As a result, according to one LC trustee, some of the relationships might be shallow. The need to develop leaders and strengthen institutional power through building relationships can be forgotten when the question becomes “when is the next action.” According to one IAF mentor, every campaign, demonstration, or rally that does not develop leadership or that does not have any element of teaching is a total loss of opportunity, regardless of the material gains of the campaign.

### ***Mechanisms to counterbalance campaigning tendency***

If it hadn't been for Jonathan Lange [American IAF organizer and mentor of LC], I think London Citizens would have spun off and would have become a campaigning organization... What Jonathan did was fundamentally kept it anchored to the principles of IAF... There is a basic principle that says ‘this is about leadership development’ and if you only do the spectacular razzle dazzle, you hollow the organization out. You got to constantly go back to those basic principles and so if it hadn't been for that anchoring, it would have gotten off like a hot-air balloon in its own direction.

Many organizers agree that they are involved in too many actions and therefore value the visits from Jonathan Lange, their American IAF mentor. Being part of a broader international network is critical for LC in terms of being reminded of the craft of IAF organizing and the need to build teams and develop leadership rather than get carried away by the glitter and glamour. It is a sort of external accountability that holds the organization true to its core principles and tradition. That way, the IAF institutions work as a ‘check’ on each other, guarding against becoming too bureaucratic or oligarchic, as this would undermine the organization’s movement ability, or against

becoming too much focused on action rather than institution building. According to one LC member, “When too much focus is on a certain action, to get a grant, other people may say ‘wait a minute, that is not our objective’ and steer it back in another direction.”

The organization has strengthened, as well, its internal accountability structure. While the staff has grown over the past five years from a handful to about 30, the majority of the organizers have less than three years experience. Over the past few months, LC has introduced a more systematic way of measuring the organizers’ performance, employing a model that comes directly from the IAF national directors and that consists of rules and procedures for advancing from a junior to a senior organizer. One of the critical elements is conducting a high number of one-to-one relational meetings per week. Indeed, as organizers can get lost in the midst of an action, these structures of internal accountability remind them of the fundamental tools of community organizing: building power through one-to-one relationships.

Finally, there is a renewed focus on working at a local level. Smaller, more local campaigns are continuously ongoing in different neighborhoods on issues such as closing down local “crack houses,” improving security with increased police patrols and better lighting, putting up road signs near schools, providing a bursary scheme for students, guaranteeing that local councils adopt the living wage, and improving the services of local hospitals. This borough strategy – LC is currently active in 22 of the 32 boroughs – focuses on rebuilding the teams, recruiting institutions, and local actions. Working at the borough level is important for fostering the relationships between institutions at that local level, which is often not possible when working on

national or city-wide campaigns. Working at the level of the local borough is also politically important, as local councilors have enormous power over the borough and often get elected with just a couple of votes. Therefore, LC's strategy is to build up a local political agenda for the local borough elections in 2014 and hold borough assemblies with a turnout of at least 500 people representing 10 to 15 institutions.

### ***The impact and challenges of community organizing in London***

Because it is located in a small country with a centralized government, LC has managed to build relationships with key political actors. Its engagement with the political structure has enabled it to influence policy on a national level. For example, during one of the accountability assemblies, LC secured a commitment from the coalition government to end child detention for immigration purposes, to further encourage the implementation of the living wage, and to work on affordable housing. As it became more popular and received more media attention as well as recognition from key actors in society, LC became more appealing for other institutions to be part of. In addition, in terms of strategy, LC has focused on diversifying its membership, adding at least 70 schools over the past few years; has been heavily engaged in big national as well as small local campaigns; and has put important external as well as internal accountability structures in place. Finally, while it encounters little competition from other groups, since it is the largest and oldest broad-based community organization in the UK, it has at the same time been very protective of its brand and its craft of community organizing.

Building a sustainable civic infrastructure has not come without challenges.

Especially in London, LC has a rather rocky relationship with the trade unions, resulting in ad hoc, instrumental collaborations rather than long-term, sustained alliances. Furthermore, as a way to bring money in, LC has worked as consultants for the Conservative Party as well as the Labour Party. The organization is aware, however, of the dangers of cooptation. As a result, these decisions did not come without any controversy, but were extensively discussed by the trustees. So far, LC has been able to remain nonpartisan while being courted by both political parties.

Even though Margaret Thatcher used to say “There is no such thing as society,” London Citizens has proven over the past decades its ability to build a powerful civil society organization. From being a small organization in East London, it has grown to become an established power player at the borough, city, and national levels. The institutional context in which the organization is embedded as well as the organizers’ strategic decisions, focusing on membership diversification and high-profile as well as small local campaigns, have contributed to LC’s success and growth.

## CHAPTER 7

### ORGANIZING IN BERLIN: FINDING THE RIGHT TRANSLATION

As of May 2012, three IAF organizations had been built in Berlin, encompassing in total over 100 local member institutions. In 1999, “Organizing Schöneweide” (OS) was created in the southeast borough of Berlin, representing 16 groups and now expanding to become “Berlin Südost.” In 2008, the community organization “Wir sind da” (we are there), with over 40 organizations, was built in Wedding-Moabit. A third community organization in Neukölln, representing over 30 institutions, held its founding assembly in January 2012. These three community organizations are supported by DICO (Deutsches Institut für Community Organizing) and led by Leo Penta and four paid IAF organizers, who are also setting up new organizations in other cities, such as Hamburg and Wuppertal. Among these organizations’ substantial achievements have been: bringing the main campus of the University for Applied Sciences to Schöneweide, improving job center services in Wedding-Moabit, and organizing successful mayoral accountability assemblies during election years, to which they invited the incumbent as well as mayoral candidates for the city of Berlin.

As institutional theorists have argued, when organizational practices are transferred to a new environment, they encounter institutional pressures to isomorphically fit within that local environment, or, in other words, pressures to become similar to those institutions that already exist. Indeed, to achieve legitimacy, and eventually success and survival, novel organizations need to adapt to work within

the local cultural or market frameworks (Meyer and Rowan 1977; DiMaggio and Powell 1983). In Germany, the civil society sector, already consisted of other (powerful) institutions, such as national and regional trade unions and local neighborhood managements, as well as a community organization called FOCO, or Forum for Community Organizing. The IAF organization in Berlin, however, did not become similar to the already existing institutions, but remained rather unique. As a result, they were able to create a niche to survive in this setting and even grow. At the same time, however, the organizers had to be creative in making this unique model work in a German context.

This chapter is divided into three parts. The first is an overview of Berlin's political economy, illustrating how DICO is different from and/or similar to the other organizations in the civil society sphere. Next, I zoom in on DICO and describe in greater detail the founding process of one of the organizations, explaining how, from its inception, it consciously produced a particular structure and culture. Finally, I examine how the organization functions and some of the challenges it has encountered.

### ***Contemporary Berlin: "Poor but sexy"***

On 3 October 1990, East Germany, or the German Democratic Republic (GDR), legally joined West Germany, or the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), and the newly united city of Berlin became a city-state, one of Germany's sixteen federal states (*Bundesländer*), with an elected Parliament that appoints a Senate. Berlin itself is subdivided into 12 boroughs, each governed by a borough council and a borough



Mayor. The West traditionally had a strong Christian Democratic Union (CDU) presence, a major conservative party that mostly ruled in coalitions. The disclosure of a banking scandal at the end of the 1990s, however, put the power in the hands of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), mainly present in the West, which formed coalitions with left-wing parties based in the former East, such as the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) and the Left Party (Die Linke). The state elections of 2011, however, put the CDU back in play, and Berlin is again governed by a red-blue coalition, SPD-CDU. The social democrat Klaus Wowereit has been the Mayor of Berlin since 2001.

As Mayor Wowereit famously remarked in a television interview in 2004, “*Berlin ist arm, aber sexy*,” meaning Berlin is poor but sexy. Shortly after reunification, industry in Berlin collapsed, losing over 150,000 manufacturing jobs, with skyrocketing unemployment numbers. Industries of the former East couldn’t survive the exposure to outside market competition, while industries of the former West could not survive being cut off from special subsidies. Unemployment rose throughout the succeeding decades from about 10% in 1990 to 19% in 2006 and has only recently decreased to about 12% (Eures 2012). Even though the rate has gone down over the past few years, it is still well above the nation’s unemployment rate of about 6.5%. Berlin’s annual gross domestic product is around EUR 101 billion, which is lower than that of most western European capital cities and many German cities such as Hamburg, Stuttgart, or Munich (Eurostat 2012).

Berlin has not become the economic hub or the service metropolis once envisioned. Service sector jobs have not been able to compensate for Berlin’s low level of manufacturing activity, and it has only a weak presence of corporate

headquarters compared to other German cities. But, according to Krätke (2004), “new islands of economic growth have been developing in Berlin, particularly in so-called ‘knowledge-intensive’ and innovation-driven activities like the software industry, biotechnology, medical engineering, the pharmaceutical industry, and research and development services; additionally, there has been significant growth in the Berlin media industry, which is based on the particularly strong ‘socio-cultural capital’ of Berlin” (515).

While it is an affordable large city, attracting creative, well-educated young people, especially from Eastern Europe, not everyone has enjoyed an equal share in this development. With about 3.5 million inhabitants, Berlin is the largest city in Germany and has the second-highest percentage of immigrants, mostly from Turkey and Poland. The number of immigrants has been increasing over the years, currently at about 470,000 or 13% (Berlin 2012), mainly living in the West. During the Cold War, the West had “guest worker” agreements with Southern European countries, as well as with Turkey, while the East had temporary agreements with Vietnam, Algeria, Angola, Mozambique, and Cuba. After reunification, most of the contract workers from the East repatriated, except for a sizeable number of the Vietnamese, whereas in the West, the Turkish population mostly stayed. The immigrants have over twice the unemployment rate of Germans living in Berlin, and their children are more likely to attend lower division schools, resulting in a huge education gap (Silver 2006).

Even after reunification, Berlin remains a very divided city, its divisions reinforced by spatial segregation. Some neighborhoods are facing a process of gentrification in which the working-class is being pushed out as the area becomes

increasingly middle-class. This polarization has led to the development of programs that aim to enhance the social integration of the disadvantaged communities. Most importantly, since the end of the 1990s, Berlin has participated in the so-called “districts with special development needs – the socially integrative city” program as a way to tackle social exclusion. As a consequence, in different neighborhoods throughout Berlin, “neighborhood managements” were created which are allocated certain amounts of resources to implement neighborhood specific projects on various themes, such as education, employment or housing.<sup>39</sup> Based on resident participation, this program aims at alleviating poverty and reducing spatial segregation.

In 2011, there were 34 areas in Berlin with active neighborhood managements. While established with good intentions, neighborhood managements have not been without their critics. Some scholars have argued that substantive issues such as poverty alleviation have not been touched upon at all; instead, many of these managements are preoccupied with the esthetics of their neighborhood, focusing on improving the physical environment and public space (Silver 2006). Others critics go a step further, showing how the social segregation has actually been reinforced by these managements, while meaningful grassroots participation has not been encouraged, undermining the potential for protest or civil disobedience (Marcuse 2006).

In addition, Berlin suffers from a heavy fiscal deficit and has a growing debt of over 60 billion euros, leading to significant cuts in public welfare programs as well as the outsourcing of traditional state responsibilities to the non-profit, or so-called third, sector. Many of the non-profits now heavily involved in urban development or

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<sup>39</sup> Berlin’s Neighborhood Management is financed by the Federal State and by Berlin city-state, and receives

welfare programs arose out of the social movements of the 1970s and '80s, such as the squatter movement. While these movements were initially formed in solidarity with the underprivileged, the bulk of the nonprofits today, working as the extended arm of the local government, seem to reinforce their marginalization (Mayer 2006). Finally, Berlin has an active trade union scene, with a strong presence of the umbrella organization DGB, as well as the public sector union Ver.di and the metalworkers union IG Metall. While unions membership has gone down over the past few years, the unions remain powerful actors, especially, in driving labor market policies.

How do the IAF community organizations in Berlin survive in this dense organizational landscape? To what extent do they build alliances with or encounter competition from other groups within the civil society sphere?

### *Allies and enemies in Berlin*

While DICO has gained recognition from key policymakers, DICO's access to policymakers and influence in the political sphere remains so far rather limited. Furthermore, even though the organization does not encounter a high level of competition, it does not have a strong alliance structure.

In terms of access to policymakers, the organization is focusing more internally, on building its grassroots base, rather than externally, or strengthening their access to policymakers. That being said, DICO has gained important recognition from key actors over the past decade. In 2006, a first accountability assembly was held in the presence of four mayoral candidates from the local borough as well as nine

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financial support as well from the European Union (European Funds for Regional Development).

members of the Berlin Parliament. During this event almost 250 people from across 25 member institutions and two local platforms turned out and worked together, making this event a huge success. Politicians remained perplexed by the turnout of IAF actions as well as by the diversity present in the room. In addition, over the past months smaller groups of five to six people representing the three organizations meet with politicians. By doing this, the local politicians are introduced to the idea and the functioning of community organizations and also the members might start to think about their participation not just within a neighborhood group, but part of a larger network.

In terms of alliance structure, the civil society sphere consists moreover of the trade unions, the neighborhood managements, and the community organization FOCO. Trade unions could be a potential ally of the organization. “Never do for members what they can do for themselves,” the iron rule of IAF community organizing, can be read as well in IG Metall’s strategy report on organizing (IG Metall 2008), which emphasizes the importance of a participatory rather than a representational model of organizing. In addition, the IG Metall Youth section has republished Saul Alinsky’s work as a template for organizing. Even though Alinsky’s work has been emphasized by the German trade unions, however, most of the representatives I spoke with were not very familiar with the specific IAF organizations in Berlin; they learned about the IAF organizing principles through American trade unionists (mainly from the public sector union SEIU), trying to implement the organizing model in a German context. Furthermore, while the IAF organizations in London and Boston have worked on labor-related issues, such as the living wage or

better working conditions for janitors and nurses, the organizations in Berlin have focused more on issues such as education and public infrastructure. Finally, each organization works at a different scale: the unions work mostly at a national or regional level, whereas the IAF organizations operate much more locally, at a borough or district level. Thus, given these distinct operating levels and the fact that they don't work on similar issues, the attitude of trade unionists towards the IAF organizations has often been one of indifference.

At the other end of the spectrum, the neighborhood managements work at a very local level. Each management encompasses a small residential area within a borough delineated by clear geographic boundaries, such as certain streets or a park. At first sight, their goals seem similar to those of the IAF organizations: these structures, run by people living in those neighborhoods, are intended to strengthen social cohesion and to promote social and ethnic integration. However, so far there has been virtually no cooperation between neighborhood managements and the IAF organizations. On the contrary, hostility between the two types is marked. The IAF organizers criticize the neighborhood managements for being too dependent on government funding and government experts, thereby impeding any real decision making by the residents. Some neighborhood managements, on the other hand, have accused primarily Leo Penta of running a sect rather than a community group. As a result, there is little to no cooperation between the two types of organizations.

Finally, the only organization at first glance similar to DICO that exists in Germany is called FOCO, or Forum for Community Organizing. Set up in the mid-1990s, FOCO came out of a comparative study on community organizing in the US

and Germany conducted by German scholars, who invited American community organizers to Frankfurt to hold a seminar on organizing, eventually leading to the creation of FOCO. When Penta first came to Berlin he worked with FOCO but soon decided to go his own way. Currently, there are no signs of either collaboration or competition between the two organizations. The reasons are twofold: first, FOCO does not focus on Berlin, but operates in other cities across Germany such as Saarbrücken, Hamburg, and Uslar. As a consequence, the organizations don't step on each other's turf, thereby avoiding any competition. Second, and more importantly, FOCO does not actually build long-term community organizations; its representatives can be considered consultants or trainers, giving seminars on the principles of community organizing, rather than organizers. Thus, while FOCO brought the IAF principles to Germany, IAF organizers would argue that they adapted it too much, resulting in a watered down version. One of the reasons Penta left FOCO is exactly that: he wanted to do the work, rather than just teach it. According to one of the German scholars, "Penta is grounded in IAF, as an American organizer, it is part of his metabolism. Penta grew up in the States, trained in it [the States], has seen it work, and truly believes in it." Indeed, the biography of the founder is important in shaping, at least partly, an organization's survival and success (Ganz 2000).

In sum, the IAF community organizations in Berlin have created a specific niche for themselves, working at the "meso" level. By operating mostly at the borough level, these organizations distinguish themselves from the big trade unions, since they are not working at a national or regional level, as well as from the very local neighborhood managements. The only other community organization, FOCO,

functions more as a consultancy or training institute rather than a community organization. While DICO doesn't encounter strong competition, it still lacks a strong alliance structure and access to policymakers. Nonetheless, the organization has been able to survive and grow in this rather hostile context.

Next, I show how an IAF organization is built and how during the founding processes the organizers intentionally create a strong culture based on member commitment and accountability, contributing to the organization's sustainability over time.

### ***The Founding Process of a New IAF Organization***

In order to survive and be successful, the organization, from its inception, adopted a hybrid logic of organizing, in which critical bureaucratic as well as social movement characteristics have shaped its structure as well as its culture.

During my stay in Berlin, the Bürgerplattform "Wir in Neukölln" (WIN) was in its founding stages. The founding of an IAF organization is a long process, in this case taking over two years. Building up the organization from scratch, however, shows how the structure and culture come into place. First, decisions need to be made as to where to organize. Once the geographic area is selected, enough organizations need to be on board, and a so-called internal action is held. The last phase is an external or public action, in which the members publicly announce the new organization. The importance of the founding process cannot be underestimated, as it builds the base for the organization. Most notably, during this founding process a specific culture and norms are created and reinforced.



In 2009, the lead organizers decided to expand and build another IAF organization, since the goal is to eventually build sufficient institutional power to run a united campaign affecting policies and making changes across the city. Building on the success of “Organizing Schöneweide” and the Bürgerplattform Wedding-Moabit “Wir sind da” the organizers decided to try it in Reineckendorf, an area that borders Wedding and Moabit. But after about three months of one-to-one meetings with various groups in the area, they concluded that it was not the right place. The area seemed too divided into little quarters, very different one from the others. In addition, there were many pockets of middle-class people who did not “have enough anger or energy to want to change anything.” The area had had the same Mayor for the last 15 years, and the majority of the inhabitants seemed content with her and did not feel any urge to fight on particular issues.

Next, the organizers shifted ground and had parallel meetings in Schöneberg and Neukölln. After a period of about six months of talks with local leaders, such as pastors, school principals, and teachers, the organizers sat down together and unanimously agreed Neukölln would be the place to create a new Bürgerplattform. Schöneberg is a big district that merged with other areas. The different quarters did not feel they were part of one district and had no interest in working together. In addition, some of the pastors in the area were rather dismissive regarding the creation of a Bürgerplattform, seeing no potential in it. Neukölln presented a completely different picture.

Even though the organizers were hesitant at first – Leo Penta had tried to organize in the same area ten years before– they argued that, this time, people were

ready to fight. The citizens complained mainly about high unemployment and the safety and quality of the public schools. In addition, with a large migrant population, some streets in Neukölln are perceived as dangerous; there is almost a sense of “ghettoization,” hostility, and division. In the words of one organizer “one spark can bring this volcano to erupt.” Many of the migrants, however, felt discriminated against because no one ever asked them how they felt or what they needed to change the situation. While there are local initiatives and groups working on some of these issues, they tend to cover only the northern or southern part of the borough. In that sense, building an encompassing platform to truly enforce some sort of change seemed attractive to many members.

Once the decision was made to build a platform in Neukölln, countless one-on-one meetings took place between an IAF organizer and leaders from the various community institutions. At the end of each conversation, the organizer would invite the leader to an info meeting providing a broader explanation of what the Bürgerplattform was all about, how the groups could benefit from it, and how it would work. Over the course of one year they would hold about ten info meetings in which different groups would be present – ranging from 10 to 30 people in each meeting – giving the different groups an opportunity to meet one another. By September 2010, these one-to-one and info meetings ultimately culminated in a so-called *Gründungskreis*, or founding committee, represented by 18 groups. At the same time, IAF organizers canvassed medium and small business owners in the area to see whether they would be interested in funding the platform.

The next step was to hold a first internal action. For these groups, to actually

show how it works, the task is to bring enough people together, explaining in their own words what community organizing is about and why they decided to join the platform. Here the exercise is really to show the importance of turnout and, at the same time, the difficulty of mobilizing. Every group was asked to bring ten of its own members as well as people from organizations that were not yet part of the founding committee. The goal was to gather at least 180 people, but the organizer pushed for more than that. In the end, 268 people showed up, turning their first internal action into a huge success.

During that action, leaders – rather than the IAF organizer – went on stage and explained what had been done so far and what the platform was planning to do. Intense coaching by the IAF organizer precedes this form of leadership development. The organizer and leader will sit down, go over the notes, and practice the lines. Indeed, the organizers will often closely guide the members throughout the process. In addition, a voting system was set in place. Leaders would vote on topics such as when the founding assembly would take place: whether they would wait until they got to 50 groups or hold it regardless of the number but within a certain time frame. Another important topic was whether groups that came to the meetings but had not officially decided to join could continue to come every time and watch without really engaging. Another issue was how to deal with groups that officially joined but whose members would not show up. It is clear that important parts of the culture and the norms were created during these initial stages. During the founding process, the significance of member participation, decision-making, commitment, and turnout is emphasized through voting procedures as well as certain rituals.

Furthermore, during this process it was critical to aim for a diversified membership. The group existed so far more or less of half German and half non-German groups, half religious and half non-religious groups. The members wanted to get more schools on board, and the organizer argued, “If of all these 70 schools which I know in Neukölln, we get two, three, five, that is fine. We don’t need to get them all. We don’t want only schools... they will dominate a discussion about a certain topic.”

Finally, on January 25<sup>th</sup> 2012, the founding assembly took place. Over 1,000 people gathered in *Villa Müzikhol*, a ballroom in Neukölln where Turkish weddings are often held, and over 30 groups introduced themselves as official members of “*Wir in Neukölln*” or WIN. As is typical for IAF founding assemblies, a member of each organization went on stage and explained why they had decided to join the platform. As one of the members stated, “We don’t want to live in a ‘parallel society’... we are German Muslims who finally want to show what [we] can do. That can be done only [when we live] in one community.”<sup>40</sup> The platform is, for many, considered an opportunity to bridge ethnic and religious divisions in the community. Two strangers, such as 35-year old Tom Hansings, the chairman of a local clothing design shop, and 42-year old Ercan Yilmaz, a member of the Islamic community Milli Görüs, while living less than a quarter of a mile apart, would probably not have met without the platform. Hansings argues “I was for the first time in a Mosque thanks to the Bürgerplattform” and for Yilmaz the Bürgerplattform gives the Evangelical, Catholic, and Muslim communities a chance to build bridges between their worlds, which otherwise would not happen. In addition, according to some participants, WIN doesn’t

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<sup>40</sup> Berliner Zeitung, January 26, 2012. "Wir wollen nicht in einer Parallelgesellschaft leben" by Andrea Beyerlein.

exist just to link non-Germans with Germans, but also to encourage and promote closer connections between northern and southern Neukölln. While a large Turkish and student population is present in the North, there is a scary growth of support for the far-right national democratic party NPD (*Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands*) in the South. An encompassing platform could promote unity and resist a push to the right.<sup>41</sup>

In sum, the initial process of building up the base, selecting topics, and trying to come up with a concrete plan to take action takes a long time and is hard work. Many meetings (group meetings as well as one-on-one meetings) must take place to work through this process in a democratic way. The emphasis on teamwork and shared responsibility enhances feelings of group commitment, ownership, and accountability among the participants. Clear *solidary* as well as *developmental* benefits come out of this process (Polletta 2002). The members get a stake in the decision-making and therefore a stake in the success and the survival of the organization, heightening their sense of solidarity and commitment.

### *First Power, then Program*

In IAF organizations, groups decide to join the community organization before they even know what topics they will work on. First they build the power, then they work on the program. Indeed, only after this two-year founding process did discussions start regarding potential issues WIN might work on. Between January and May, three so-called *Themenfindungsabende* took place, in which between 200 and 250 people

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<sup>41</sup> Berliner Morgenpost, January 22, 2012. "Bürgerplattform Neukölln: Ein Netzwerk für die Großstadt" by Jörn

participated. These meetings are critical, as they are opportunities for everyone to co-decide which issues the organization will work on. The participants split up into smaller teams of six to eight people, each team moderated by a volunteer, and minutes are taken. Typical for an IAF organization, these meetings take place in a very disciplined fashion. There is indeed a structure in place with certain rules and procedures.

As one of the members stated,

The meetings are quite short. They have this rule that meetings are not longer than 90 minutes. We always have a very full schedule and we have lots of organizational things to discuss, so it's rather sometimes run as a business meeting. In the sense that it is very strict: we start on time, people pay attention, we go through the agenda, and we usually don't go for drinks afterwards...it is easier, say for people with kids or so, 'I will be gone for 90 minutes and then be back home,' instead of these really long, two, three, four hour meetings like with other political organizations.

The participants were asked to state their most urgent concerns regarding Neukölln. The organizer gathered the minutes and discussed the long list of issues together with the steering committee, turning it into the following short list of topics: education, a job center, housing, local authorities, public space, and lack of doctors. After each team was asked to identify the three most important topics, a general assembly was organized by two volunteer groups (one group in charge of the technical issues, the other in charge of the program and guests) to take a final vote. Finally, at the assembly, the participants voted to work on issues around "public space" and "education." Once the topics were selected, the participants split up into so-called *Aktionsteams*, or action teams, examining and discussing the different layers of

concerns and trying to put together a proposal for concrete action.

It is thus quite unique for an organization to work together for at least one year, before even deciding which specific issues they will tackle. Building this grassroots base takes time and is part of an enormous effort, but it is key for the IAF organization to remain sustainable in the long run. The emphasis on leadership development, one-to-one relational meetings while having a certain structure with rules and procedures in place is what makes the organization effective. However, as I show next, certain challenges specific to this model come to the forefront.

*Too organizer-driven? “The Grey Eminence”*

During the founding stages of WIN, some members became rather skeptical of the democratic process. As one of the members remarked,

When things become a little bit difficult, or when the organizing team thinks, ‘this will be an important meeting,’ Leo Penta [director of DICO] comes in. He comes in, listens for a while and then says something like: ‘You should pay attention to this, and therefore you should do it like this.’ He has this authority. In German we say, he has the *Graue Eminenz*, the gray brain behind everything. By the end of the day, they say it is all on us, we can vote on anything, but they try to push it in a way they want it.”

Being too organizer-driven is not a complaint only in Berlin, but can be heard across the IAF organizations; tension indeed exists between building an organization based on participatory or grassroots democracy and, at the same time, having in place a hierarchical structure.

In this German case, the organizers proposed it would be more efficient to focus on one or two issues, rather than three as initially suggested. They reasoned that

focusing on three issues might take too long, and they argued, in addition, that they had tried this with the Bürgerplattform Wedding-Moabit and it didn't work. While at the end of the day, a majority voted in favor of just two issues, some groups felt betrayed. As one of the members argued, "Maybe Neukölln is different, we should try it anyway." This model of participatory democracy has indeed a strong "guided" character and is based on tutelage (Polletta 2002). While the organizers don't force any decisions on the members, they do try to guide the members in certain directions towards winnable issues.

Next, I examine how the organization has been able to overcome specific challenges related to the German context.

### ***A German translation of the IAF organizing principles***

Germany doesn't have a legacy of community organizing. In order to set up an IAF organization in Berlin, challenges in terms of re-defining the role of the state, finding the right funding channels, attracting member institutions, and coming up with the appropriate translation, had to be overcome.

When the director Leo Penta illustrated during a training session that IAF organizing is part of the civil society, or the so-called "third sector," which is separate from "the state" and "the market," confusion arose among the participants. "Isn't civil society part of the state?," one of the participants asked. In Germany, there is a very strong notion of "the state" and the idea that the government is responsible for shaping civil society. Even though, according to the organizers, this social-democratic welfare system is quietly crumbling, many people hold on to the idea that the state is taking



care of its citizens. Furthermore, the state seems to be always there. One organizer illustrated this with the parable of the hare and the hedgehog running a race, in which the hedgehog – even though slower – outsmarts the hare and wins. The hedgehog represents the government; “wherever you go, government is already there.” Even in those places, like Schönevide, that seemed completely abandoned by the government, “you have a sleeping government, which as soon you want to do something, you obviously wake up.”

In addition, Germany’s strong welfare system is provided not only by a public or private system, but also by a strong intermediary, non-for-profit sector. Germany has a highly institutionalized third sector, closely tied to the state and the market. The main umbrella associations, such as the Catholic German Caritas Federation (Deutscher Caritasverband), the Service Agency of the Protestant Church in Germany (Diakonisches Werk der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland), the German Red Cross (Deutsches Rotes Kreuz), and the German Welfare Association (Deutscher Partitätischer Wohlfahrtsverband), comprise numerous decentralized agencies and organizations all over the country. Between the 1970s and 1990s, these non-profit welfare organizations have grown faster than the manufacturing and services sector, employing over one million full-time workers. The bulk of their income comes from public funds, contracts and grants, and about a third of their revenue comes from private fees and payments directly from the customers (Bauer 2003). These non-profits focus mainly on delivering services and in most cases are highly dependent on the state. As a consequence, when Penta first came to Berlin most citizens were unfamiliar with a type of organization that acts independently of the state.

A big challenge in those beginning years was therefore to find the right funding. As a principle, in order to retain independence, IAF organizations are not supposed to accept government funding. During the mid 1990s, however, when Penta first started to organize in Germany, he accepted money from a so-called “Quartiersmanagement,” or neighborhood management, in Neukölln. Penta’s experience with the neighborhood management ended up being a “disaster” so he decided never to take funding from it again. According to Penta,

Nothing constructive could take place because there was a constant battle over, you know, what we should do and what we should not do... I had ... a meeting with the person who is in charge with neighborhood management at the time and literally she asked the question: ‘Why are you meeting with all these tenants?’ And I was ready to say - I bit my tongue - but I was ready to say, ‘well would you like to have maybe a scholarship to our training so you can come and understand what neighborhood work is all about.

Traditionally, IAF affiliates receive the majority of their funding from member institutions and foundations. In Berlin, the situation is different. The community organization runs on a budget of only \$75,000 (or 50,000€), primarily from small and medium businesses located in the community, which provide about 75% of the budget, the member institutions providing the remainder. These businesses, however, have no say regarding the issues the community organization takes on or the strategy it pursues (interview organizer). Having businesses fund the organization is an innovative approach compared to other IAF affiliates.

Another challenge arose in terms of member institutions. In line with the IAF mantra, these organizations have institutional membership. The organizers, however, did not just consider the IAF principles as the Ten Commandments; implementing

them in a new institutional context required creative adaptation. Two specific differences come to light. First, not only institutions are encouraged to become members; individuals can participate as well if they form their own group. This was a strategic choice of the organizers, because they believed people in Germany, especially within the former East, are reluctant to join institutions. Giving “people without a group” a chance to join the community organization could circumvent that initial lack of connectedness. Second, there is much more diversity among the members – racial and ethnic diversity on the one hand, religious/non religious diversity on the other. Traditionally, IAF organizations started off with strong support from the Catholic church. But again, in Germany the situation was different and, soon enough, Penta and his organizers realized this was not possible in Germany, where the role of religion is much smaller. The country is much more secular. Berlin, a relatively young city, rather than being founded on religious pillars, has been known as the cradle of the industrial revolution for its innovativeness in electricity and the invention of the S-bahn.

The oldest organization “Organizing Schöneweide” is located in the former East. Its membership consists of evangelical and catholic churches, senior centers, kindergartens, and community gardens and is represented by a majority of white, middle-class Germans. Even though the organization displays some generational diversity, with young Germans as well as older men and women part of it, the group is much more homogenous compared to the organizations set up in the West. Indeed, since the postwar, there has been a much greater presence of immigrants in the West than in the East, which is reflected in the composition of each organization’s

membership.

Located in the West, both “we are here” in Wedding-Moabit and WIN in Neukölln are composed of migrant associations, mosques, evangelic and Baptist church communities, as well as kindergartens, non-profit neighborhood associations, and groups of individuals. This membership diversity in terms of German and non German groups as well as religious and non religious organizations, while a reflection of the specific areas, is exceptional and has been part of a deliberate effort of the organizers. As a member from Neukölln states,

The diversity of people participating is extraordinary...this is what I like most about the *Bürgerplattformen* [community organizations] and what is also different from all neighborhood organizations I know in Berlin. They bring together groups and individuals who usually would not talk to each other if they met in the streets.

The lack of diversity in the organization in Schöneweide has more to do with the lack of racial or ethnic diversity in the greater borough than with the strategic choices the organizer made, or, as she would tell me, “you work with what there is.”

Their outreach towards Muslims and migrant associations has especially been noticed by American IAF organizers. In the US, one of the national directors of the IAF showed me a picture of a community organization’s action. A majority of the people in that picture wore headscarves or Islamic clothing. He asked me, “Do you know where that has been taken?” “Berlin,” he answered. He shows the same picture at IAF trainings across the US to show the diversity and the importance of going beyond church-based groups in setting up new organizations.

Furthermore, the difficulty with getting churches on board can be partly explained by the following: Christian churches are closely linked to the state through

the so-called “church tax.” This tax, of about eight percent, is automatically collected from citizens of religious communities by the state and is then distributed to the major denominations to support their activities. Christian churches are thus maintained and survive mainly through the automatic collection of taxpayers’ money, rather than through donations. As a consequence, few people see the need to be involved in community organizing (interview organizer). When DICO’s mentor Tom Lenz came over from Chicago to Berlin and attended the founding assembly of Südost, he told me,

Two moments were shocking to me: when we were evaluating [the founding assembly] one of the members said, ‘We are over-represented by religious institutions, that’s a problem.’ I said ‘What?!’ But yes, only under 5% of the population are active in religion. The second moment was when I asked one of the lay leaders of the church, ‘How big is your church?’ He said ‘5000 members.’ ‘Wow that’s big.’ ‘How many come to service?’ ‘30!’

Indeed, relying only on faith-based groups would be organizational suicide in a German context.

Finally, the question arose of how to translate key concepts such as leadership, relational meeting, or community organization into German words that made sense. The IAF strongly emphasizes the role of leaders. In its history, Germany has known one leader or “*Führer*,” and no one wants to be reminded of him. As a consequence, rather than using the literal translation of leader, “*Führer*,” the organization uses the words “*Multiplikatoren*” (disseminators) or “*Schlüsselpersonen*” (key people). The relational meeting, or one-to-one meeting, has been introduced as “*Einzelgespräch*,” or one-to-one conversation, and community organization has been loosely described as building a “*Bürgerplattform*,” or citizens platform. While the first organization

“Organizing Schöneweide,” created under Leo Penta still retained some of the English names, it has been a conscious decision to leave out the English terms in the more recently built organizations such as *Wir Sind Da* (We are there) in the boroughs Wedding-Moabit and *Bürgerplattform Neukölln*.

Beyond these issues of literal translation, however, it has been even harder to make the concepts resonate within the German context. During the IAF training in Berlin, participants were wary about the role of leadership. Not just the term “leader,” but why the organization would need a leader in the first place, was questioned. Again, Germany’s history, and its infamous leader, remain vivid in the memories of many. Even organizing in the former East versus the West of Berlin displays the effect of different historical memories. The older members of “Organizing Schöneweide” especially, many of whom grew up in the former East, had experienced decades of a different form of socialization. An organizer from the West described the following scenario. She attended a very successful action in the former East led by “Organizing Schöneweide.” The organization managed to procure EUR 150,000 of funding to revitalize the economically devastated neighborhood of Schöneweide. Representatives from the organization went on stage and handed over, as a symbolic gesture, a huge check to the local mayor. The organizer continues,

The people were just sitting there and I thought, ‘My goodness! 150,000 Euros!’ The Neukölln and Wedding-Moabit people would say, ‘Yeah, great’!

But according to the organizer, people living in Schöneweide come from a very different cultural background, in which they have been trained to go to organizational meetings, and they are fed up with it. They don’t want anybody to tell them to do

things in a certain way anymore and are very suspicious of having to say “Oh yeah! Great!.”

Indeed, IAF community organizing consists of many rituals, bringing out strong emotions among the participants and leading to feelings of solidarity (Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta 2004). The power of emotions has been long established by social movement scholars, who have shown how successful rituals produce positive energy and generate strong feelings of unity among the members (Collins 2004). For members from the community organization in the former East, however, while these rituals still occur, in a certain sense they are downplayed. The memory of obligatory collective action as well as the many rituals during the Cold War have left scars on many of the older members.

In sum, the organizers had to be creative to adapt the IAF model to a German context. Challenges in terms of re-defining the role of the state, funding, membership, and translation had to be overcome.

### ***The impact and challenges of community organizing in Berlin***

Even though the German IAF organizations have gained recognition from important political actors, such as the Mayor of Berlin, members of the Berlin Senate and Parliament, and mayors from several different boroughs, concrete policy outcomes have remained modest. So far, the organizers’ success lies mainly in developing the organizations, connecting people that were previously unconnected, and building up institutional power. The value of these processes cannot be underestimated, though. As Putnam (2000) has argued, civically engaged communities are more likely to have

better outcomes in terms of education, control of crime and drug abuse, urban poverty, unemployment, and even health than communities that are not engaged. In this era, marked by an erosion of social capital – in Germany, people are less likely to be active in church or members of a trade union than decades ago – these community groups attempt to counteract that trend by developing new networks, norms, trust, and engagement, facilitating coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit. These IAF organizations don't rely on so-called "checkbook membership" (Skocpol 1999), but represent a novel way to enhance civic participation in Germany.

The IAF organizations in Berlin exist as a result of an American IAF organizer's coming to Germany and trying to implement this model in a very distinct context. It is an American style of organizing with which not everyone has been comfortable. The organizers have tried to creatively adapt it to make it work within this distinct historical and institutional setting. In a dense German institutional landscape, the IAF organizations have found their niche, working at the meso-level, or the level of the borough or district. Importantly, the organizations have diversified their memberships, including immigrant associations as well as mosques. For many underrepresented groups, the community organizations have been an opportunity to actively participate and work together towards social change, rather than live in a parallel society.

In the final part, I provide a comparative analysis as well as a brief evaluation of community organizing.



## CHAPTER 8

### ACCOUNTING FOR THE SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

Despite being embedded in very different institutional and socio-economic contexts, the organizations have been able to mobilize their members over time, maintaining their vitality and sustaining their original goals of building power for social change. In this chapter, I examine what accounts for their similarities, in terms of their mobilization capacity, and what accounts for their differences, in terms of membership growth. I conclude with the broader implications of my framework.

#### *A Hybrid Logic of Organizing: Enhancing Member Mobilization*

The goal of IAF organizations is to improve the living and working conditions of local communities. As non-bargaining actors, their fundamental source of power lies in grassroots mobilization.

The meetings, actions, and delegate assemblies that I attended spoke for themselves. Hundreds, sometimes thousands, of members were present, spanning a variety of religious, ethnic, and class backgrounds. Every member or organizer I approached, whether in Boston, London, or Berlin, mentioned the importance of turnout as a measure of success and regularly attended actions and meetings.

Newspaper articles on these organizations invariably mentioned with awe the number of people the organizations were able to turn out. The organizations are indeed able to mobilize hundreds of members overnight. I argue that combining the logics of

bureaucracy and social movements in both the organizational structure and culture is likely to lead to strong mobilization capacity.

### *Mobilizing Structure*

The IAF organizations have a hybrid organizational structure. On the one hand, they have offices and paid professional staff, but on the other, they rely heavily on member volunteers or so-called leaders to do much of the work, such as organizing assemblies, conducting research on the issues, and preparing action proposals. These hybrid organizations have a sufficiently robust structure, providing legitimacy and resources, while they are also able to take advantage of the informal networks connecting people and organizations. In line with social movement theory, while hierarchical organizations tend to become overly conservative, locked-in, bureaucratic structures, lacking any mobilizing capacity, the anarchist counter model, based on extremely loose ties, often lacks the necessary coordination to act (Tarrow 2011). A hybrid structure can therefore counter these tendencies.

Tensions, however, can occur between building an organization based on participatory or grassroots democracy and, at the same time, having in place a hierarchical structure. Being too organizer-driven is a complaint among the members that can be heard across the IAF organizations. Indeed, while the organizers don't force any decisions on the members, they do try to guide the members in certain directions towards winnable issues, or as Polletta (2002) described, this model of participatory democracy is based on tutelage and has a strong "guided" character.

Finally, the organizations are affiliated with an international network, IAF.

Each organization, therefore, has a so-called supervisor/mentor, who will participate in the organization two to three times a year, attend meetings and actions, teach IAF principles, and closely monitor and train the young organizers. Being part of a larger network is important as it provides the organizations legitimacy and stability. Having organizers from the UK and US come over to Germany to attend a big assembly, for example, increases the power and legitimacy of the organization in the eyes of the members, funders, and politicians that are present. This does not just hold for the more “remote” organizations in Europe, but even in the US, it has been critical for the organization in Boston to be part of the IAF. As the director of GBIO said,

When I first started organizing in Brockton [Massachusetts], ... [we] had essentially taken the principles of the IAF and attempted to institute them through Brockton Interfaith Community. I worked in Brockton, did my best, I went to IAF training, and did my best to, on my own, operate and create a culture that was similar to what I learned through IAF. I think I did a decent job, but it was very hard. It is very hard on your own.

Being part of the IAF network provides the organizations with an institutional memory and a track record critical to their success and survival. Furthermore, the cross-organizational dialogue, training opportunities, and mentoring sessions are a means to keep the organizations in line with the IAF core principles. The mentoring visits of Arnie Graph, Jonathan Lange, and Tom Lenz to Boston, London, and Berlin respectively, promote a form of external accountability, ensuring that the organizations remain true to the IAF core traditions. In Germany, for example, the community organization FOCO – not affiliated with the IAF – does not actually build IAF organizations, but organizes mainly workshops, focusing on teaching the IAF principles. As such, the organization would not be able to affiliate with the IAF as it is

not in line with its core mission: building powerful organizations through organizing and mobilizing members.

The IAF network promotes therefore an important level of legitimacy, stability, and external accountability, enhancing the sustainability of the affiliated organizations.

### *Mobilizing Culture*

IAF organizations combine a “relational” culture based on values and trust, fostering a sense of commitment, with a more pragmatic culture based on strategic decision-making and negotiations, fostering a sense of accountability. Again, in line with social movement theory, cultural dimensions, which in turn produce solidarity, motivate participants, and thus encourage collective action (e.g., Goffman 1974; Snow et al. 1986; Polletta 2006; Valocchi 2008). The fundamental building block of every IAF organization is the one-to-one, or relational, meeting, a face-to-face conversation between an organizer and a member with the aim of exploring or strengthening the ties between the community organization and the particular institution. These conversations can be considered important rituals and are the means of building and maintaining relationships by understanding the other party’s reasons and motivations, and of building trust. Members become strongly committed towards the organization, develop a sense of shared responsibility and are likely to actively participate in the organization (Kanter 1968, 1972; Lawler et al. 2009). As a member in Boston told me,

It is important to realize the depth of how real a one-on-one is, how real that is as a tool, how potent... Doing individual meetings up and down the organization and across... When I was in East Harlem, I could get

150 people out of 550. I'd get them. I had done my one-on-ones with a lot of people, I had enough moments of relationships. Sometimes they did it because they were convinced [in the issue] sometimes they did it because they were convinced in me.

The organizations are not, however, merely about dialogue; IAF leaders and organizers consciously combine nurturing deep democratic values with building a powerful organization that has the ability to act. For example, during campaigns, the organizers rely heavily on member accountability and discipline. Turnout to events is critically important. In fact, one of the first questions in evaluating an action is about the turnout. As an organizer in London would argue, "We will often reflect that the success of the action is about 90% down to the turnout." A full room at an accountability assembly, for example, is a clear demonstration of power, whereas if it is half empty, the organization won't be taken seriously.

In addition, there are written procedures in place on how to evolve from a tertiary leader to a primary leader or on how to develop from a junior to a senior organizer. These bureaucratic rules and targets promote a degree of professionalism as well as internal accountability between the members and organizers. The organizers, for example, keep track of how many new relationships they have made through one-to-ones and how much money they are able to raise. Similarly, leaders are categorized as primary, secondary, or tertiary: primary leaders have 20-25 followers, secondary have 10-15, and tertiary have 5-10.<sup>42</sup> According to the IAF, the main characteristic of a talented leader is that he or she has followers, or strong relationships with people

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<sup>42</sup> Primary leaders teach and give training; they raise money for the organization and their own institution, and are part of the Strategy team. Tertiary leaders are task and project oriented, whereas secondary and primary leaders think more broadly about building a powerful organization. The aim is to move people from secondary leadership into primary leadership and from tertiary into secondary.

who will therefore “follow” him or her to an event, or, in other words, according to the IAF, “A leader without followers is just someone going for a walk.” Breaking leadership down into concrete categories with numbers attached makes it clear to the members what leadership means and how it should manifest itself in practice.

In sum, this hybrid model of organizing consists of a mobilizing structure – lying somewhere between a social movement and a bureaucratic organization – and a mobilizing culture – combining moral values and pragmatism – that enhances member mobilization and promotes the organizations’ effectiveness and sustainability. And to a certain extent, this hybrid model is flexible and dynamic enough to travel across distinct institutional contexts.

### ***Mechanisms of Creative Borrowing***

While important similarities are noticeable in the structure and the culture of the organizational model, the organizations do not simply copy the model, but apply creativity and resourcefulness to make the model work in each context. This is what I call the mechanism of creative borrowing: each organization must adapt to a new environment and will be challenged to overcome internal or external pressures in order to survive. The strategic decisions that the organizers make are bound by the realities of the external context in which the organization is embedded. In particular, differences in terms of membership growth come to the forefront: the community organization in London has grown immensely, doubling in membership over the past decade, the one in Berlin has had a much more moderate growth rate, while the Boston organization has actually declined in membership over the past 10 years. What

accounts for these differences?

Based on my three case studies, I argue it is important to examine the temporal, geographic, and strategic dimensions to understand the organization's membership growth or decline. In particular, IAF organizations outside the US have been created much later and often have much more wiggle room to act. In addition, they were able to learn from the mistakes and try to be innovative in their approach. Second, the political structure or in a broad sense, the geography, is critical in the organizations' development over time. A small country with a centralized government might make it easier for an organization to grow, compared to an organization created in a large, decentralized country. In addition, it is important to examine the level of competition the organization faces. Finally, the strategic decisions of the organizers are critical as well: is there an intentional decision to diversify the membership or not? Do the organizers allow for enough action among the members or are they focused more on internal organizational development?

#### *Membership decline in Boston*

In 1998, 4,000 people from about 80 organizations attended GBIO's founding Assembly. Three years later, membership peaked at about 100 member institutions. Today, GBIO consists of 52 member institutions. Over the course of almost 15 years, GBIO's membership has declined by nearly a half.<sup>43</sup> What explains this decline?

Even though GBIO was only created in the 1990s, it rides on the back of a

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<sup>43</sup> Because the organization itself does not keep a detailed yearly record of its membership, these data are approximate and are reconstructed by analyzing virtually all the newspaper articles between 1998-2012 that mentioned GBIO, as well as interviewing the lead organizers.

decades-long IAF history and legacy. Nonetheless, whereas most American IAF organizations are primarily church-based, GBIO started off in a unique way, consisting of migrant associations, housing organizations, and youth groups as well as religious institutions. This membership diversity was the result of its main founders, long-time union organizer Jim Drake and community organizer Lew Finfer. At the offset, GBIO was therefore quite different from the more traditional, faith-based IAF organizations, which allowed them to grow in membership. When Jim Drake passed away in 2001, the organization went through a leadership vacuum until national IAF directors came in and steered the organization back to its original faith-based model. The strategic decision of the leadership to shift the organization back to a “traditional” IAF model resulted in some non-faith groups leaving GBIO. Today, GBIO’s membership consists overwhelmingly of religious congregations, with Christian, Jewish, and Muslim participation.<sup>44</sup> Only four member organizations – two trade unions (SEIU local 1199 and SEIU local 615) and two community development corporations (Dorchester Bay EDC and Somerville Community Corporation) – are not faith-based. The emphasis on faith-based groups without tapping into other pockets of society has partly made it more challenging for the organization to grow.

Furthermore, as mentioned by many interviewees, Boston seems oversaturated with nonprofits. While it is hard to get comparable data across countries, certain databases, such as Guidestar, list over 10,000 nonprofits in the greater Boston area. While these data do not tell what kind of nonprofits these are (e.g., service versus organizing), they can give a sense of the density of NGOs in Boston. In the

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<sup>44</sup> In addition, in the early 2000s, due to the implosion of the Catholic scandal around sex abuse, GBIO lost a



interviews, members and organizers would mention the fierce competition when applying for funding or reaching out to new potential members. As so many “social justice type” organizations exist within the area, membership growth is not easy to attain. This rather competitive environment adds thus to the challenge of membership growth.

Finally, in terms of the political geography, the Boston IAF has worked mainly on a local level. An important exception has been their campaign on healthcare, resulting in state-wide reform. As a result of the federal system, however, there is more power at the local level, with the municipalities and counties having a substantial degree of autonomy. This political structure reflects the level at which they organize as well as the policy changes they are able to achieve. In some instances, however, it’s been difficult to break through the power of this local structure. For example, GBIO has been looking to cooperate more with schools and tried to get them into membership. Each school, however, is tied to a school district with a school board. As a consequence, the schools become part of a political machine, preventing them from being actively involved as a member into community organizing. So far, “Austin Interfaith” in Texas has been the only American IAF organization that has worked extensively with public schools.

In sum, for the Boston IAF, the lack of membership diversity, the competition, as well as the governance structure has contributed to its membership decline. As I will show next, the collaboration across the three religious denominations, however, might not be underestimated as it brings a certain power to the organization and its

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significant number of Catholic churches.

members.

### Opportunities of Faith-based Membership

While having a diversified membership promotes membership growth, GBIO has been able to build a strong collective identity based on faith values, encouraging the members to act. Certain challenges, however, had to be overcome. Jewish leaders, for example, mentioned how in the beginning meetings would often be held on Saturdays, the Sabbath, or that everyone would be invited to pray in the name of Jesus. This has changed. Members learned to be more sensitive towards each other's holidays and as opposed to collectively saying "let us all pray," individuals pray according to their own tradition and language. As one Jewish leader explains, "In the end they'll say in the name of Jesus Christ; I don't say that, but I'll say 'Amen' because I understand the spirit of it."

Besides these challenges, the variety of religions brings a certain power to the organization and its members. A Jewish leader explains how she got up to speak in a black church. She was used to the synagogue, where people sit quietly and listen. Nervous but thrilled at the opportunity, she gets her first sentence out and the pastor, sitting in the first row, starts responding, "that's right, aha, you tell them," creating a powerful moment of merging traditions. Furthermore, during campaigns, GBIO's faith-based identity can be an important trigger for members to act. As I mentioned earlier, in meetings regarding GBIO's anti-usury campaign, for example, the congregational leaders referred to their sacred texts, stating that usury is wrong and pushing members to act. This collective identity based on faith is indeed considered a

powerful driver of member participation.

### *Membership Growth in London and Berlin*

Community organizing has a long legacy in the US, whereas in Britain and Germany it only started about two decades ago. This temporal difference, however, has two important consequences: first, it allowed the organizers in London and Berlin to learn not only from US successes, but from the mistakes as well, promoting innovation rather than merely imitation. As an organizer in London would say, “you can take and learn and use all the things you like, you can get to start things again, in a way you can never do once you’re decades into organizing.” They were indeed able to creatively borrow and adapt the model in their own context.

Furthermore, in the UK and Germany, churches are much emptier than in the US and even though mosques have started to mushroom in London and Berlin, they don’t have abundant resources. The organizers, therefore, had to be creative concerning their sources of funding, making them highly diverse from the start.

Membership growth is more likely when the organizers can tap into diverse types of organizations instead of limiting themselves to faith-based groups. According to an LC organizer,

IAF is getting broader and more diverse, but it wasn’t. It was mostly Christian in membership and a few trade unions but not many...While we knew we couldn’t sustain this, nor was it attractive to build a sectarian alliance, it had to be civic in Britain, because faith is so small and effectively so insignificant...So [London Citizens] has always been more diverse in alliances because Britain is and London is very diverse, but then so is New York and so is Chicago. But we had the privilege to start off later and learn from it that if you don’t start diverse it is quiet difficult to go diverse. So that has been helpful.

Second, the IAF organizations in the UK and Germany are virtually unique, which have allowed them to establish a niche within the civil society landscape and grow over time. In the UK, while civil society organizations are growing – according to the Charity Commission, there are about 5,000 nonprofits in London – most of them are focused on delivering services rather than organizing. According to an LC organizer,

They [American IAF affiliates] look enviously on the fact that we don't have any competition. That is such a relief. In Chicago there are 5 training institutes. There is some evidence that Gamaliel [another model of community organizing], which is one of them, has been seen in Manchester [UK]. In fact I know Gamaliel has been invited by some people... to come and train them in Manchester, which is very frustrating, because the last thing we need is another American network doing a slightly different sort of organizing here. I can't stop it, this wouldn't be appropriate, but it is unfortunate, because it will confuse the foundations from which we try to get the money out of, particularly if they suggest that they are the nice face of organizing and we are the nasty face. Because that is how sometimes people treat us.

Similarly, since IAF organizing is a new phenomenon in Germany, the organizers have not encountered direct competition, whereas there have been occasions when other types of organizations, such as “neighborhood managements,” have tried to block IAF development by publicly criticizing the organization.

Finally, organizers were well aware of the geographical differences especially between the US and the UK. Being based in London rather than an American city had some clear advantages:

Because we are such a small and centralized country, we can do actions, which I know our American colleagues are very envious of. We can get to Westminster in half an hour from here, so we can reach

significant politicians, cabinet level politicians, we can reach corporations that are based in Canary Wharf and the City of London in 20 minutes. We can reach the main media outlets in 10 minutes, so we have the benefit and privilege of working in an area in the country, which is like the center of media, business and politics, in some cases for Europe, in some cases for the world.

This geographical advantage led to ambitious actions and campaigns fighting for issues at a national level such as the immigration system or asylum policy, something American IAF affiliates had never done before. As a result, conducting these high-profile campaigns made it more likely for other institutions to join LC.

In sum, for the London and Berlin IAF, the membership diversity, the lack of competition, and the centralized governance structure (especially in the case of London) have contributed to their membership growth. Next, I illustrate some of the challenges, however, when dealing with a highly diversified membership.

### Challenges of Membership Diversity

As scholars have shown, the formation of a strong collective identity will move people towards collective action. For the American IAF organizations, the collective identity is built around faith and faith-based values. The task in London or Berlin is to create such an identity for the organization in which the members are diverse, religious and non-religious. A member from Berlin described the following,

For me it was interesting to see when we had this public event, when we celebrated the founding of the *Bürgerplattform* [community organization] ... the people who came would dress in a traditional way, they wouldn't do this during our meetings. A priest would come out and say, "God is with us." We never talk like that in our platform meetings; God is not with us. It is very interesting, and I think it's good in a way, everyone knows that people have all these differences, but people who are there have this openness and tolerance, otherwise they

would not be there.

In a certain sense, therefore, the collective identity is built around shared values and mutual respect rather than faith alone. Or as Leo Penta, the director of the German IAF, would describe it to me, it is about appealing to what people hold to be sacred. Many of these values are also religiously sacred, but they won't call them that in Germany. Part of what the organizers do is translate or use different forms of expression among believers and non-believers. When speaking in the public arena, the language might be different from the language they speak inside the organization.

One of the challenges in London has been on how to include the new Jewish communities. While Christian and Muslim groups have been part of LC since its offset, only recently synagogues have joined the membership. According to one of the organizers, LC needs to still figure out how to work all together, across religions. Jews, for example, don't do public worship, "happy clappy, we're going to call on the Lord." It is not part of their practice and makes them feel cringe-worthy when going to LC assemblies and the other members do so. At the North London founding assembly, for example, the organizers blew the "shofar" or a goat horn to call for action. In the Jewish tradition, the shofar is considered an awakening call or a call for prayer, usually used in a private setting, for example, on Rosh Hashanah. According to the organizer,

The Christians thought 'that's beautiful, I love it, so Old Testament, that's gorgeous.' The Muslims are like 'yeah wicked, we are comfortable with that.' The Jews wanted to die of shame: 'why would you do this, it's a weird squeaky noise, why would you ever blow a shofar at an assembly'.

In addition, it has been a challenge for LC to mobilize the Jewish community as Jews. According to the organizer, a former rabbi would have the phrase: “we are Jews in the home and Englishmen on the streets.” Contrary to the US, public action has not been that intuitive for the Jewish community in Britain. As a result, the organizer tries to build a mental landscape of what Jewish public action looks like, literally carrying a picture in her purse of Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel and Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. at the historic Selma Civil Rights March of 1965. One way to bring out public action and build bridges with other membership groups has been through working on specific campaigns. Their campaign on social care, still in its initial stages, has so far been excellent at creating a collective interest around caregivers – often migrant workers from low-wage communities – and caretakers, such as many parents of Jewish members.

***Broader implications: Do these explanations hold beyond my case studies?***

What are the broader implications of this study? To what extent do my explanations hold for other IAF organizations?

While I focused mainly on the IAF organizations in Boston, London, and Berlin, I have a general understanding regarding the other IAF organizations abroad – Canada and Australia – as well as in the US. The IAF trainings that I attended allowed me to have informal conversations with leaders and organizers from different IAF organizations across the globe and I rely on secondary sources, such as the work by Amanda Tattersall (2006) on the IAF in Australia, Paul Osterman (2002) on the IAF in Texas, and Michael Gecan (2002) on the IAF in New York. I argue that despite being

embedded in different contexts the development of a hybrid model of organizing can be found across the organizations. They have a similar structure, in terms of institutional membership, paid organizers, volunteers, and develop a mobilizing culture, with one-to-one relational meetings as their main tool. The rules and procedures come from the national IAF directors and are handed down to the different organizations.

While each organization functions along the same principles, not every IAF affiliate has managed to survive. Some organizations started off as IAF affiliates but have drifted away from the original IAF mission towards becoming service providers. The most famous example is Saul Alinsky's first organization, the Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council. As Alinsky even noted during the late 1960s, "They [BYNC] moved into the nightfall of success, and the dreams of achievement which make men fight were replaced by the restless nightmares of fear: fear of change, fear of losing material possessions. Today they are part of the city's establishment and are desperately trying to keep their community unchanged" (1969: xi). Even though it was the first organization set up by Alinsky, BYNC is not part of the IAF and focuses mainly on community service and economic development (BYNC 2012). Similarly, in 2008, London Citizens disaffiliated Birmingham Citizens as it abandoned its mission to organize members and turned into a community development corporation. These examples show the difficulty and importance to keep the organizations balanced somewhere between bureaucratic organizations and social movements, developing a mobilizing structure and culture. When the organization shifts too much towards the bureaucratic side, it is likely to transform into a more conservative service provider.



Second, can this model be transferred to other organizations? As Osterman mentions (2006), organizing within faith communities is often just as challenging as in other parts of society. Many trade unions have lost their “social movement” roots and became rather bureaucratic structures. Developing a strong relational culture takes time and is never ending. Trade unions, however, can’t always afford to devote so much time to developing their membership and as a consequence find it harder to sustain member mobilization (Tapia 2012). Even though some unions in the United States have established a relational culture between the members and the union (see, e.g., John Hoerr 1997 on Kris Rondeau’s Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers), they remain the exception.

Conversely, for loose social movements, such as the Occupy movement, it is hard to remain sustainable over time. Arguably, not having enough of a structure in place contributes to their decline. As Verta Taylor (1989) illustrates, the women’s movement between 1945 and the mid 1960s was able to stay alive over time due to its “abeyance structure” in place. Based on archival data moreover from the National Woman’s Party and the League of Women Voters as well as interviews with female activists, she illustrates how this structure is characterized by temporality (or the length of time that the organization can hold personnel), purposive commitment of the members, its exclusiveness, the importance of centralization, and the development of an organizational culture. The IAF organizations have to a certain extent this “abeyance structure” in place, allowing them to remain sustainable between waves of actions and campaigning.

In terms of membership growth, I argue it is important to examine the

mechanisms of creative borrowing that take place within the boundaries of the external context. Specifically, I point towards temporal, geographic, and strategic dimensions. These variables, however, are derived from three single case studies, and as such, they should be regarded as hypotheses for theory testing with respect to other cases. There could be other important factors, however, that help explain the growth or decline of the organization. First, member institutions might join because they are interested in a particular issue the organization is campaigning on. For example, in Boston many housing organizations joined as the GBIO started off with an affordable housing campaign, or, in London, many migrant associations joined as LC embarked on their “strangers into citizens” campaign. Once these campaigns come to an end – because they were won, lost, or dropped – it becomes challenging to retain these single-issue organizations and as a result, some will drop out of the organization. This happened across the organizations and can thus not explain the difference in growth between them. Similarly, when there is not enough action taking place certain member groups are likely to drop out. For member institutions that are externally focused without being interested in their internal organizational development, getting into action is critical. Again, member groups dropped out because of this reason across all three of the organizations and cannot explain the difference.<sup>45</sup> In sum, these alternative explanations do not offer persuasive arguments to account for the differences in membership growth.

To summarize this chapter, the IAF organizations develop a hybrid logic of

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<sup>45</sup> To counteract this drop-out tendency, the organizers in London often decide to carry out an action immediately upon member groups joining to show the potential and effectiveness of organizing.

organizing, accounting for their similarities in terms of member mobilization. The intentional development of a mobilizing structure and a mobilizing culture encourages member participation. Furthermore, this model is dynamic enough to travel across contexts. Nonetheless, differences, in terms of membership growth, come to the forefront as well. Here, I have shown that the organizers must creatively borrow and adapt the IAF model within each context. Temporal, geographic, as well as strategic dimensions in terms of competition, governance structure, and membership diversification, are likely to account for these differences. Finally, I argue that this hybrid logic of organizing can be found across the IAF organizations and could be a model for either trade unions or social movements to remain dynamic and sustainable over time. The factors explaining the differences in membership growth, however, are based on my three case studies and should be considered hypotheses to be tested with respect to other cases.

## CHAPTER 9

### EVALUATING COMMUNITY ORGANIZING

While community organizations might not be very well known, as Heidi Swarts argues, “they play a critical role in agenda setting, representation, and policy making from below” (2008: xiv). They are important actors in reinvigorating democracy, relying on an active grassroots base as they fight for social change. For example, among GBIO’s greatest accomplishments is its role in the passage of Massachusetts’ Health Care Reform, collecting over 100,000 signatures and pressuring policy makers to expand access to affordable health care to a half of million people without health insurance. One of London Citizens’ greatest achievements is the living wage campaign. Targeting hospitals, banks, and universities, the campaign resulted in huge gains for the city’s low-wage workers, or over £210 million living wages. The organizations in Germany also experienced important successes. Among others, they brought the main campus of the University for Applied Sciences to Schöneeweide, an important effort to revitalize this devastated borough, they created important improvements regarding job center services in Wedding-Moabit, and organized successful mayoral accountability assemblies during election years in which they invited the incumbent as well as candidate mayors for the city of Berlin. Indeed, the IAF organizations don’t have a revolutionary set of goals, such as overthrowing capitalism or eliminating private production. Their purpose is not to displace the established order of power but to incrementally change some of the policies. In line

with Gamson (1990), this “strategy of thinking small” is, however, more likely to lead to successful outcomes than radical demands.

While these organizations have a long legacy in the US, they are quite a new phenomenon in Europe. In this dissertation, I compared a similar model of civic engagement in the US, UK, and Germany, and tried to identify the underlying processes that explain the mobilization capacity and development of these three organizations.

To fully understand how the organizations function I start off by going back to their roots: Why were the IAF organizations able to emerge when they did? The institutional context as well as the explicit strategic decisions of the founders provide some clarity. First, an opening in the institutional context allowed the organizations to emerge. Here I emphasize a new interpretation of “opportunity structure,” differing from the classic political opportunity structure theory, in that for each case the political context had actually become quite hostile – rather than more open – when the organizations emerged. I show how because of a shift from an open to a rather hostile environment the traditional channels of representation were weakened or absent, allowing this alternative form to emerge. Secondly, while the organizations were able to carve out a niche for themselves, this would not have been possible without the strategic capacities of the founders to diffuse this model across different settings.

I show how their similar organizing practice across countries is due to their development of a “hybrid logic of organizing,” or, in other words, the organizations combine practices and principles of bureaucracy as well as of social movements in their organizational structure and culture, enhancing the organizations’ mobilizing

capacity. Differences, however, come to the forefront as well, as organizers need to adapt each model to fit within a specific context. Indeed, while these organizations adhere to the same IAF model of organizing, at the same time, they try to be dynamic enough to work in different contexts. As a result, a process of creative borrowing occurs within the boundaries of the external context. Differences in strategies regarding membership diversification, as well as the different levels of competition and governance structure affect their membership growth.

This dissertation builds moreover on the work of Heidi Swarts that compares the “mobilizing culture” and the style of organizing of secular and faith-based groups in St.-Louis and San Jose. Church-based community organizations, according to the author, develop a unique, innovative, and exemplary cultural strategy, mobilizing successfully across race and class. Drawing on religion and “a practical theory of power” these organizations are able to construct a strong collective identity. The secular organization ACORN, on the other hand, excels for its innovative organizational and political strategy. This poor people’s movement takes on a more instrumental and utilitarian approach, spending only little time on building a collective identity. In line with Swarts, I argue it is important to examine the mobilizing culture of the organizations. Especially in case of the Boston IAF, the organizers have intentionally developed a collective identity built around religious values. The London and Berlin organizations, however, are to a certain extent much more secular than the one in Boston. Here, I tried to show how the organizations still try to build a collective identity based around values of shared respect. While Swarts juxtaposes the two types of community organizing, faith-based versus secular, in terms of their organizing

strategy, my cases show that each organization takes on a rather mixed approach: building a relational culture as well as taking on innovative, tactical and pragmatic approaches.

### *Theoretical implications*

With this cross-national comparison I contribute to the theoretical debates on the role of alternative forms of collective representation, the development of organizations, and the factors affecting their relative success. In a narrow sense, these community organizations can be considered alternative forms of worker representation, whereas trade unions are often regarded as the traditional form of worker representation (Fine 2006; Givan 2007). These IAF organizations, however, go beyond just representing workers in their workplace, but reach out to the community, offering a model of collective representation across race, class, and ethnicity.

By bridging different theoretical approaches from industrial relations, social movement, and organizational studies, I emphasize the importance of the interaction between structure and agency, or, more specifically, the external environment, the internal organizational structure, as well as the organizational culture and the strategic capacities of the organizers to explain the emergence and success of the organizations. While I take on a comparative institutional framework, I draw attention to the agency or the specific strategies the organizations develop to mobilize their members and to remain dynamic and sustainable over time. DiMaggio and Powell argued (1986) that as organizations compete for resources and legitimacy they adopt a homogenous set of practices and isomorphic tendencies become visible. Especially in case of the IAF

organizations in London and Berlin, I illustrate how the organizations were able to resist becoming similar to the already existing institutions. Instead, the organizers intentionally developed this rather new IAF model, cultivating a mobilizing structure and culture, within each context. As such, this study shows how strategy can partly trump the institutional context.

My analysis challenges moreover the deterministic trajectories often described in the literature and shows how a social movement organization can retain its vitality and remain sustainable over time. According to Robert Michels' "iron law," over time, a social movement organization will transform into a highly bureaucratic, conservative organization.<sup>46</sup> Many scholars have focused on structural factors such as the size of the membership or the amount of revenue to show whether this transformation does or does not occur. In this dissertation, I go a step further and reach inside the "black box" processes of a social movement organization, illustrating under which conditions an organization maintains its capacity to mobilize its members. I show how corrective mechanisms have been critical, enabling the organizations to steer themselves back into the direction of their mission: building a powerful organization through relationships and public action.

Specifically, in the Boston case study I show how GBIO could have changed over time into a dialogue organization, a self-help group, or a service provider. Corrective mechanisms, in the form of reflection and deliberation between the members and organizers, come into play that prevent these potential drifts or risks of goal displacement. In London, the organization is aware of its closeness to key policy



makers. Decisions on whether to take on consultancy contracts or provide services are therefore intensively discussed by the board of trustees. In addition, the organization runs the risk of focusing too much on high-profile campaigns, losing touch with the members. As a consequence, internal as well as external accountability structures, such as the use of targets and performance measures as well as their linkages to the IAF network, and specific organizing strategies, such as LC's strategy to organize at the borough level, are intentionally developed to avoid goal displacement. In sum, I go beyond the existing literature and illustrate how social movement organizations can correct these presumed flaws and overcome goal displacement.

Similarly, in *Elusive Togetherness*, Paul Lichterman (2005) examines mostly protestant, church-based community groups in the Midwest and their ability to build alliances across racial, class, and religious lines. However, while most groups fail to forge these ties across different social actors, Lichterman shows how the ones that did succeed engaged in a form of "social reflexivity," or "the practice of talking reflectively and self-critically about a group's extant relationships to the wider social world of which they are a part" (15). More broadly, Lichterman argues that the way we talk, interact or engage with each other is a powerful resource for building robust societies. In my study, I found similar results, such as the importance of the language that is used as well as the critical moments of deliberation and reflection that happen within the organization.

Furthermore, this study offers a contribution to the scholarship on political opportunity structure theory (Tarrow 2011), showing how a shift from an open

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<sup>46</sup> As mentioned earlier, with the term "conservative" I refer to an organization abandoning its original goals in

towards a seemingly hostile political structure might still represent an opening for some, and builds on theories of institutional logics to explain the success and sustainability of an organization (Thornton and Ocasio 2008).

Finally, this analysis can be linked to the coalition literature on two levels. First, the IAF as an organization of organizations is in itself a coalition of different groups across race and class (Polletta 2002). Furthermore, as shown in this dissertation, building coalitions between the IAF organization and other groups is a difficult task and has not always been successful. For example, London Citizens has not been able to sustain a long-term coalition with the trade unions.

Social movements are not homogeneous social entities, but coalition formation is critical and plays a key role in understanding contemporary collective action (Van Dyke and McCammon 2010). According to Levi and Murphy (2006), a sustainable coalition is characterized by the following elements: the groups are able to define common framing or interests and have compatible tactics, there is the establishment of trust and credible commitments, they are able to resolve tensions, and, finally, there is some benefit to building a coalition. In addition, research has shown that the presence of so-called coalition brokers or bridge builders – activists with social ties across the organizations – will facilitate coalition formation (Obach 2004). Furthermore, McCammon and Campbell (2002) examine the circumstances that foster coalition formation between the women’s suffrage organizations and the Woman’s Temperance Unions in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. They show that the contextual factors in the form of threats to movement goals rather than political opportunities are likely to

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favor of organizational maintenance.

spur coalitions. In addition, they illustrate the importance of organizational factors, or, when groups have similar ideologies and are resource rich they are more likely to work together. In teasing out the interactions between the political context and ideology, Staggenborg (1986) examines the pro-choice coalition groups, suggesting that different ideologies can be overcome when there is a serious political threat, such as the creation of a countermovement, providing an even greater incentive to cooperate.

As I have illustrated, the coalition building between the London IAF organization and the British trade unions have been fraught with challenges. Rather than building a sustainable, long-term coalition, their collaboration has taken the form of a short-term, campaign or event coalition (Tarrow 2005). While there have been key bridge builders between the organizations, the presence of these social ties was not enough to create a sustainable coalition. There has also been conflict concerning the different ideologies of the organizations, with the IAF considered too “churchy” and the trade unions considered too “left wing.” Arguable, there have not been any political threats against the IAF organization justifying the potential costs of forming a coalition.

### ***Policy implications***

In terms of policy implications, this study offers important insights regarding the role these grassroots organizations play in society. Even though they are relatively small, they have contributed to important social changes, such as bringing the living wage or improving the healthcare system, and have as well been a critical force in revitalizing

certain neighborhoods or cities. Indeed, this model of civic engagement should be seen as an important precondition for a well-functioning democracy. This study also provides practical value in terms of cross-national learning. When Leo Penta came to Berlin in 1996, his audience listened to his stories but was skeptical. That's all very well, "but it won't work in Germany," people said. As of today, three IAF organizations have been built in Berlin, encompassing in total over 100 local member institutions.

This study also provides practical value in terms of cross-organizational learning. To a certain extent, social movements could profit from adopting some elements of the structure the IAF model offers, making them sustainable over time. With regards to trade unions, as early as 1964, James O'Connor argued, "the social base for working-class organizations will lie more in the community where today there is a political vacuum. Community unions clearly will be the appropriate mode of working-class organization and struggle" (O'Connor, 1964: 146). The unions, on the one hand, can take advantage of the geographical density and the mobilization capacity of community members to kick off an effective organizing drive. The alternative organizations, on the other hand, by allying with the traditional trade unions, can gain increased economic leverage. Going beyond just a functional role, building such coalitions are an important part of the fight towards a more equitable, sustainable society.

### ***Future research***

In terms of future research, it would be fruitful to conduct a paired comparison of a successful and a failed IAF organization. The organization in London was successful, while the organization in Birmingham failed. What explains the difference? To what extent does the context play a role versus the internal organizational dimensions? In addition, IAF organizations are present as well in Canada, Australia, and since recently France. Examining the whole universe of foreign IAF organizations would give us a deeper understanding of how the organizations function in different contexts.

Finally, these case studies have generated hypotheses that could be tested. When are movements likely to correct their defects? One way to test it would be by examining organizations that function in a hostile environment or that develop highly bureaucratic cultures, and examine whether these corrective mechanisms are still triggered that mitigate organizational conservatism. One might hypothesize that an organization with a strong mobilizing culture operating within a hostile environment is more likely to radicalize in order to survive, whereas an organization with a highly bureaucratic culture operating within an open environment is more likely to institutionalize, commercialize, or become a voluntary group.

## APPENDIX

### DATA COLLECTION

Below I describe in more detail my data collection for each of the organizations. In general, the interviews lasted between 45 minutes and 2 hours, which I recorded and transcribed. Most of the interview selection was done through snowball sampling. During the process, however, I tried to make sure, to interview people from different layers within the organization and paid attention to capture the diversity in terms of gender, religion, and ethnicity. The interviews took place not only in the organizations' office but often in the interviewees' homes, in cafes, or restaurants.

#### ***The Greater Boston Interfaith Organization (GBIO)***

In terms of the Boston IAF organization, I collected the data between 2010-2012. During the summer of 2010, I was closely involved as a participant observer in the activities of GBIO and was granted thorough access to the organization. I was able to attend internal meetings, such as the strategy team leadership meetings and internal staff meetings. I sat in on various training sessions and attended a Delegate Assembly, in which representatives of all the institutions come together, evaluate the past year, and decide on issues for the following year. I was involved in their anti-usury campaign and was part of their "action team" on that campaign. Since that summer, I have attended on a more irregular basis internal and public meetings of GBIO. Furthermore, in May 2010, I participated in an intensive five-day IAF regional

training at the Theological School of Drew University, New Jersey. This led to many informal conversations with about 35 participants from six different American IAF organizations.

Second, I conducted a total of 40 semi-structured interviews and obtained my first pool of contacts at GBIO's internal leadership meeting. I interviewed GBIO organizers and staff (N=7), leaders of the member organizations (N=16), and IAF national directors (N=3). Furthermore, to better understand the "organizing environment" of the greater Boston area, I interviewed trade union representatives (N=2), organizers from other organizing networks (N=8), and scholars (N=4) from Harvard University, MIT, and Boston College as well. Finally, I used archival documents, such as internal organizational reports and newspaper articles to construct a historical record. In particular, I coded and analyzed over 350 local and national newspaper articles – from the *Boston Globe*, the *Boston Banner*, and the *Jewish Advocate* – that have been published on the organization between 1996 and 2012.

### ***London Citizens (LC)***

In terms of the London IAF organization, I collected the data between 2008-2013. During the summer of 2008, I participated in London Citizens' Summer Academy Training. For about six weeks I was immersed in LC's organizational structure; I took part in its campaigns, attended its meetings, and was involved in daily activities, work-related as well as birthday parties and goodbye lunches. I was one of London Citizens' student organizers on their hotel workers campaign and attended many team meetings mostly with other organizers. I took part in a two-day training event with leaders from

the different London chapters, participating in mock negotiations and roll-plays. During the summer of 2009, I conducted follow-up interviews with LC as well as with union representatives. While the organization was successful in 2008 and 2009, its membership had grown exponentially by 2013. Between 2010 and 2013, I was able to “attend” their mayoral and national accountability assembly meetings on-line, resulting in extensive notetaking. In the Spring of 2013, I returned to London to conduct another set of follow-up interviews; I sat in on an internal leadership meeting, and participated in the community organizing seminar at Queen Mary University of London.

I conducted a total of 39 semi-structured interviews and obtained my first pool of contacts through my internship and close collaboration with LC staff and organizers. I interviewed LC organizers and staff (N=18) and leaders of the member organizations (N=9). Furthermore, to better understand the “organizing environment” of the London area, I interviewed trade union representatives (N=9) and scholars (N=3) as well. Finally, I coded and analyzed over 200 local and national newspaper articles – from the *Guardian*, *the Morning Star*, *the Evening Standard*, *the Independent*, *the Observer*, *the Hackney Gazette*, and *the London Times* – that have been published on the organization between 1990 and 2012.

### ***Deutsches Institut für Community Organizing (DICO)***

In terms of the Berlin IAF organization, I collected the data between 2008-2012. I have been in contact with DICO’s director Leo Penta since the summer of 2008 mostly through email and phone conversations. During the Spring of 2009, I went on a



short trip to Berlin, attended an accountability assembly of the IAF organization in Wedding-Moabit and had informal conversations with the DICO organizers. I kept contact with the organizers through email. In the Spring of 2010, I spent 6 weeks in Berlin and participated in a three-day training on the outskirts of Berlin. This led again to many informal conversations with the 18 participants from the different Berlin chapters.

I conducted a total of 31 semi-structured interviews and obtained my first pool of contacts through my contact with the Director Leo Penta. I interviewed DICO organizers and funders (N=9) as well as leaders of the member organizations (N=7). Some of the members and organizers I interviewed on multiple occasions. Furthermore, to better understand the “organizing environment” of the Berlin area, I interviewed trade union representatives (N=5), representatives from other organizing networks and from the so-called Quartiersmanagements (N=6) as well as scholars (N=4). Finally, I coded and analyzed about 75 local and national newspaper articles – from the *Berliner Morgenpost*, the *Berliner Zeitung*, and *Der Tagesspiegel* – that have been published on the organization between 1999 and 2012.

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