Claiming their space: Rethinking the role of local community organizations in social justice work

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A Thesis

In the Special Individualized Program

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at

Concordia University

Montreal, Quebec, Canada

August 2010

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

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Entitled: **Claiming their Space: Rethinking the Role of Local Community Organizations in Social Justice Work**

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (Special Individualized Program)

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Abstract

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Local community organizations can contribute to social justice work. They provide an entry point for citizens' activism in community life. They develop relationships with citizens that endure over time. They can document both quantitatively and anecdotally the impact of unjust government policies and business practices on people's lives. They provide an ongoing space for citizens to congregate and from which to organize.

A case study was undertaken to better understand the specific roles local organizations can take on to contribute to social justice work. Two organizations working in English in Montreal were studied. Primary data was collected from interviews with 13 current and former staff and senior volunteers.

The study highlights the challenges and opportunities for local organizations to contribute to social justice work within the existing neoliberal context. It concludes that while local organizations may not be at the centre of progressive social change, they can and need to claim, and re-claim, their space in this work by clearly stating their intent and organizing their programs and services to work for collective justice. They

can shift their empowerment work to reach beyond the individual and the local to collaborate with like-minded organizations. By implementing alternative structures they can more fully reflect social justice principles and put them into practice.

Claiming space in social justice work requires an articulated analysis of what social justice is and how it can be worked on within the existing neoliberal context. This includes being prepared to work with conflict when confronting power. Community organizations need to claim their space more fully in the work for social justice.

Acknowledgements

My thanks go, first and foremost, to Eric Shragge. As my principal advisor, he invariably provided timely and appropriate critical analysis. As a colleague and friend he provided ongoing support, encouragement and an unwavering belief that I could and would do just fine completing this work.

Thanks also to Ailie Cleghorn and Kate Connolly who were willing to step up to the task of being my advisors and were always there when I needed them.

Since the late 1970s I have been associated with Concordia University: as an undergraduate student, alumni, part-time faculty member and most recently as a graduate student. “Learning for the real world” is a wonderful gift this university gives to the world. Without the Special Individualized PhD Program, I’m not sure I could have found a way to do this degree. Thanks for being part of my life Concordia. Keep working with people to learn for the real world.

Gratitude and thanks go to the 13 people who participated in the study and the many others with whom I was able to explore this topic. Thank you for sharing your thoughts and time so freely with me. Let’s keep supporting each other in our social justice work.

To my work colleagues, specifically those at the Centre for Community Organizations (COCo), who have put up with me, challenged me and encouraged me while doing this work, thank you.

Thanks to my partner Glenn Hodgins and to David Smith, for reading and editing throughout my doctoral work. A special thanks to Jan Ravensbergen and Claire Robitaille for working on the final edit. As good editors you will, of course, find a few mistakes that I did not correct.

Specific thanks go to Liz Chanona for taking me kayaking back in 2003 and probing me to clarify how I would do my doctoral work along everything else I was committed to and then for being such a present and supportive buddy throughout this work.

Last but certainly not least, thank you to all my family and friends, especially Glenn, for encouragement, support and help as I tried to create the space to do this work.

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Chapter One: Introduction

There is an underlying assumption among people active in the community sector that we are part of making this world a better place not only by providing needed services to our communities, but by working toward deeper and more profound social change. I often hear this being expressed as the reason people work and/or volunteer in the community sector. For a long time, I also felt that way. However, during the 1990s I began to have doubts about how my involvement was actually going beyond the proliferation of services as the poor cousin of government. I was increasingly frustrated with what I saw as a shift of focus, away from core social change work to management and professionalization. I was also discouraged by the erosion of rights and progressive thought that became apparent around me. I felt as if things were getting worse, not better. I was losing enthusiasm and belief in my work. This evolved in the context of my background. This was as a longtime community organizer and director of a community centre; currently a facilitator and consultant in organizational change with nonprofit organizations; an activist over decades for peace and environmental and women's issues; and a volunteer in both local organizations in my community and with larger and more far reaching organizations. I needed to stop and think, to question and reflect on how my practice could refocus on progressive social change. My doctoral work, and specifically this thesis, is a result of this reflection. It reports on what I have been

reading, reflecting on and researching since 2004 about the role of local community organizations in social justice work. Specifically, it presents the results of a case study examining such work by two local community organizations in Montreal[1]. The case study examples are organizations that work with, and have roots in, the English-speaking community. They are located in different low-income areas of the city.

To begin, this chapter presents introductory information to help the reader situate the study on which this thesis reports. It elaborates on why this study was required, what the thesis covers, and definitions I use.

Why This Study?

I am not alone in my interest to more clearly understand the work of community organizations. There is broad agreement that numerous aspects of the nonprofit sector need to be studied, since little is documented about this field (Anheier, 2005: Brock, 2003a; Conway, 2006; Dreessen, 2001; Eakin, 2009; Stewart-Weeks, 2004; Voluntary Sector Research Symposium, 2000). As Banting (2000) underscores:

> Despite the growing interest in the nonprofit sector, we know surprisingly little about it and the role that it plays in our society. Research on the

[1] The organizations studied remain anonymous, encouraging the reader to focus on what we can learn about the role of local organizations in social justice work rather than the specific work of these organizations. I recognize that those who are familiar with Montreal's English-speaking community sector may identify the organizations. Study participants were also cognizant of this possibility. This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Four.

> nonprofit sector lags well behind that on the public and private sectors in virtually all countries, but this is especially true in Canada (p. 4).

Specifically, little has been written in English about the Quebec community sector.

Even though little is known about this sector, it has experienced tremendous growth since the 1960s (DeFilippis, Fisher & Shragge, 2010; Hall, Barr, Easwaramoorthy & Salamon, 2005; Jetté, 2008; White, 2008). There are over 46,000 community organizations in Quebec (Fontan, 2010) and over 180,000 organizations in Canada (Voluntary Sector Initiative, 2001). It is one of the fastest growing sectors of the economy in Canada (Stone & Nouroz, 2007). Moreover, there is specific concern that community work is increasingly subjugated by the state and losing its critical perspective (Côte & Simard, 2010; DeFilippis, Fisher and Shragge, 2010; Stewart-Weeks, 2004). This thesis examines this specific concern as one element of its focus on the role of local community organizations in social justice work.

Finally, this study was undertaken because of the marked erosion of rights and progressive thought influencing community work. We live in a world dominated more and more by conservatism and embedded in neoliberal ideology (Saul, 2005). In Quebec, we have just seen the new provincial budget slap a user fee onto our supposedly “universal” health care system. The federal government continues to cut funding for Aboriginal healing, women’s programs, literacy work, and community arts. A massive oil spill is destroying the Gulf of Mexico because of BP Oil’s inability to contain a catastrophic oil leak, with the causes apparently

stemming from on-the-cheap drilling techniques. Innocent Afghani and Iraqi citizens continue to be killed because of the West's quest to grab and control world oil production. How can we keep doing what we are doing in our local practice for social justice as our rights and the rights of others continue to be eroded? What can we do to contribute to positive social change in our work at the local level? Fainstein (2005) reminds us that the ultimate power of community practice lies in the extent to which it contributes to social justice. So how do we accomplish this with our work in local organizations?

Overview of the Thesis

This thesis examines the role of local community organizations in social justice work. Its focus is on organizations that work in Quebec. It begins by contextualizing the history and the current challenges and contradictions of these groups through a review of the literature (Chapters Two and Three).

I then present a case study undertaken to explore the work of two local community organizations in a social justice context. Chapter Four reviews the methodology. Chapter Five introduces the organizations studied, while Chapter Six presents an analysis of the findings.

Chapter Seven offers my analysis of what the literature and the study teach us. In the final chapter, I present the limitations of this study, along with questions for further study, in addition to my conclusions.

Some Important Definitions

Before going any further, some clarification of definitions is required. This thesis will continuously refer to "local community organizations" as part of the "community sector" or "nonprofit sector" and working for "social justice". Let me explain my use of these and related terms.

Local Community Organization

"Community organization" is a notoriously elastic term (Borgos & Douglas, 1996; Sites, Chaskin and Parks, 2007) with varying definitions (LewinGroup, 2000; also see Hyde, 2000 and Brock, 2000 for a discussion of this). For the purposes of this thesis, the definition is:

> Structured groups whose primary objectives are not-for-profit and who act as autonomous vehicles for community, social, economic and environmental development in collaboration with others. They function in a participatory, democratic manner seeking to provide responses to and advocate on behalf of the interests of their primary stakeholders and/or promote social change (Centre for Community Organizations, 2006).

This definition was developed with the specific Quebec context in mind. It integrates the provincial government's definition of "autonomous community organizations". (See Chapter Two, page 40 for a full discussion of this.) It is the definition I use in my work, mostly with the Centre for Community Organizations[2] (COCo) as a facilitator for organizational change.

[2] Founded in 2000, COCo works with the English-speaking community sector in Quebec to promote social justice, active citizenship, democracy, and just socio-economic development by supporting the development of healthy organizations and strong communities.

"Local" refers to community organizations active within specific geographic communities. These are the type of organizations I primarily work with; organizations focused on youth, seniors, families, etc., in a geographic community such as (in Montreal) Mile End or Little Burgundy. My main interest centres on local community organizations because these are the types of groups to which "ordinary" citizens often turn for support, services and to have a sense of community. Local community organizations often form important threads in the daily fabric of community life, support and development; for after school care, teen programs, information and referral, support groups, food banks, crisis support etc. Throughout this thesis, the terms community organizations, community-based organizations or local organizations are used inter-changeably. These terms are synonymous for "local community organizations".

However, my definition of local does not mean the research should not be of interest to organizations that work from an issue base (e.g. gender rights, health or housing rights) beyond the local level (e.g. for the Island of Montreal). These broader organizations frequently face and grapple with identical or similar realities as local community organizations. My chosen approach simply means the focus of this thesis is on the role of local community-based organizations.

Community Work

The field of community work employs many differing or overlapping terms. There are few widely-shared definitions (see Roberts, 2001; Sites, Chaskin &

Parks, 2007; White, 2001). Some of the terms habitually used will be clarified here in relation to their use in the thesis.

The nonprofit (or not-for-profit) sector refers to a specific legal status held by an organization. It is often confused with different but overlapping terms such as the community sector, the voluntary sector and civil society[3]. For the purposes of this thesis, community sector refers to the group of nonprofit organizations which meet the criteria of the Quebec government's definition of community action organizations (Secrétariat à l'action communautaire autonome du Québec, 2004). These organizations are incorporated as a nonprofit; rooted in a community; working democratically; and, self-determining of their mission, approach, and ways of working. Community action organizations include women's organizations, local community organizations, social justice groups and more. Excluded are nonprofit sports and cultural organizations, professional organizations (e.g. Association of Early Childhood Educators) and foundations whose primary purpose is to distribute funds.

Community work is part of civil society with the latter the "space that is occupied neither by the state nor the economy but is not necessarily independent of them" (Shragge, 2003, p. 115)[4]. There are, of course, multiple other aspects of civil society (Fontan, 2010). Among these are social movements (defined in

[3] And new terms continue to be discussed. Lynn Eakin (2009) suggests we need to use the term public benefit economy to underline the value of the work. Mintzberg (2010) argues against "the social sector" and for "the participant sector".

[4] See Jamie Swift's (1999) *Civil Society in Question* for a full exploration of civil society in Canada.

Chapter Three) and informal and unstructured citizen action. So is the social economy which can be defined as “economic activity neither controlled directly by the state nor by the profit logic of the market, activity that prioritizes the social well-being of communities and marginalized individuals over partisan political directives or individual gain” (McMurtry, 2010, p. 4). Civil society is sometimes referred to as the “third sector”, although this term also often lacks precise definition (see White, 2001).

Voluntary organizations or “the voluntary sector” is not a term widely used in Quebec (White, 2001) but broadly used in the rest of Canada, generally to describe the community sector. While it usually depicts organizations that rely heavily on volunteers to provide services, the term is frequently used interchangeably with community sector and the nonprofit sector. (For examples: see Ilcan & Basok, 2004; Voluntary Sector Initiative, 2001). This thesis avoids the term voluntary sector. However, references to works cited using the term voluntary organizations or voluntary sector have been checked to ensure they include local community organizations as defined in this thesis.

Social Justice

Social justice is also a loosely used term. John Rawls (1971) defines it as the redistribution of rights within the existing social context. For social justice to occur, justice must take place based on three principles: (a) the greatest equal liberty (every person has the equal right to basic liberties), (b) equality of fair opportunity, and (c) bringing maximum benefit to marginal and powerless people to reduce the gap between those who “have” and those who “have not”. Rawls

applies these principles in descending order of importance. This prioritizing ensures that no conflicts develop between the principles. Equal rights to basic liberties therefore take priority over fair opportunity. The latter take priority over bringing the maximum benefit to those marginalized and powerless.

In his more recent work, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement (*2001), Rawls somewhat adapts his theory. The single core change relevant to this discussion is that he frames justice as fairness "within a political conception of justice rather than as part of a comprehensive moral doctrine" (p. xvii). Although he never, in his earlier (1971) work, specifically stated that his theory was meant to be comprehensive, his 2001 clarification answers, at least in part, concerns raised by Harvey, among others.

Harvey (1973) asks us to take a step back from redistribution and look more broadly at changing the parameters of how we define "just". Is it a more equitable distribution of the current norms in society? Or, is social justice producing new social conditions, beyond how current ideology and social processes define redistribution? As an example to illustrate Harvey's point, using the Rawls (1971) definition we might work for the right for a basic living wage for everyone. Applying Harvey's definition, we might question the capitalist system within which the world currently operates and call for more equitable sharing and stewardship of the world's resources.

How one defines social justice determines how one works to achieve it (DeFilippis, Fisher & Shragge, 2009). If the Rawls definition of redistribution is

adopted, working on community development projects that lead to basic rights for more citizens is clearly the primary objective. If Harvey's definition of transformation is applied, more radical organizing work is required. However, as already discussed, there is often an absence of clarity of definition in much of the community development literature. Much of the literature provides a general overview of social justice (see Ife & Tesoriero, 2006; Lee, 1997). It addresses themes of justice for individuals; justice through reform of institutions; justice through transformation of "the system"; and justice by focusing on relationships of power and rebalancing them. However, the concept of social justice is most often discussed in superficial ways, using the definitions covering both the redistributive approach of Rawls and the transformative approach of Harvey without elucidating with precision. When using the term "social justice" in this thesis I am referring to all of the above definitions. Specific uses of the term as a redistributive approach or as a transformative approach are identified as applicable or needed.

This thesis occasionally use the term "social change" but with an acknowledgement of its imprecision. Social change can be progressive, leading to social justice, or regressive, leading to the diminution of rights and equity. Nonetheless, this term is the dominant vernacular for social justice in the community sector. To be clear: for me social change refers to progressive social change that leads to social justice. All these terms (social justice, social change and progressive social change) will be used interchangeably.

Conclusion

The role of local community organizations in social justice work is important to explore and better understand. If people active in the growing numbers of local organizations and concerned with justice are to stay motivated and remain in the community sector they should consciously understand how to work for progressive social change. Citizens concerned with the erosion of rights and progressive thought must see how social change can be supported at the local community level so that they can use local organizations as a vehicle to work for progressive social change. As a facilitator of change in the community sector, I need a better understanding of the role of local organizations in social justice work. This requires a more profound understanding of the historical forces that have led us to where we are today in our local community organizations. Chapter Two explores this in detail.

Chapter Two: The History and Context Shaping the Study

Historical context is extremely important. It shapes "not only the success or failure of any effort but the very opportunities that exist for organizing" (Fisher, 2001, p. 100). It helps us understand how and why organizations were founded, the choices that were made, how social justice work changes over time and the contradictions or anomalies that appear evident in hindsight[5]. Understanding the forces of history and context can help us see how local organizations have been shaped, help us make choices for the present and make us aware and vigilant for the future (Minkoff, 1995; Stacey, 2005). Mills (2010) recent contribution to understanding the context that shaped Quebec pre-1960 and the impact of the 1960s on today is a poignant example of how important it is to acknowledge the many forces of history.

This chapter provides an overview of the history that frames this study and links the study to the wider context. The focus is on Quebec. It reviews the history of the Quebec community sector specifically since the 1960s given that current day community activism began in the 1960s and the organizations involved in this study were strongly influenced by the wider context as of the 1960s. It incorporates key discussions about larger political and social realities

[5] As examples: Hyde (2000) studied six social movement organizations in the U.S. womens' movement, showing how right-wing politics during the 1980s often led to organizational conservatism (bureaucratization, professionalism or formalization). Piven and Cloward's (1997) American research on poor peoples' movements in the 1960s concluded that local organizations diminished the power of social movements by working on organization, not movement building.

that influence the sector as they relate to this study. It specifically examines the impact of neoliberalism on the current-day community sector. The specific history and context of the organizations that are part of this case study research is outlined in a subsequent chapter.

Quebec's community sector is, in some ways, unique because of its formalized relationship with the provincial government (Guay & White, 2010; White, 2008). However, there are many similarities with the history and development of the community sector elsewhere in the Western world[6]. Both the distinctions of Quebec and the dominant similarities with (primarily) the Canadian context are presented here.

The chapter is divided into sections based on periods of change. Authors have divergent views of how to divide periods[7]. For the purpose of this study, three fairly distinct phases have been identified. The 1960s-1970s is the first. It involved intense activism and the proliferation of community organizations. The 1980s-1990s can be identified as a second phase. It can be characterized as one of conservatism, the transition towards neoliberalism and the formalization of the sector. After 2000 is the third and current period, with the entrenchment of neoliberalism as a hallmark profoundly affecting the community sector. First we need to look, however briefly, further back than the 1960s.

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[6] See McDonald and Marston (2002) for parallels with the Australian community sector; Hasson & Ley (1994) for similarities between British Columbia and Israel; and Fisher (1993) for a discussion of American and Western community organizing.

[7] See Baum, 1997; Deslauriers & Paquet, 2003; Deveaux & Deveaux , 1971; Favreau & Lévesque, 1996; Fournier, Rosenberg & White, 1997; Hasson & Ley, 1994; Phillips, 2003b; Shragge & Fontan, 2000; Wharf & Clague, 1997; White, 2001.

Activism has a long history: Antecedents to the 1960s

Community activism of one sort or another has always been with us. From Aboriginal traditions of taking care of each other collectively to the early French and English settlers developing health and education services, we can document community activity (Hall, Barr, Easwaramoorthy, Sokolowski, & Salamon, 2005).

We can trace the beginnings of community sector work in Quebec and Canada in charitable or "relief" work that began to be documented beginning in the early 1800s. The work was conducted mostly by religious organizations, primarily the Roman Catholic Church (particularly in Quebec) and, to a lesser extent, by women's organizations, political parties and labour unions (Panet-Raymond & Mayers, 1997; Roberts, 2001; White, 2001). On the English side, it included the establishment of many predecessor organizations to more recently founded community groups. These include the founding of the Montreal Day Nursery in 1887 as the first child-care service in Montreal (now the daycare in the downtown YMCA); the founding of the Montreal Diet Dispensary (1879); and the creation of the Atwater Library as the first lending library in Canada (1828). All these organizations remain active.

The creation of settlement houses is also part of the history of the community sector in Quebec. These Protestant church-based organizations were inspired by examples in Britain and the U.S. As of the early 1900s, they were

established in low-income geographic communities in Canada to work on issues of poverty. They focused on providing services to community members. At times, they moved towards more civic engagement including activism on issues of welfare at the federal level, local community organizing and providing more controversial services (including birth control during the 1930s and1940s; see Irving, Parsons & Bellamy, 1995). One of the organizations reported on in this study comes from the tradition of settlement houses.

By the mid-1850s, governments began to enact laws to regulate community work. Incorporation of nonprofit organizations, as a sub-section of business-incorporation law, was put in place. In Quebec, the Companies Act was enacted in 1920 (Éditeur official du Québec, 2010)[8]. This nonprofit status is the legal form many community organizations use today. It is characterized by a nonprofit legal purpose for the organization (the goals or “les objets” in French); being membership-based; and having a board of directors elected to run the organization. Both organizations that are part of this case study have nonprofit status (Part lll of the Quebec Companies Act).

During the mid-1850s government also enacted a law to regulate which organizations could define themselves as charities. This law, similar to the law for nonprofit incorporation, has not changed in any substantial way in the century and a half that followed. It is federal law. It requires organizations to fulfill one of

[8] Historically, many nonprofits applied for federal incorporation. Currently most nonprofits that operate in Quebec opt for provincial incorporation. Both are legally accepted forms of incorporation.

four charitable purposes[9] with increasingly rigorous interpretation of the specifics of the law by the certifier; the Canada Revenue Agency. Both organizations reported on in this case study have charitable status.

We can also see community activism during the late 1800s, more so in the early 1900s and within the 1900s, in progressive waves of social movement activity. The women's movement is one of the more striking examples, with the suffrage movement beginning in the late 1800s/early 1900s - mid 1900s. There were also periods of intense activity including the right to work (post World War Two) and the right of access to "The Pill" and abortion during the 1960s- 1970s. Anti-war movements provide another example, with waves of activism at the beginning of wars throughout the century. However, social movements will be examined in this thesis within the confines of where they link to the social justice work of local community organizations.

[9] The advancement of education, relief of poverty, advancement of religion or other activities of benefit to the community that the courts have determined are charitable.

Activism is widespread: The 1960s/1970s

Revolution and populism, turbulence and change, and social experimentation are all terms used to describe this period of the community sector's evolution and development (Clague, 1997; Doucet & Favreau, 1997; Fisher, 1994).

Modern day activism was widespread in the 1960s and into the1970s. Housing rights, poverty reduction, anti-racism, women's rights, the student movement and, of course, the peace movement (focusing on the war in Vietnam) were among the key themes that defined the rise of modern day community activism and framed the period. Government funding was relatively easy to access[10] and many "alternative service organizations" were born as a means of pursuing social change by providing alternative services. In these groups, citizens played an active role in controlling the organization, linking to wider social movements, and integrating service delivery and politics (Shragge, 1990). Alternative services are services that are innovative and different, in operation as well as philosophy, from state-sponsored programs, pushing for new ways of responding to human needs[11]. The second organization reported on in this case

[10] From the federal government, for example, Opportunities for Youth, Local Initiative Programs (LIP) and Company of Young Canadians grants were plentiful, relatively easy to secure, and required little administration or accountability.

[11] Also referred to as hybrid organizations in American literature (Hyde, 1992; Minkoff, 2002), these are defined as "organizations in which the explicit pursuit of social change is accomplished through the delivery of services at the local level" (Hyde, 1992, p. 122). They combine identity-based service provision and political action (Minkoff, 2002). The term "alternative service" will be used in this paper as this term appears to be more popular across the pan-Canadian context and, most importantly, reflects one of the important elements of these types of organizations; that they

study grew out of this period. It can be identified as an alternative service organization with its two-pronged approach of services and community organizing.

Many organizations were founded during the 1960s/1970s. Some of the key ones in Quebec included the Association coopérative d'économie familial (ACEF), Jeunesse ouvrière catholique (JOC), and the Bureau d'aménagement de l'est du Quebec (BAEQ) (Baum, 1992; Doucet & Favreau, 1997; Panet-Raymond & Mayer, 1997). ACEF still exists today. The BAEQ, one of the largest undertakings of community development in Quebec up until that time, had as its goal to eliminate poverty in the Gaspe region. JOC provided training to many future francophone community workers.

Meanwhile, on the English side, the Greater Montreal Anti-Poverty Coordinating Committee (GMAPCC) was advocating for welfare rights and organizations such as the Parallel Institute were organizing in local communities. (The CourtePointe Collective, 2006; Shragge, 2003). Other alternative service organizations established in that era included medical clinics, services for the unemployed, home economics associations, tenants associations, and popular education centers (Leclerc, 2010). These organizations worked locally but connected at times with each other to push for broader changes (e.g. the anti-poverty work of GMAPCC brought together organizations working with the

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provide alternative approaches to services when compared with more conventional state-sponsored responses to the same issues.

English-speaking community)**.** The case study organization that began in this period reflects this reality of working locally while connecting with other organizations. It has continued with this type of linkage over time.

As activism grew and community organizations proliferated, the province of Quebec was undergoing fundamental shifts. The Quiet Revolution[12] too place and the control over the delivery (as well as content of education and health and social services) shifted to newly-formed departments within a rapidly growing provincial government. (See Fournier, Rosenberg & White, 1997; Panet-Raymond & Mayer, 1997; Shragge & Fontan, 2000.)

During the 1970s many of the recommendations of the Castonguay Commission (1967-1971) were implemented with the establishment of CLSCs (Centre locale des services socials or local community social services centres) throughout the province. Each CLSC had several community organizers working for it, under its administration and control. CLSC community organizers spent much of their time helping establish new community-based organizations. Funding began to flow out of the provincial government's Health and Social Services Department towards community organizations. Early on, CLSC community organizers and projects funded by the province often agitated against government programs. This changed over time as CLSC organizers became promoters and supporters of government programs (Panet-Raymond & Mayer,

[12] Intense changes in Quebec under the Liberal Jean Lesage government took place from 1960-1966 as Quebec shed its strongly rooted Roman Catholic dominance, became more secular and modernized.

1997). Over the years, the flow of funding was shifted towards integration of the more autonomously-run community services into the more centrally controlled government network (Laforest & Phillips, 2001).

Independence was also a key focus in Quebec with the watershed events of the October Crisis of 1970 and the eventual election of the separatist Parti Québécois in 1976. This period was marked by linguistic and cultural tension (CourtePointe Collective, 2006; Mills, 2010). Both organizations in this case study came out of an English milieu; but maintained their relationships during this period with organizations working in French; albeit not without some major differences in opinions.

During this period, activists were trained through hands-on experience. For many, it was their involvement with JOC and/ or the various Marxist-Leninist groups that operated. Also, 'Alinsky-style' training[13] from the United States influenced the approach to organizing, possibly more on the English side (The CoutrePointe Collective, 2006; Fournier et al., 1997). At the latter end of this period, CLSC community organizers were such a dominant part of community activity in Quebec that they were perceived as the people that trained, and some would say "tamed", community organizing throughout Quebec (White, 2001).

The type of training people received is important to highlight because formal academic training is one element of professionalization within the sector.

[13] Inspired by Saul Alinsky, this approach to organizing focuses on mass direct-action organizing to confront people and institutions holding power. Paid staff provide the leadership. See Alinsky's writings (1969, *Reveille for Radicals* and 1972, *Rules for Radicals*) and DeFilippis, Fisher & Shragge (2010), Fisher (1994, 2009) for details.

As professionalization grew, activism diminished. The two case study organizations illustrate, in different ways, the impact of how staff was trained altering the work of the organization.

The two organizations reported on in this case study were part of this period of activism and growth; one as a newly formed nonprofit, the other as a more established organization, both reflecting the general high level of activity and activism.

However, the end of the 1970s signaled a transition. “With the passage of time (…) protest organizations have frequently moderated their actions, and have become absorbed within the institutional-political system, a sequence typically running the gamut from paternalism to protest, and finally to partnership or co-production” (Hasson & Ley, 1994, p. 4). In the case of some Quebec organizations, the radicalization by Marxist-Leninist groups imploded, with groups shutting down or isolating themselves. For many Quebecers, the focus was on political independence. For the community sector, organizing efforts focused mainly on running alternative organizations or CLSC-initiated activities. The transition to neoliberalism was ushered in.

The Transition to Neoliberalism and Formalization of a Community "Sector": The 1980s/1990s

If the 1960s/1970s were the decades of activism, populism, and social experimentation, then the 1980s/1990s can be described as an era of conservatism led by a transition towards neoliberalism, and a more structured and professionalized community sector with an increasingly complex relationship with the state (Fisher 1994; George, 2007; Panet-Raymond & Mayer, 1997; Shragge, 2003; White, 1997). This section looks at how the community work of the 1980s/1990s was shaped within this broader context.

The Transition to Neoliberalism

The election of Margaret Thatcher in Great Britain in 1979 marked the beginning of the Western world's transition from Keynesian economics[14] to neoliberalism (George, 2007; Harvey, 2005). In Canada, the 1988 Free Trade Agreement was a key event signaling this change (Conway, 2006). It came under the tutelage of Brian Mulroney as Progressive Conservative Prime Minister from 1984-1993. The subsequent Liberal government continued the transition with the 1995 federal budget which instigated severe cuts to public services and social programs and restructured and reduced federal transfer payments to the provinces (Miller, 1998). The impact of this budget was profoundly felt across the

[14] Keynesian economics calls for active public policy to stabilize private sector behavior.

community sector. As an example; one of the case study organizations experienced a significant growth in consultations because of the cuts in social programs. This surge in need translated into the development of a larger and more service-oriented approach, with a ramping up of counseling with volunteer involvement. The legacy of this transition is still evident in the organization today.

Neoliberalism is the liberalization and deregulation of economic transactions within national borders and across national borders. It involves the privatization of state-owned enterprises and state-provided services, and the treatment of public welfare spending as a cost of international production rather than as a source of domestic demand. It seeks to roll back forms of state intervention and roll forward new forms of governance that are purportedly more suited to a market-driven economy. It implies a shift to partnership-based forms of governance and leads to **"**new public management". In practice, this promotes private-sector, business-management practices in public services, either within an activist-discouraging government environment or via outsourcing with an emphasis on results which forces those managing the programs and services to be responsible for showing change and promoting incentives for performance. It involves reorganizing civil society to promote "community" or self-organizing communities simply as compensatory mechanisms for the inadequacies of the market (Jessop, 2002; Jetté, 2008).

In Quebec, similar changes were put more slowly into action. The early 1980s saw the Parti Québécois in power under the leadership of René Lévesque. With the support of this social-democratic government, the size of the community

sector continued growing from the late 1970s onward with the establishment of alternative mental health resources, women's shelters, daycare centres and youth centres (Shragge, 2003; White, 2001). However, the loss of the 1980 independence referendum, coupled with the 1982 recession with the PQ's subsequent hard line with public-sector employees, and the election of the Liberal party in 1985 led to a shift "from social to economics" in Quebec (Panet-Raymond & Mayer, 1997). Despite the Parti Québécois holding power again briefly from 1994-1996 (under the leadership of Jacques Parizeau) the move toward neoliberalism was well underway.

Blurring the Lines Between the State and the Community Sector

As neoliberalism was implemented, new ways of working were introduced into the community sector in Quebec during the 1980s and more strongly in the 1990s. "Community economic development" (CED) entered the lexicon and the "social economy" began to emerge. Community economic development has various definitions (Shragge, 2003) but can generally be described as community-focused responses to concerns (e.g. poverty, exclusion) that engage in economic endeavors to address them (e.g. job creation for the purpose of delivering community services including meals, home care, etc.). The social economy can be described as the development of the third sector as a source of employment (White, 2001, also see Chapter One, page 8). These new ways of working blurred the lines between the state and the community sector. While implemented because of the need for creative solutions to social problems, they began dissociating governmental responsibility for meeting the basic needs of

people by placing the onus on the community sector to generate revenue to fulfill social needs.

At the same time, some of the community work began to resemble the charitable and benevolent works of the early history of the community sector in Canada (Roberts, 2001). Because of cuts to social programs, food kitchens and emergency housing for the homeless became growth industries.

The blurring of lines between state and community work was also evidenced by workfare (working for your welfare cheque). In the late 1980s workfare was introduced in Quebec (National Union Research, 2000; Shragge; 1997b). Although community organizations were ideologically opposed to workfare programs[15], compromises were made and workfare was put in place. Community organizations began hiring welfare recipients on short-term contracts.

These examples show how the respective roles of the state and community organizations became blurred. In large part, organizations stopped challenging the state and began working within the dominant neoliberal framework, as implementers of state policy.

The Sector Becomes Formalized

In parallel, this period also saw community organizations collaborating more formally and becoming more organized among themselves. This was

[15] Workfare left participating welfare recipients working with few additional financial benefits and little or no increase in their self-esteem. It often did not lead to long-term integration into the work force. See White (1997, p. 76-78) for a discussion of this.

carried out via the establishment of formal networks and, at the end of the period, the formation of the Comité aviseur as the voice of "an important part of the autonomous community movement" (translated from Sotomayor and Lacombe, 2006, p. 11). This structuring contributed to the sector's ability to negotiate and mediate with the state as the lines between the two became blurred. The period is described by Quebec writers as either cooperative conflict, contradictory participation or critical cooperation with the state (see White, 1997) as the sector organized and began to push for its rights.

The creation of formal networks.

It is during this period that community "tables de concertation", also known as "tables", began to spring up[16]. Tables are usually local organizations bringing together community groups on a regular basis around shared interests, be they sectoral (e.g. youth) or geographic. Examples of geographic tables include: the Côte-des-Neiges Community Council[17]; Action Guardien in Pointe St. Charles (one of the older ones, founded in 1981); and the Verdun Table de Quartier.

"Regroupements" also began forming as the number of organizations significantly increased and the need for collaboration grew[18]. Established to

[16] It should be noted that one of the first tables was the NDG Community Council; which created a common voice for (mostly) English-speaking organizations in the 1940s.

[17] Recently changed to the Corporation de développement communautaire Côte-des-Neiges; at least in part because of funding opportunities.

[18] Regroupements can be described as "permanent organizations that gather groups or individuals around a common cause with common objectives and a common approach" (Leclerc, p. 1, 2003). One of the first was the formation of the Regroupement des resources alternatives en santé mentale, in 1982.

represent local organizations, to defend their common interests and to put pressure on the government, The Front d'action populaire en réaménagment urbain (FRAPRU) is an example of one of the most effective (and long-standing) regroupements. Established in 1978, it has more than 25 members (groups that work directly on housing issues) along with more than 100 associate members. It actively promotes the development of a housing policy across the province of Quebec, lobbies for alternatives to private housing and organizes protests on specific issues (i.e. Overdale, Guidonville) (Groupe d'études et d'actions urbaines, 2008). One of the organizations in this case study is an active member of FRAPRU.

Other regroupements that are well-known and important in the history of the Quebec community sector include the Regroupement intersectorial des organismes communautaires de Montréal (RIOCM), a forum for organizations focused on health and social services[19]; the Table régionale des organismes voluntaries d'éducation populaire (TROVEP) for organizations rallying around issues of poverty and exclusion; and L'R des centres des femmes, a regroupement of women's centres. Along with coalitions[20], the formation of tables and regroupements led to organizations beginning to act like a "sector".

From helping to form local tables to being active members in various regroupements and coalitions, both organizations in this case study have a long

[19] Regroupement des organismes communautaires (ROC) exist in many of the administrative regions of Quebec.

[20] For example: COCAF- the Coalition des organismes communautaires autonome en formation.

history with, and a strong belief in, the importance of being involved in structures that move the work beyond the doors of the local organization. However, involvement in a table or regroupement is time-consuming, often requiring a commitment of at least one day a month. The large majority of those active at the table and regroupement level are paid staff; as is the case with the organizations in this case study. Therefore, these structures can raise concerns about how the voice of local citizens is represented (Parazelli, 2004), about who is not at the table yet active in the sector, and what might happen as the community sector becomes increasingly linked to the state's apparatus.

SACA and the Comité aviseur.

By the mid-1990s, the relationship between the state and the community sector moved to yet a new level. In 1995 the provincial government formed the Secretariat for Autonomous Community Action (SACA), with the stated intent to have it act as a means of supporting the development of the third sector in partnership with the state (White, 2001). In 1996, the Comité aviseur was created by community sector regroupements to fight for representation at the political level and to garner influence on SACA (Sotomayor & Lacombe, 2006). The Comité aviseur represented major segments of the community sector structured through tables, coalitions and regroupements.

What had been many independent community organizations became part of the formal community sector. This shift is significant as it is, in the Western world, a unique type of organized relationship between the community sector.

Nowhere else do we see a recognized body from the community sector having a formal relationship with the state.

Broader Trends Influencing This Period

During the 1980s/1990s, the sector was also being influenced by broader trends that relate to this study. Several are briefly described here.

The move to professionalization.

The 1980s/1990s was a period of maturation for many community organizations, during which they coalesced into a sector. With some history and experience in place, more formalized training programs replaced the on-the-job training of the 1960s/1970s in response to the needs of the growing ranks of people working in the sector. As the knowledge in areas such as youth work, working on issues of mental health, and women's issues increased (Panet-Raymond & Mayer, 1997), training often focused on competencies and specific skill sets, rather than analysis or critical thinking that would encourage those being trained to question the underlying assumptions of the approach which they were being taught (Delhi, 1990; Hall & Banting, 2000; Parazelli, 2004). University certification was given primacy over the "lived experiences" of the issues on which organizations worked.

With the increased hiring of university-trained staff, alternative service organizations began to lose their distinction of having citizens play an active role

in controlling the organization. As well, the work became more complex and time consuming for volunteers (Shragge, 2003). For Panet-Raymond and Mayer (1997) the shift is described as specialization and bureaucratization followed by professionalization. This trend continued into the post-2000 era.

Identity politics.

Identity politics focuses on organizing for the self-interest of groups of the marginalized or those with specific interests (such as women or the lesbian-gay-bi-sexual-transgender (LGBT) community). The strengthening of identity politics, coupled with diminishing class struggles (e.g. the labour movement) dominated this period of community organizing in North America. This was reflected in Quebec as well. Much of the organizing moved away from working on issues of class and economic rights into the sphere of organizing for the social rights of the marginalized.

Identity politics is positive in that it builds a collective identity and solidarity among people through consciousness-raising. However, by focusing on identity, issues of class are not raised. And, questions of power are often replaced with concern for recognition, not necessarily that of equality. Therefore work for structural change can be undermined when “concern (has) shifted towards a non-political terrain: the need for self-realization in every-day life” (Melucci, 1989, p. 23). Moreover, focusing on identity tends to fragment movements for more global change.

With the shift to identity politics, fighting for structural change took more of a back seat during this period. Struggles were framed in terms of getting the state to acknowledge the realities of people; without necessarily pushing for fundamental shifts in society. This was lived out in one of the case study organizations during the early 1990s in a period of activism to fight government policies on welfare. An organizer from one of the case study organizations lost an argument with a coalition because she believed that a new and different strategy had to be found to fight draconian welfare policies. The consensus in the room was described by the organizer to me as: “We did the same thing last year and even though we did not win a damn thing, we need to keep doing the same thing this year. We need to let them know we don’t agree with the policies”. The organizer realized that the other members of the coalition had shifted their way of working from, as she describes it: “fighting for real change to expressing a culture and values”. Her experience represents an example of how identity politics replaced class or economic struggles as the dominant form of organizing.

Language as a reflection of deeper shifts within the sector.

The vocabulary shaping the sector evolved during this period. It reflected the changes in practice. There was a shift from community “organizing” to “development”; from “poor people” to “social capital” and “asset building”; and from “volunteer engagement” to “volunteer management” (Fisher & Shragge, 2000; Ilcan & Basok, 2004; Shragge 2003). The “community movement” became “the community sector” (White, 1997). These examples illustrate how the language moved from fostering fundamental social change to inclusion (i.e.

community organizing to community development) and from engaging with core issues to managing them in more of a case-by-case basis.

Community work was introduced to John McKnight's (1995; 1993 with Kretzmann) "appreciative approach"; working from an "asset-based", not problem-based approach to difficulties or challenges in a community. Working from an appreciative approach is a "marvelous opportunity" to mobilize people (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993, p. 352). However, it calls for scrutiny, assuming one is looking for fundamental social change, because it places the burden of change on individuals and their "assets" rather than the need for fundamental societal change to respond to peoples' needs. The asset-based approach repositions community organizing from using oppositional to collaborative and individual strategies for change (Fisher & Shragge, 2000; Shragge, 2003; McGrath, Moffat, George & Lee, 1999). This shift has the effect of fitting well within a neoliberal context where the focus is on reorganizing civil society to promote self-organizing communities as compensatory mechanisms for the inadequacies of the market (Jessop, 2002). These examples of shift in terminologies illustrate a fundamental shift of focus in community work. The axis of action has been moved away from fundamental changes in society to variations of acceptance, management of, and some inclusion of formerly marginalized people, this without necessarily improving their fundamental conditions, rights, or relationships of power.

It was concomitant with these broader shifts in society, coupled with an emerging organized community sector within a neoliberal framework, that the most recent period began.

The Recent Past Becomes More Deeply Entrenched: Post-2000

The current context is that the Canadian community sector is, to a large extent, a community of service providers with close ties between government and the sector (Ilcan & Basok, 2004; Voluntary Sector Initiative, 2003). The discourse at the pan-Canadian level is that of improving relations with the government (Brock, 2000; Phillips, 2003b) and of contracting at the provincial government level. This is a period of entrenchment of neoliberalism; although changes are often not framed with the acknowledgement of the new political and economic context as the root of the changes.

The Canadian Voluntary Sector Initiative (VSI)[21] has documented this reality well. VSI was a federal government initiative with the voluntary sector to "enhance their relationship and strengthen the sector's capacity" (Voluntary Sector Initiative, 2006). The mandate was "to advise and support the Reference Group of Ministers on the voluntary sector, as well as departments and agencies, on the state of the voluntary sector-government relationship and on actions to be

[21] Voluntary sector was a term chosen to represent the essential spirit of unincorporated, nonprofit and/or charitable organizations on which VSI was focusing. It covers organizations serving a public benefit. It includes service clubs, community associations, advocacy groups, community development groups, recreational associations, etc. See VSI, 1999, p. 10 for a detailed explanation.

taken to strengthen the partnership and the voluntary sector's capacity" (Voluntary Sector Initiative, 2003, p. 3). The fact that VSI even existed may well illustrate the implementation of neoliberal policies. VSI was active from 2000 to 2005 (with a website still being maintained by the federal government). The mandate of the VSI was broad, the time period short, the political will insufficient and many players in the community sector did not participate in the initiative (Phillips, 2003a). Nonetheless, it commissioned and/or relied on numerous studies[22] that painted a portrait of a sector, moving into the post-2000 period, concerned primarily with funding (Hall & Banting, 2000; Phillips, 2003b; Pross & Webb, 2003; Roberts, 2001; Scott, 2003; Statistics Canada, 2004; Voluntary Sector Initiative, 2003a), management (Voluntary Sector Initiative, 2003b;Statistics Canada, 2004; Roberts, 2001) and accountability (Phillips & Levasseur, 2004; Scott, 2003); all areas implicit in a shift to neoliberalism and all areas relating to the survival and viability of organizations; and not necessarily working for social change. Each of these elements will now briefly be explored.

Funding was raised as a key area of concern for good reason. By 2000, at the federal level and for most provinces (however, not Quebec) there was a shift away from core funding (funding that covers basic operations for an organization) to project or program funding for the short term (Scott, 2003) and awarded because of government-perceived needs, not needs initially articulated by organizations working in the sector (Roberts, 2001). This shift placed

[22] The most notable was a series of books edited by Keith Banting and Kathy Brock: Banting 2000; Brock, 2000, 2003c; Brock & Banting, 2001, 2003.

organizations in a difficult position. They have become the deliverers of services, the face of government that the public sees and critiques but not the decision-makers. This shift was the implementation of new public management within the shift toward neoliberalism, embedding community organizations within the state apparatus (Evans & Shields, 2004; Phillips & Levasseur, 2004).

Second, charitable status accreditation regulations became increasingly problematic for community organizations. Accreditation had become more and more difficult to attain and Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) has escalated its vigilance to ensure the regulations limiting advocacy work are respected (Bridge, 2002; Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants, 2005; Pross & Webb, 2003). This has made an impact on funding in two ways. First, because foundations can only give money to organizations with charitable status, funding opportunities for organizations have been limited. Organizations unable to obtain charitable status cannot secure funding from foundations. Second, because organizations with charitable status are being more closely scrutinized by CRA to ensure they follow the regulations concerning advocacy work[23], organizations

[23] Advocacy work is limited, under federal law, to 10- 20% of an organization's resources (depending on its budget; with larger organizations permitted a smaller percentage). Advocacy work is quantified as direct political activities that call explicitly for laws, policies or government decisions to be retained, opposed or changed (however, always without promoting or denouncing a specific political party). The restrictions actually allow for much advocacy work as long as it is not "big P" political (i.e.: public awareness campaigns, talking with elected politicians is acceptable); something many organizations seem to have forgotten or are afraid to do. See Centre for Community Organizations, 2009 for more details.

with a social justice agenda are less keen to apply for charitable accreditation, again cutting themselves off from foundations as a source of funding[24].

Management of organizations had also become a major concern by 2000. This included specific concern about: “managing” volunteers (Roberts, 2001; Statistics Canada, 2004); planning work (Statistics Canada, 2004); infrastructure development (Roberts, 2001); and legal liability (Roberts, 2001). This concern with management flows naturally out of the neoliberal restructuring call for new public management demanding bureaucratic implementation of services for governments to enter into service delivery contracts (Evans & Shields, 2004). New public management calls for skills that volunteers and activists don’t necessarily come by naturally (e.g. writing grant applications and reports, quantifying participation of people in programs and services, etc.); thereby training is required (Shragge, 2003).

The success of an organization I helped found and have worked with since 2000 is an example of this shift towards the need for more seasoned management skills. The Centre for Community Organizations (COCo) has been financially supported precisely because funders require community organizations to produce long-term plans, conduct evaluations, “manage” volunteers and respond to questions of liability and other legal issues. These are all functions that require varying degrees of specialized training. COCo has always needed to walk a fine line between training people how to manage and how to use the skills

[24] However, some even criticize the very existence of foundations as a source of funding. See the discussion of Incite’s work (Incite!, 2007), p. 76.

of management to challenge those holding power and to focus on social change work.

The focus on management is also supported by the growing professionalization of the sector that began in the 1970s/1980s. People working in community organizations are, increasingly, trained professionals and, less and less, former participants in or clients of the organization. This influences the way issues and needs are seen; less from the perspective of how to resolve problems people have and more with sustainability of funding of organizations and the salaried jobs of those doing the managing in mind.

This increased concern with management can take the focus away from work for social change. Donnelly (2004) goes so far as to call it “non-profit careerism derailing the revolution”. He suggests that with the professionalization and management focus of the community sector, activists have a comfortable place to work and, thus a venue to live their values and carve out a career without excessively rocking the neoliberal boat. It’s no wonder then that trying to achieve social change becomes less urgent; working for it becomes a comfortable career, not a goal to achieve.

This focus on management feeds into the third area identified by VSI efforts: accountability. New public management requires enhanced accountability, as organizations respond to needs identified by the government (Flynn & Hodgkinson, 2001). This calls for new systems and structures to ensure government priorities are being met, and to be able to show this to those who control the purse strings. Results-based management, with the results that are

desired and required to ensure continued funding both framed and evaluated by the state, is one of the most visible forms of new public management adopted by the federal government. These constraints are often framed as required to assist in accommodating a desire for more accountability. This approach has dictated that many training sessions have been set up so that staff in community organizations can learn how to write grant requests in a results-based format[25].

These VSI-linked studies and reports show that much of the sector is concerned with organizational survival and self-perpetuation. Canadian nonprofits have good reason to be concerned about funding, how they manage their organizations, and accountability issues. However, when these areas become the dominant focus, the original purpose of organizations can become blurred or derailed, as Donnelly would suggest. Survival, not social change or showing alternative ways of being in the world, can begin to dominate[26].

There appears to be an acceptance of, and an implicit adherence to, a neoliberal system without always the understanding or explicit identification of how neoliberalism has profoundly altered and reshaped the community sector.

[25] Accountability has been pushed in the post-2000 period specifically in Canada by federal government on the basis that a Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) 2000 audit revealed deficiencies in documentation in some grants and contribution programs. It is to be noted that the deficiencies were later identified to be, in effect, minor, and often not linked to funding for the community sector (Phillips & Levasseur, 2004), and particularly minor in comparison to the more recent Sponsorship Scandal (see CBC News, 2006). Regardless, it had the effect of the imposition of enhanced accountability on community sector organizations to the federal government.

[26] A shocking example from VSI research is a story of the Victorian Order of Nurses (VON). Although it is not the type of organization in which I am specifically interested, it illustrates how survival, not mission-based work, has become pre-dominant. Executive directors speak with remarkable and telling candour about staying in business simply to “to maintain employment for staff” (Tindale & Maclachlan, 2001, p. 202).

For example, Scott's (2003) study of funding shifts in Canada speaks about the "new funding regime", but neglects to mention neoliberalism. Yet, context and history are important. We need to analyze, understand and question the broader forces that shape community work. We need, as Geoghegan and Powell (2009) astutely ask us, to ponder whether our community development work is "alongside or against neoliberalism" (p. 430).

Quebec: Distinct yet similar.

Quebec has certainly been affected by the shift toward neoliberalism. But, the post-2000 community sector looks quite different in many ways from the rest of Canada. Funding is more attainable (specifically core funding to cover basic operating costs) and accountability to the state is less stringent. This is due in large part to the implementation of the Politique de reconnaissance et de soutien de l'action communautaire (PRSAC). The Politique, finalized in 2001, recognizes and supports, community action organizations[27] and autonomous community action organizations through project funding and service contracts. Autonomous community action organizations may receive core funding[28], however they need to respond to the four criteria mentioned (footnote 27) as well as to the following criteria:

[27] These are defined as organizations that have a legal nonprofit status, have roots in a community, work with democratic principles and self-determine their mission, approach and practices (Gouvernement du Québec, 2001, p 21, translated and summarized).

[28] Funding over multiple years to cover basic costs such as rent, office equipment and up to several salaries. Core funding is often desired because it provides an organization with stability.

- began as a community initiative;

- have a social mission and work towards social transformation;

- work from a broad social change analysis in collaboration with others; and,

- are run by a board of directors with no structural links with the government (Gouvernement du Québec, 2001, p 21, translated and summarized).

SACAIS[29] (formerly SACA) is mandated to coordinate the implementation of the Politique and mediate between the state and the organizations recognized by the Politique. SACAIS works with the Réseau québécois d'action communautaire autonome (RQ-ACA, formerly the Comité aviseur), which represents organizations funded through the Politique as autonomous community action organizations, to (among other objectives) define funding mechanisms and principles for performance evaluation, accountability and streamlining of government practices[30]. The RQ-ACA is the recognized voice of autonomous community action organizations (Sotomayor & Lacombe, 2006).

For those in Quebec who have always lived this complex relationship between the state and the sector (and have seen the gains it has won), this structure and the current context of the sector is seen generally as positive

[29] Sécretariat à l'action communautaire autonome et aux initiatives sociales.

[30] http://www.mess.gouv.qc.ca/sacais/informations-generales/mandat.asp, retrieved May 29, 2010.

(Sotomayor & Lacombe, 2006). For others, it also raises some important challenges. Jetté's (2008) review of the relationship between the government's Health and Social Services Department and community organizations over the past 30 years documents the strong gains the community sector has made (i.e. influence with the government, the Politique, increases in funding, etc). He also notes how new public management practices have led to less innovation and diminished citizen participation. Others echo and build on his concerns. For example, there are concerns that democracy and mobilization of citizens at the local level is weakening. There are groups working in the community that are not part of this more formal relationship. These groups are therefore lacking funding, acknowledgement of their work and participation in the ongoing debates over priorities and required actions. There is also concern that the links with the government for groups is too limited and sectoralized; that the Politique is too unevenly implemented across various government departments; and that it lacks coherence for funding autonomous community action organizations. In addition, concerns have also been expressed that the designations of autonomous community action organization and community action organization are too narrowly defined (Centre for Community Organizations, 2007; Lachappelle, 2007; Shragge, 2007a; Shragge 2007b; Sotomayor & Lacombe, 2006; White, 2001, 2008). Moreover, it is a policy, not law; therefore the government is not obliged to implement the *Politique* (Guay & White, 2010). Though very distinct in implementation from the rest of Canada, it can be argued that Quebec is following an analogous trajectory of state and sector relations, characterized by

closer relationships between the community sector and the state with the resulting blurring of roles and the deeper structural and operational implementation of neoliberalism (Côte & Simard, 2010).

Neoliberalism has united voices of opposition across the world and has nurtured a global movement for social justice[31] (Ferguson, Lavalette, Whitmore, 2005). With key meetings to implement neoliberal directions being held in Canada (e.g. Summit of the Americas in Quebec City in 2001, G-8 meeting in Kananaskis, Alberta in 2002, George Bush's visit to Canada in 2003, the recent G-8 and G-20 summits in Ontario), many citizens active in the community sector have participated in protests against neoliberalism. However, the more formal community sector has rarely officially mobilized and taken a public stand. With neoliberalism such a dominant force in the current context, local organizations have ended up dealing with its impact at the micro level. These impacts include: the funding process; the enhanced management requirements; the professional training required; accountability questions (to a lesser extent in Quebec); and the formalization of the sector. If community organizations are to make any significant headway with progressive social change, work needs to be done at a more macro level to move away from neoliberalism towards a more just economic system.

[31] More commonly known as the anti globalization movement, the term "movement for social justice" more accurately reflects the vision of the movement. See Bevington & Dixon (2005) for discussion of these terms.

Conclusion

The two organizations explored in this case study illustrate aspects of the history and context of the Quebec community sector (primarily from an English-speaking community organization perspective) as the sector moved from activism to proliferation and formalization to neoliberal entrenchment. Within this context, these organizations offer multiple community-based services to citizens living in low income communities. They speak about their work as one of social justice and they organize and advocate on issues of concern to their participants and members. Their histories and evolution has been in constant motion and is complex. This environment has shaped the opportunities that exist for organizing and created tensions between the community sector and the state. It raises considerable challenges for local community organizations in their work for social justice.

Being conscious of, and responsive to, the changes outlined in this chapter are important for organizations working for social justice. That is why this history, this context have been presented in detail in this thesis. The specific relationship between historical events and the current-day work of the case study organizations is discussed and assessed in future chapters.

In the following chapter I explore what the literature says about community organizations navigating this history and context as they strive to work for social justice.

Chapter Three:

Literature Review: The Role of Local Organizations in Social Justice Work

This chapter explores what the literature says about the role of local community organizations in social change work. It builds on the history and context explored in Chapter Two. Specifically, it identifies the challenges and contradictions of local organizations working for social justice.

The primary literature reviewed is North American. It covers literature from a social movement perspective, examining the role of local organizations in social movement work and literature originating with the local perspective. Specifically, the work of the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) and Building the Movement Project are explored. ACORN was, until very recently, the third largest nonprofit in the U.S., with a presence in over 100 American cities and several other countries (including Canada). It had half a million members and has won important social gains in the U.S. (Rathke 2009b). There has been scholarly interest in examining the work of this organization as it relates to social change work of local organizations (Brooks, 2005; DeFilippis, Fisher & Shragge, 2009; Fisher, 2009). This work is summarized in this chapter[32].

[32] As of April 2010, ACORN has shut its U.S. offices. Major funding sources were withdrawn after a video clip was widely circulated showing conservative activists posing as a prostitute and a pimp being told by ACORN staff how to avoid taxes. The video was later discredited but it appears that right-wing interests have succeeded in shutting down the organization. Internal financial problems and allegations of fraud have also not helped the reputation of the

Building the Movement Project began in 2000 with a meeting entitled "Building Movement In(to) the Nonprofit Sector". This has since become an organization that works with individual organizations; carries out research projects; and publishes on how nonprofits can be part of movement building. Evaluation on its work is also reported on here.

This review is presented in four sections. The first explores the role of local organizations in social change work within social movements. We begin with this discussion because of a common critique that local organizations can act as a detriment to a social movement's work for change. The section identifies ways local organizations can contribute to social movements. It also discusses the critique social movement writers make about local organizations.

The second section highlights what the literature says about how the service delivery work of local organizations can contribute to progressive social change work. The third section explores key challenges and contradictions local organizations face in contributing to social change work. A fourth and final section builds on recent research from Building the Movement Project on the role of a social justice mission in local community organizations working on social change.

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organization. This is unfortunate as ACORN has much to show us about the role of local organizations and social justice work. It is worrisome that a leader in social justice work is attacked so vehemently. See http://www.flickr.com/photos/42406957@N04/sets/72157622225019439/show/ (retrieved September 11, 2009), http://spectator.org/archives/2009/08/26/acorn-in (retrieved October 7, 2009) and Urbina (2010) for details.

Local Community Organizations Have a Role in Supporting Social Change Within Social Movements; Albeit Only a Supportive Role

Social movements can be defined as "collective challenges based on common purposes and social solidarities, in sustained interaction with elites, opponents, and authorities" (Tarrow, 1998, p. 4).

There is debate about whether local community organizations have a role to play within the social change work of movements. Popular belief in the Canadian community sector suggests that local organizing by community-based organizations is a fundamental component of social movement work (Doucet & Favreau, 1997; Lamoureux, 2009; Lee, 1997). Some research suggests that local organizing can play a role in laying the foundations for, or have an active role in, supporting social movements. (For example: DeFilippis, Fisher & Shragge, 2010; Putman, 2000; Tarrow, 1998; Whitmore & Wilson, 2000). Other research suggests that local organizations working for social justice can prove detrimental to social movements. (For example: Goodwin & Jasper, 2004; Holst, 2002; Piven & Cloward, 1977.)

The argument I present here is that there is a role for local organizations in social movement work. However, local organizations are not at the centre of social movement work. The literature I have reviewed suggests local organizations can contribute to such work. They can focus on engaging people or introducing them to the issues. They can develop critical thinking skills in citizens

so that new discourses as alternatives to the dominant ideology emerge. As well, they can work with other like-minded organizations to have a broader impact, thereby supporting social movement work.

Despite the popular belief that local organizations are a fundamental component of social movement work, little research exists identifying their specific role (Conway, 2006; Chetkovich & Kunreuther, 2006; Fisher, 1993; Goodwin & Jasper, 2004; McAdam, 2004; Pickvance, 2003; Putman, 2000; Whitmore & Wilson, 2000, 2008). Pickvance (2003) suggests this is the case, in part, because of the isolation of urban movement theorists (those concerned with local citizen action) from social movement theorists. Also confusing the discussion is a lack of clarity or the use of very different definitions when referring to local organizations, network organizations and social movement organizations[33]. Moreover, most writing about social movements does not make the role of local community organizations the focal point of the work.

However, several authors do address specific elements of the role of local community organizations in social change work. These are now explored.

[33] For examples of differing definitions, see: Goodwin & Jasper, 2004, p. 19-20 where they refer to "social movement organizations" which they do not define but could have included community-based organizations, particularly given the example they use of "social movement organizations" working on AIDS (p. 127); Holst (2002, p. 101) where he speaks about non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and appears to infer that community organizations are one type of NGO; Phillips, 2003a, Putman (2000, chapter 9), Shragge, 2003, Whitmore & Wilson, 2000, 2008. For a discussion about the terms, their definitions and the confusion in the language, see Tarrow (1998, p. 189), Keck & Sikkink (1998), and Pickvance (2003). For the purposes of this thesis, local organizations are as defined in Chapter One (see page 5). "Network organizations" refers to intermediary organizations; organizations that bring together other organizations to work on shared interests (which may be working on an issue, securing funding from a common source, sharing information, etc.). Tables and regroupements in Quebec are seen as network organizations. The definition I use for social movement is on page 47.

Engaging and Mobilizing Citizens Over Time

One role that local community organizations can undertake to support the work of social movements is to engage and mobilize people over time. This is important because social movement work is often sporadic. Local organizations can provide a continuum for contact with citizens. Tarrow (1998), Whitmore & Wilson (2000), and Putman (2000) help us understand this.

Tarrow speaks specifically of the role of social networks (friendships, neighbours and family networks) as places from where to draw people in order to build social movements. For him, these spaces have "emerged as the most common source of recruitment into social movements" (1998, p. 125). By looking at historical social change movements (e.g. the French Revolution, challenges to the Roman Empire) and more recent social movements (e.g. the environmental movement, movements for democracy and global justice), he documents how "contention crystallizes into a social movement when it taps embedded social networks and connective structures [and produces collective action frames and supportive identities able to sustain contention with powerful opponents]" (p. 23).

Tapping embedded social networks is a role suited to local organizations. Tarrow even suggests that "institutions are particularly economical 'host' settings in which movements can germinate" (p. 22). He is referring to organizations

similar to local community organizations; student organizations and Black churches in the U.S. in the 1960s [34].

Tarrow acknowledges an important challenge. There is difficulty in structuring organizations to do this engagement work in ways that have "autonomous and contextually rooted local units linked by connective structures and coordinated by formal organizations" (p. 124). Creating organizations that are flexible enough to have informal connections and strong networks among people, yet robust enough to do oppositional work, is difficult. Little detail is given as to how this can be accomplished. This is one of the questions this case study explores.

However, Tarrow reminds us that changes in political opportunities and constraints play "the strongest role in triggering general episodes of contention" (p. 200). Thus, for Tarrow, local organizations have a role to play in social movements by engaging people, with the provision that they play a supportive role, not a primary one, in responding to shifts in society.

Whitmore and Wilson also highlight the role of local organizations as one of engaging and mobilizing people. They do so from a Canadian perspective. Focusing on the challenges to globalization, they (2000) identify ways for "popular groups" to get involved in social movements. They (all too briefly) speak about the importance of sharing information, building linkages, demonstrating the

[34] See page 208-209 for more discussion about "institutions" and their similarity to local community organizations.

impact of policies on people's lives, creating alternative possibilities and building peoples' capacity.

Their most recent research looks at how nine Canadian national activist organizations define success in their social change work *(*Whitmore & Wilson, 2008). This work sheds additional light on a possible role for local community organizations in social movements. The research identifies five ways that success is defined by the pan-Canadian social change organizations. They are: citizen engagement; change in policies, practices or people's attitudes; personal meaning (which refers to people feeling they are involved in something bigger than themselves, are making a difference or are learning); raising consciousness (of the group's members, the public, garnering media attention, and raising the consciousness of the target for change, often the government); and organizational effectiveness (meaning that there is a sense of positive group functioning, enhanced credibility for the organization, or output such as funds raised or programs developed). While it must be noted that actual change in policies and practices is only one way and not the only nor the primary way that success is defined for these organizations, for the purposes of this discussion these findings (in tandem with those from 2000 work) highlight a possible role for community organizations to contribute to social movements via citizen engagement work.

In the 2008 study, engagement work is referred to as engaging people in large numbers, from diverse backgrounds and from among those who are marginalized, engaging people willing to take a stand for justice, and initiating

people to social change work ("getting people starting to talk"). Engaging people with the issues is work that local organizations can undertake. This engagement can then raise consciousness, give personal meaning to people and foster changes in their attitudes. The work of helping bring about actual change in policies or practices is perhaps more fully a role for broader social movement work.

In his well-publicized work on social capital in the United States entitled *Bowling Alone*, Putman also makes the connection between local organizations and social movement work. He sees it as omnipresent (2000). He shows evidence that each feeds the other, from friendships leading to movement activism after Three Mile Island[35] or reading groups being the "sinews of the suffrage movement" (p. 153) to social movement involvement leading to enhanced social capital (i.e. Mississippi Freedom Summer participation leading participants to become more predisposed to activism). For Putman, the specific role of local community organizations is to mobilize supporters for direct action.

The lack of grassroots involvement in social movement work is of concern (DeFilippis, Fisher & Shragge, 2010; D. Fisher, 2006; R. Fisher & Shragge, 2002, Putman, 2000). Membership in social movement organizations is increasingly through donations and signing petitions, not grassroots activism. Computer activism, while involving large numbers of people, to some extent has supplanted the physical mobilization of citizens. So, how then do we mobilize and engage

[35] The most significant nuclear accident in North American history. In 1979, a nuclear plant near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania had a partial core meltdown.

people when participation is increasingly sedentary and removed from activity? Local community organizations may be part of the answer, as they give us an opportunity to engage directly with citizens over time.

Producing and Providing Alternative Knowledge

Local organizations also can have a role in supporting social movements through developing critical thinking skills in citizens, in order that new and alternative discourses to the dominant ideology can be explored. This role of fostering alternative knowledge has more recently been clearly recognized in social movement literature (Alcock, 2006; Foley, 1999; Holst, 2002; Jesson & Newman, 2004).

Foley (1999) refers to this process as one of “unlearning” the dominant discourses and the learning of “resistant” discourses. This can be done through non-formal, informal or incidental education (2004, p. 4-5). It’s worth taking a closer look at these three types of learning and their relationship to alternative knowledge production. For Foley, non-formal education is what takes place when the need for “some sort of systematic instruction” (2004, p. 4) is identified and carried out “in a one-off or sporadic way” (2004, p. 4). On the other hand, informal learning is about consciously learning from experience and incidental learning is what can take place while other tasks are being performed. This raises questions for those leading local community organizations. What can we do to increase learning via informal and incidental opportunities? Do we have adequate non-formal education processes in place? Is doing this educational

work sporadic enough, or does it need to become more systematized? In other words, do we undertake alternative knowledge production work in our community organizations? Do we do it consciously? Do we do enough of it?

The Metro Network for Social Justice (Toronto) documented the importance of alternative knowledge production with local organizations in social movement work. The Metro Network for Social Justice was a coalition of more than 200 organizations: service organizations, social justice organizations, women's groups, international development organizations, etc. It was formed in the early 1990s and specifically used a popular education[36] approach with its members to develop lobbying strategies for policy changes at the pan-Canadian level. Knowledge production was seen as "movement-based interpretation of the world becom[ing] central to the movements' self understanding and development and to the capacity of social movement publics to enter into political struggles in which contestations over knowledge are central" (Conway, 2006, p. 21). The work was challenging because it required bringing many different types of organizations together to identify "good local action within the larger context "(p. 76) but the approach was deemed to work well because of the popular education approach. This is the type of work that can be done within local organizations, or collaboratively with like-minded organizations, around specific social movement issues.

[36] An educational approach and methodology inspired by Paulo Freire "which aims to empower people by focusing attention on the knowledge and experiences they already possess" (Linds, 1991, p. 13).

Linds' (1991) work with local community social justice organizations in Saskatchewan is an example of popular education being implemented at the local level to learn about the connections between local and global issues. In this case, links were established and reinforced between global issues of poverty and the rights of children. These two examples (Conway and Linds) illustrate how intermediary organizations can create opportunities for alternative knowledge production among local community organizations.

To engage more citizens in knowledge production, it is also important to do the work within local organizations. This is a collective process (Jesson & Newman, 2004; Nadeau, 1996). Examples of how to develop alternative knowledge collectively at the local level exist (Arnold & Burke, 1983, 1985; Barndt & Freire, 1989; Nadeau, 1996; Ravensbergen & VanderPlaat, 2009). Foley (1999) shares a case study of two neighbourhood houses in Australia. He documents the process of women developing critical consciousness as they informally learn about social change. Women often come to the houses to break their isolation. Through participating in playgroups with their children, many come to recognize their own needs. This evolves through informal discussions, management and resolution of conflictual situations or through participation in the management of the house. It is how the staff works within these situations that encourages the women to develop new forms of knowledge. Foley highlights the importance of: organizations taking time to explore the contradictions of social life; creating "liberated spaces" to explore these contradictions; the role of struggles and experiencing difficulties for learning; and the value of stepping

back from the experience and “reordering it” using concepts such as power conflict, structure, values and choice to understand it from a different perspective and create new knowledge (1999). This process takes time and the conscious creation of spaces within which to explore alternative knowledge. These elements often present a challenge for organizations.

Unfortunately taking the time to do this type of work is often not undertaken in local organizations. Ilcan and Basok (2004) document how critical thinking and social justice knowledge production is actually discouraged in state-funded volunteer organizations in the Windsor, Ontario area. They illustrate how the broader social context of “community government” (new public management) has a negative impact on the social justice work of local community organizations by showing how the government has moved nonprofit organizations to be responsible for providing services and not encouraging their volunteers to look “at the big picture” of why the services are needed and how society as a whole could more appropriately and with better success respond to needs.

While knowledge production may be challenging to do in local organizations, providing alternative knowledge and encouraging citizens to question the dominant discourse can be undertaken. This requires a leadership which understands popular education and has an analysis rooted in alternative knowledge.

However, even if local organizations produce or provide alternative knowledge, knowledge production alone will not bring about social change. As Holst (2002) reminds us, “education does not change society” (2002, p. 79).

The Fundamental Importance of Working With Others For Social Change

Social change work cannot be undertaken or achieved alone. Working collaboratively with other organizations is important for local community organizations as a way of linking citizens to broader social change work (Chetkovick & Kunreuther, 2006; DeFilippis, Fisher & Shragge, 2010; Hardisty & Bhargava, 2005; Lamoureux, 2009; Morris, 1984; Tarrow, 1998; Whitmore & Wilson, 2000). It builds a larger unified front to push for social change and enriches the work of social movements.

Smock (2005) illustrates the importance of transcending the local neighbourhood focus through the creation of what she calls “supra-local” structures of organizations that have an overarching ideological framework. She studied 10 American organizations focusing on the importance of participatory democracy to achieve a shared ideological framework from which to work collectively. Sites, Chaskin and Parks (2007) contribute the idea of working with others across sectors and crossing boundaries to have more voices working in harmony for social change. Delgado (2009) echoes Smock and Sites et al. (2007), calling for the development of an overarching set of ideas with a vision in the building of coalitions. An overriding set of ideas or overarching ideological

framework is important because it builds a shared foundation from which to work for social change with clarity.

ACORN illustrates a good example of how this can be done. Because of its structure with 100 local organizations, ACORN had been able to scale its work up to the national level. Moreover, it had collaborated with other organizations. The link with labor is an example. While coalitions between labor and the community sector may form at provincial or pan-Canadian levels, they are rare at the local level. However, for ACORN, "the labor movement is clearly the backbone of any effective progressive movement. Despite steady declines in the proportion of the labor force in unions, there is real excitement about the successes over a number of major unions and a sense that a revitalization of organized labor is possible" (Dreier, 2009, p 28). ACORN has partnered with unions such as the United Food and Commercial Workers and the United Federation of Teachers on a 'living wage' campaign[37] and to fight the privatization of schools (Delgado, 2009; Rathke, 2009a). ACORN has drawn on the strengths of the labor movement to broaden its support base and increase its ability to exercise power; both necessary elements in social change work.

By applying these movement building activities, ACORN has been able to claim "wins" for progressive social change (Delgado, 2009), and lots of them; from workfare reform to the development of low cost housing to stopping predatory practices by businesses such as H & R Block. ACORN's work at the

[37] Living wage refers to ensuring everyone has a basic, sustainable amount, a "living wage" regardless of whether they are on welfare, working for very low wages or on disability.

movement level has made significant differences in the daily lives of the disadvantaged. How many other organizations can make this claim?

The ability to work nationally, regionally and/or locally, within one organization and across the boundaries of community with unions is a challenge for those of us who work for social justice only at the local level. This type of collaboration in social movement work is so difficult for many local organizations. Popham, Hay and Hughes (1997) illustrate the challenge through their story of the Campaign 2000 work to end child poverty in Canada. Campaign 2000 is a coalition of 120 national and community organizations with participation across Canada[38]. A 1997 evaluation of Campaign 2000 revealed that one of the main lessons learned from doing the work since 1991 was that "policy activism is an *extremely* limited practice in social organizations" (p. 271, italics theirs) and required much work at the coalition level. It took time, a long time, for the partners to reach a consensus on the goals of the campaign.

Others raise additional concerns about the challenges presented by collaboration for social change. Chetkovich and Kunreuther (2006) note that organizations are pulled between their own interests and movement interests. The current proliferation of small groups can even undermine a more centralized structure to work for change.

Moreover, collaboration is no mean feat when there is a dearth of social movement organizations. Shragge (1986) refers specifically to the peace

[38] Ironically, it is still active in 2010. Retrieved from www.campaign2000.ca, Aug 19, 2009.

movement and, although dated, a parallel reality exists today with the lack of social movement organizations focusing on peace issues within the Canadian context. The same reality is apparent for many other social justice issues.

For some, there is also a perceived incapacity of social movement organizations to represent the interests of civil society organizations (Embuldeniya, 2001). In a CIVICUS[39] study interviewing 90 Canadian civil society leaders, more than half of survey respondents believed that umbrella organizations seldom or only sometimes have the capacity to represent the interests of member organizations. While these data should be checked against other data, this perspective rings true and raises valid concerns about the ability of social movement organizations to provide leadership.

There are also barriers and tensions between local organizing and social movements. While referring specifically to the anti globalization movement, the barriers and tensions Fisher and Shragge (2002) identify reflect the challenges other issues raise. These include: the debate over the merits of organization building versus movement building, the stability in local organizations in opposition to social movements that focus on events, and the relationship with the state of local organizing versus the relationship in opposition to the state of social movements.

DeFilippis (2004) gives examples of several organizations that have successfully worked at the local level and been able to mobilize and organize

[39] An international initiative to index civil society. See CIVICUS (2001) for details.

with people to address more global issues. Specifically, he speaks about the Kensington Welfare Rights Union (Philadelphia) as being able to operate on more than the local scale with its involvement in anti globalization protests. However, even this limited link between local and global work is seen as the exception, not the norm: “In general, the current anti globalization protests have been disconnected from organizing at the local and community scales” (p. 156).

Finally, funders promote collaborative efforts but often don’t pay for it. It takes time and skill to collaborate with others. It also takes hard work[40]. Without the resources to carry it out, collaboration can easily be neglected at the local level. However, without collaboration we cannot build a larger unified front to push for social change.

It is to be noted that much of the literature focusing on collaboration is really speaking about collaboration for organizational self-interest, not social change. This confuses the message that collaboration is inherently part of social change work. Take, for example, Building the Movement Project work (Chethovich & Kunreuther, 2006). In speaking about collaboration, of the five types identified, there is only one that is closely linked to social change work: political coalitions. The other types of collaborations[41] speak more to better or

[40] Chetkovich & Kunreuther (2006) identify eleven elements that make collaborations successful. They are: shared purpose and potential for mutual gain; resources; commitment; communication; clarity; trust; respect; leadership; equity among partners; shared conceptual frames; and, compatibility of organizational cultures.

[41] They are: political coalitions, complimentary alliances, match-making, service partnerships and issue-area networks, and joint productions. Political coalitions refer to working with other community organizations to push for a very specific action by public authorities. Complimentary alliances and match-making partnerships refer to working through other organizations. For example: one organization supplying information and analysis and other organization doing the

more comprehensive service delivery. Crutchfield and Grant (2008) also create confusion about all collaboration being part of working for social change. In their study of 12 "forces for good" nonprofits[42] they encourage the reader to treat other groups not as competitors for scarce resources but, instead, as allies "because it's in their self-interest to do so" (p. 22). That's not exactly a strong endorsement for collaborative social change work!

Contesting the Role of Local Community Organizations in Social Movement Work

While the above-mentioned points argue for a role for local community organizations in social movement work, there are those that take a more critical stance. Starting back in the 1800s, suffragette Lucy Stone went so far as to compare organizations to Chinese foot binding, declaring that she "had had enough of thumb-screws and soul screws never to wish to be placed under them again" (Clemens, 2005, p. 352). Stone preferred to conduct her feminist organizing more through mass movement building work. She wanted nothing to do with organizations.

Others echo, although not as forcefully, the suggestion that organizations (not only local community ones) are unnecessary, and even detrimental to social movements. The argument comes out of Michels' (1962) seminal work critiquing

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educational work. Service partnerships are about coordination among service providers to complement each other's services. Issue-area networks are what we would call tables or coalitions in Quebec. Joint productions refer to organizations working together, each taking on the piece of the work in which they have expertise. See pages 134-143 for details.

[42] While the organizations studied are national (i.e. America's Second Harvest, Habitat for Humanity), the authors think their findings are applicable to local organizations.

organizations as oligarchies that become bureaucratic over time. Piven and Cloward (1977) reinforce this view, in their study of the role of community organizations in the American civil rights and welfare movements of the 1960s. They conclude that community organizations did not play a central role in societal changes during this period but that local organizations actually focused on organization-building and, at times, became power brokers between the state and the movement; thereby diminishing the power of the movements. Piven and Cloward summarize by stating that community organizations need to prepare people for opportunities of resistance and identify strategies that can escalate the momentum and impact of disruptive protest (1977). In more recent writings exploring shifts in the sector since the 1970s (1997, 1998), Piven and Cloward focus more on relations of power. They suggest that with the beginning of a new era marked by globalization, there is a need to build solidarities that can actually achieve changes within this new context. There is little reference to the role of community-based organizations. “It is mass protest, not poor people’s organizations, that wins whatever is won,” they state (1997, p. 268).

Others continue the critique. McAdam’s (1982) study of the American civil rights movement notes that “the formation of formal organizations renders the movement increasingly vulnerable to oligarchization, co-optation and dissolution of indigenous support” (p. 56). However, in more recent work that revisits his original study (2004), McAdam questions his original statements in light of “recent intellectual trends in sociology and the social sciences” (2004, p. 202). By this he means his original work did not take into account many of the newer

theoretical constructs that help explain movement formation (e.g. synthesis across structuralist, culturalist and rationalist approaches). He does not re-question specifically the role of the formation of formal organizations in movement building but he does mention the importance of individual motivation being connected to "one's most intimate and primary attachments [….]" (i.e. church, neighbourhood) (2004, p. 228).

There is valid concern that local organizations can become preoccupied with self-preservation. However, there are roles local organizations can undertake to support social movement work; notably engaging and mobilizing citizens over time, creating (or providing) alternative knowledge and collaborating with others to create a stronger force for social change.

Shifting the Focus of the Service Work Toward Collective Action

As we have just explored, local organizations can support the work of social movements to contribute to social justice work. Is there a role beyond this? The literature suggests local organizations can and need to go beyond service delivery if they are to be part of more global social change (Brooks, 2005; Chetkovich & Kunreuther, 2006; DeFilippis, Fisher & Shragge, 2010; Fisher & Shragge, 2000; Shragge, 2007a, 2007b).

This can be done by shifting the focus of the service work to a greater emphasis on the engagement of citizens in collective action. That puts the famous 'the personal is political' slogan at the forefront. Leadership plays a fundamental role in framing this shift in focus away from service-for-the-sake-of-service to service contributing to social change. I explore in this section some elements this shift requires.

Services as an Entry Point for Citizen Engagement

Local organizations can be an entry point for mobilizing diverse constituents for social justice work. Local organizations are close to citizens. They are the living face of issues. They are where people go to find some kind of support or resolution to problems and therefore may be the first place for citizens whose needs are not being met to learn about justice (Brooks, 2005; Chetkovich & Kunreuther, 2006).

ACORN has provided a good example of how to use service as an entry point for deeper citizen engagement. In the late 1990s, changing laws in the U.S. required able-bodied people to work in return for monthly cash assistance (workfare; see page 25). ACORN secured funding to provide individual case advocacy to workfare participants experiencing difficulties with the program. This gave ACORN a base from which to help people obtain their rights within the workfare programs (service). More importantly, it gave ACORN a base from which to mobilize, coupled with experiential knowledge about the most pressing

issues around reform within workfare. ACORN went on to block the expansion of the program (Brooks, 2005).

ACORN's work on workfare is noteworthy because the service component was designed as a way to develop organizing: the service was not the main focus. This may be fundamentally important in framing how service is viewed. Many local organizations begin with service and extend the work to organizing as they realize that service in an inadequate response to specific problems. For ACORN, services grow out of the need to organize and the provision of services was a useful means toward the goal of organizing. Offering services was not an end unto itself.

It is unusual, in the Canadian experience, to find examples of services designed to support and inform organizing work. We usually add a bit of organizing and advocacy work to service delivery. This explains the focus on services, not organizing and advocacy, as the foundation or base of the work in Canada. ACORN's model challenges us to think differently.

ACORN shows that involvement in collective action is one way to move beyond service delivery. This can be an important role that local organizations can take on in social change work. However, it is but one way for local organizations to work on social justice.

Local Organizations Have the Unique Opportunity to Document the Reality on the Ground

Local organizations are in a unique position to document the realities with which citizens live to illuminate why changes are needed (Chetkovich & Kunreuther, 2006). As front line providers of services, organizations can document both quantitatively and qualitatively the changes in policies and their impact on people's lives. In fact, funders often call for documenting the work. The challenge is to document it from a collective lens, to provide the 'big picture' of causes and effects, rather than fall into the trap of focusing through an individual service delivery lens. Colloquially phrased, this means looking at the whole forest not just the individual trees.

The ACORN example of organizing on workfare as a means to a different end aptly illustrates this point. Providing individual case advocacy to workfare participants experiencing difficulties with the program gave ACORN the ability, the information, and most importantly the power, to document how workfare was not working. It provided incontrovertible proof of the impact of the policies on people's lives (Brook, 2005) and gave ACORN statistics and credibility to argue against workfare.

An example, from Quebec, is the 1998 study by RIOCM[43]. "*Their Balance Leaves Us Off-Balance*" provides a chilling account of what local community

[43] Regroupement intersectoriel des organismes communautaires de Montréal, bringing together community groups focused on health and social service issues and funded by the Ministry of Health & Social Services.

organizations experienced after the health and social services system was regionalized during the 1990s. The study documents the reality of citizens lives as services were offloaded to community organizations without adequate funding and coordination between the government and the community sector. What is interesting to note is that this study was undertaken in collaboration with 100 people from local organizations, but conducted at the regroupement level. It underlines how documenting the reality can be done in a collaborative environment with other organizations. The result gives a richer, deeper and more comprehensive data base from which to organize.

Local Organizations Can Advocate for Collective Rights

Local organizations are in contact with citizens on a regular basis. As already noted, this gives them a role as an entry point for citizens into social justice work, as well as a space for ongoing mobilizing to counter-balance the often sporadic activities of social movements (as addressed in previous sections). Local organizations can advocate for collective rights because of this ongoing link they have with citizens. The challenge is to have the advocacy work go beyond advocating for individuals to advocating for collective rights. If we define and think about advocacy as “the act of speaking or of disseminating information intended to influence individual behavior or opinion, corporate conduct, or public policy and law” (Rektor, 2002), we can see ways to work for social justice at the local level by advocating for collective rights based on the documented reality lived by the organization’s participants.

Empowerment: Beyond the Individual and the Local Work

Local community organizations can have a role to play in social justice work by empowering citizens and contributing to the empowerment of the community to work on social gains. One challenge is to work with the most disenfranchised and to stay focused on their needs for empowerment. A second challenge is to move the empowerment work beyond the individual and the local community into collective empowerment at societal levels.

Most approaches to and models of empowerment highlight the challenge of moving empowerment work from the individual to the collective. Ninacs (2008), writing from a Quebec perspective, defines empowerment as a process to develop the capacity to act and to have the capacity to act (translated from page 2), identifying three intra-related areas of empowerment: individual, community, and organizational. While referring to the role of intermediary organizations[44] and recognizing that empowerment is not the only way that social change will take place, the model, similar to others, does not go beyond the community level.

For Ninacs, the role of community organizations is seen as fundamental to the empowerment of individuals (2008). Community organizations are the place for participation and the development of competencies, self-esteem and critical

[44] Intermediary organizations can be local 'tables' or community development corporations, organizations that act as a forum and regroup other organizations and provide assistance to them.

consciousness. Once individuals are empowered, organizational and community empowerment can follow[45].

Ninacs is not alone focusing on the individual and community level. Others have similar ways, albeit differently nuanced, of looking at empowerment. Hardina (2003) and Gutierrez, Alvaraz, Nemon and Lewis (1990) see empowerment as having, at one level, an individual dimension (with self-esteem or self efficacy increased); at another level an intra-personal component where the construction of knowledge and analysis of social problems is acquired through shared experience. A third level is community empowerment, where the development of services and social change strategies are enacted to help individuals "gain mastery over their environment" (Hardina, 2003, p. 26).

Ledwith (2005) also reflects Ninacs' empowerment model but begins to bring in the more global dimension that is required for social change. She speaks about the development of critical consciousness in restoring dignity and self-respect, and the development of understanding of the impact of structural dimensions that gives the freedom to take action to bring about change for social justice. Others push the concept of broader social change through empowerment further. Shragge (1997a) focuses on the personal and political aspects of

[45] Organizational empowerment is described as the recognition of the organization as a legitimate intervener, often providing the link between the individual and community empowerment. By community empowerment, Ninacs refers to the taking charge of an area by-and-for everyone in the area, through ways that encourage the development of the ability to act of individuals, groups and organizations (2008).

empowerment. Freire promotes “social class” empowerment (Shor & Freire, 1987), empowerment with effect beyond the community level.

It is not surprising that much of our understanding of empowerment work stays at the individual or community level. It was first used by radical feminist groups focusing on the personal level of the emancipation of women. The way in which the process was carried out allowed collective work, beyond the local, to emerge by focusing on participative democracy at all levels (Boog, 2003) and working with others who shared the same values and commitment to change. The current societal context of a focus on individualism (another part of the neoliberal construct), coupled with funding and delivery strategies concentrated on services, helps explain why empowerment often stays at (or is limited to) the individual or local level.

Also, it is hard to do collective empowerment work beyond the local community. It requires locating and working with others who share the same values and issues. It calls into question relationships of power. For many, it means more conflict and contestation and less collaboration (Fisher & Shragge, 2000; Fraser, 2005). Fully implemented, empowerment raises conflict and power struggles. Cloward and Piven (1999) correctly suggest that we don’t look at power enough in local organizing.

ACORN provides a good example of an organization that works locally but recognizes the need to challenge relationships of power. In stark contrast to what we habitually see in Quebec and Canada, ACORN empowers citizens to work in

the political world. In fact “politics up front” (Delgado, 2009, p. 257) is one of the principles by which ACORN abides. ACORN has been involved in voter registration work and supports political parties (i.e. Working Families Party in New York and Connecticut, Rathke, 2009b). It has also used its clout to broker deals. (See Atlas (2009) for a discussion of how New York City ACORN mobilized members and negotiated a deal to have 50% of the Atlantic Yards[46] redevelopment project dedicated to housing units rented below market prices.)

These examples of empowering citizens beyond the individual and local levels illustrate ways broader empowerment can be enacted. While they raise challenges given the current funding structure of community organizations (which prevents organizations with charitable status from being overtly political), they do raise the opportunity to imagine social justice work going beyond the boundaries of communities and challenging dominant power relationships; specifically within the political arena.

Meaningful participation.

Challenging relationships of power at the broader level begins with challenging relationships of power at the individual and local level. It begins with creating meaningful participation for citizens. Ninacs describes meaningful participation as the creation of places that allow community members to participate in “systems and decisions that concern them” (2008, p. 40). Shaw

[46] Atlantic Yards was a decaying Brooklyn neighbourhood.

(2008) challenges us in this, positing that we need to create spaces […..] not only places […] for meaningful community participation.

As Shaw (2008) argues, local organizations have been good at developing places for people to belong and participate in community but not as good at creating spaces for people to fully participate and live the full empowerment process. We can speak the language of empowerment as a process for social justice work but until we create spaces in our organizations for people to truly take power at the individual, organizational and community level, we are simply giving people defined places from which to live a partial experience of empowerment. Shaw points to the importance of creating "spaces in which people can assert, celebrate or contest their place in the world" (p. 34) in a way that offers the "possibility of talking back to power, rather than simply delivering depoliticized and demeaning versions of empowerment" (p. 34).

To create full and meaningful participation and work in the empowerment process, leaders must begin by being committed to sharing their own power (Hardina, 2003). This involves organizational leadership seeing empowerment as more than a technique, but as an approach to social change that incorporates real participative democracy.

Empowerment is an oft-used word in local community organizations working for social justice. We need to be clear what we mean when we use the

term[47]. As Ninacs asks (2008): Is it participation and inclusion of people in communities or is it the elimination of oppression? If it is the elimination of oppression, it must move beyond the individual, community and organization level to a broader social level of empowerment. This can only take place with meaningful participation of citizens.

Leadership Grounded in Critical Analysis

For local community organizations to participate in social change work, the leadership needs to have an understanding and positioning of the organization in relation to the context and situation within which the organization operates. It needs to engage in critical analysis (Brooks, 2005; Building the Movement, 2009; Chetkovich & Kunreuther, 2006; Fraser, 2005; DeFilippis, Fisher & Shragge, 2009, 2010; George & Wilding, 1985; Ife & Tesoriero, 2006; Parazelli, 2004; Shaw, 2008). This can require a shift in focus away from service to looking at the work through a social justice lens. This analysis needs to be developed, and shared, organization-wide.

DeFilippis, Fisher and Shragge (2009) see it as a "shared, explicit commitment to the struggle for social and economic justice" (p. 48). This requires people being able to name their politics and have an analysis of the framework within which their work is situated. This is difficult when there is a focus on

[47] There is a lack of a clear and detailed definition of the term. See Ninacs, 2008, p. 98; Ledwith, 2005, p. 128, and Shragge, 1997, p. xiii.

service, rather than on mobilization and organizing. It raises important questions about how leaders develop social analysis.

For some organizations leadership grounded in social analysis can begin with hiring people who live the issues (Brooks, 2005; Chetkovich & Kunreuther, 2006; Parazelli, 2004). However, this gives them an understanding of the issues, not necessarily a critical analysis. For other organizations, having leadership grounded in critical analysis begins with hiring staff that are clear and articulate about their commitment to social justice work (Ife & Tesoriero, 2006; Shragge, 2007b).

Regardless of where the commitment to having leadership grounded in social analysis begins, it requires ongoing opportunities for reflection and training to maintain an informed analysis. ACORN is a good example of an organization that does this consciously. It provides apprenticeships, training sessions, organizing forums, dialogue sessions for staff, reading and reflecting together, etc. (Brooks, 2005; personal notes from Wade Rathke's afternoon talk in Montreal, September 24, 2009). However, this grounding in critical analysis needs to be organization-wide. Volunteers and participants need to have opportunities to participate in reflection and training. The challenge is to see this work as important enough to take the time and develop the skills to undertake it within local community organizations.

Developing critical analysis skills in people is not only important for the work of the local community organization. Over time, it contributes to social

justice work as it leaves a legacy of people who have experienced activism (CourtePointe Collective, 2006; Feurer, 2006; Fisher & Shragge, 2002; Shragge, 2003). It is a valid and important contribution local organizations can make to social change work.

Fundamental Challenges and Contradictions Local Organizations Confront Working for Social Justice

As we have seen, working for broader social justice at the local level has possibilities. It requires shifting the focus of the work beyond service delivery and taking on roles to support social movement work. However, making this shift is not without some fundamental challenges and contradictions. This section explores key points made in the literature about these.

The Funding Conundrum

The funding reality in Canada makes it challenging for local organizations to work for social change. They are often dependent on state funding agreements that contract to provide services, not work for policy changes and particularly not work for policy changes against the specific state funder! Providing services requires management, not social change skills under the guise of new public management. (See Chapter Two.) So how do organizations work for social change when the funder pays for service work and requires management and accountability? It's difficult, contradictory, and challenging.

Ng (1990) documents this as well in her study on changes in a women's immigrant organization in Toronto. Along with Muller and Walker, she identifies how "activities of the ruling penetrate relations in community life" (Ng, Muller & Walker, 1990, p. 314). She (1990, 1996) shows how state funding began to increasingly shape how the work was seen and structured within the women's immigrant organization. Specifically, she documents the development of a hierarchy of division of labour between the board and staff (with incorporation and funding procedures); how documentation required by the government began to frame the organization of the work; and how placement rates (into jobs) became the most important measure of success, to the exclusion of others such as appropriateness of the job. What her work raises, along with other examples of relationships between community organizations and the Canadian state (Ng, Walker & Muller, 1990), is the insidious and subtle ways that the state influences and in effect controls community organizations.

More recently, Ilcan and Basok's (2004) study on social justice work of voluntary organizations in the Windsor Ontario area reflects similar findings about the relationship between the state and community organizations. Through a review of the fiscal policies and service delivery schemes that have led to a shift towards "community government" (i.e. new public management), Ilcan and Basok document how volunteers have been transformed into "responsibilized service providers rather than social justice-oriented advocates" (p. 141); providing front-line support and encouragement to people in need and not working to advocate for social justice for individuals or groups of disadvantaged people.

Being cognizant of how funding shapes the work they do is one important acknowledgement for local organizations to make. This can be done through continual critical analysis and questioning of the funding situation. However, is it enough to be cognizant? Incite! (2007) suggests that if organizations are serious about working for social change, they need to question their sources of funding and make hard decisions about from whom they will accept it. Its work concentrates on foundation funding, major funders in the U.S. context, tracing and illustrating how foundation funds come primarily from the pockets of the wealthy in the form of untaxed money spent to fulfill the interests of individual (or family groups). Incite! situates foundations at the centre of the “nonprofit industrial complex”.

While foundations are less prominent in Canada, the situation is very similar; the money foundations give reflects the interests of the foundation’s board. In the Quebec context, a closer look at Chagnon Foundation funding (Pauzé, 2009) fittingly reminds us that “the revolution will not be funded” by money coming out of the pockets of the wealthy; money which otherwise would have been taxed and put in government coffers so that society as a whole could benefit and have a voice (however small) in determining how it gets spent.

In a different way, ACORN provides an example of how to not only question but take control of funding. In its workfare program, it secured funding for the service work within an organizing strategy. It was also comfortable negotiating revenue from businesses. For example, ACORN secured funding from H & R Block (Rathke, 2009a) in its fight to get H & R Block to drop the fees

it charged people for giving tax refunds upon filling of tax forms, aptly named “refund anticipation loans” (Fisher, Brooks & Russel, 2009). While this approach to funding might seem odd in the Canadian context, organizations that are serious about social change work need to question their financial dependence on government.

Other organizations rely heavily on donations from those that believe in their work (e.g. Council of Canadians, Amnesty International). However, this is a difficult route for local organizations to take. Their participants often do not have much disposable income. It is expensive to mount a campaign to garner donations. And there is often little interest from the general public in donating to local work that is not directly and obviously connected to their own lives.

Others suggest social justice work should be seen less as a job and more as a volunteer commitment. Donnelly (2004), for example, asks us to consider whether our involvement with the community is for social change or for “nonprofit careerism”. In my own experience, some of the most satisfying work I have done on social justice issues has been as a volunteer (environmental activism, women’s issues and peace work). Perhaps, on an individual level, we need to see our nonpaid social justice work as a bigger part of our commitment to social change work.

While none of these ways of addressing the funding conundrum are completely satisfying, they do push us to think about how to move beyond simply being cognizant of the challenges and, as discussed, the inherent structural

constraints that state funding both raises and imposes. They can incite us into action.

Being Truly Alternative

Local community organizations can have a role in supporting social justice work by demonstrating new and different ways of being and organizing life locally, by not mirroring the status quo in society. This is a difficult and a fundamental challenge to confront, as hegemony pushes us to be part of larger society. A contradiction local organizations face is that they often become a reflection of society, rather than an example of alternative ways to move forward. Ng, Walker and Muller (1990) speak about this as the need to develop alternative forms of resistance and ways of organizing social life. DeFilippis, Fisher and Shragge (2006) refer to it as not mirroring "the voices of oppression and injustice they [meaning community] oppose" (p. 682). Perhaps local organizations need to consciously situate themselves on the margins of society, with a vision of how society could work.

Successfully developing and demonstrating new and different ways of being and organizing locally is profoundly challenging, given the minimal effort required to maintain the status quo. However, alternatives can be created. They need to be created as a conscious effort to experiment with, illustrate, and push for new ways of organizing social life. The literature indicates, in several ways, that being alternative can be undertaken as a way of contributing to social justice. First, alternative services can be, have been and need to continue to be created

at the local level (DeFilippis, Fisher & Shragge, 2006; Shragge, 1990, 2003). The 1970s concept of alternative service organizations should not be forgotten or discarded. For example, alternative mental health organizations that developed in Montreal in the 1970s (such as Project PAL, see Shragge, 1990) and inclusion of those living with financial poverty when developing policy alternatives (Ravensbergen & VanderPlaat, 2009) are two of the many examples of alternative services that exist. They highlight ways of working that allow people to be part of "producing change versus being the object of change producing strategies" (Ravensbergen & VanderPlaat, 2009, p. 12).

Second, alternative ways of organizing social life can be developed by local organizations while not mirroring oppression in relations between the diverse identities people have in communities (i.e. women, poor people and ethnic groups). Current dominant identity-based organizing needs to be cautious that it does not "de-legitimize […] collective action based on common experiences of oppression and injustice" (DeFilippis, Fisher & Shragge, 2006, p. 681). In fact, local organizations are a prime place to work on creating just and equal relationships between the diverse identities people have. They can show alternative ways of organizing social life by bringing citizens together beyond traditional boundaries of difference to oppose the status quo and work for broader social justice.

Third, studies have shown the importance of shared and democratic leadership as a way of creating alternatives to forces of oppression. This thinking comes out of the feminist movement (Buechler, 1990, 2000; Clemens, 2005),

with examples increasingly found in social movement organizations (Chetkovich & Kunreuther, 2006; Ferguson, 1984; Lounsbury, 2005). Lounsbury's (2005) study of social movement organizations has shown that the iron law of oligarchy is not ironclad. "Advocacy organizations that remain small, rotate leadership and job assignments, and are strongly committed to democratic and participatory values are able to maintain social movement energy over time" (Lounsbury, 2005, p. 95). This is challenging work when we live in a society of consumption and branding and where the "cult of impotency" (McGuaig, 1998) is strong. However, creating shared and democratic leadership is one way of challenging the forces of oppression.

Finally, alternatives to the forces of oppression can be demonstrated through the creation of alternative structures for organizations. Organizational structures that are democratic, participatory and inclusive model a different way to live in this world. They challenge the status quo. While examples of alternatives structures are limited, Inter Pares is one relevant Canadian example[48]. The collective model of Inter Pares is explicitly conceived and designed as a way of "living our politics internally" (Samantha McGavin, presentation May 20 2009, introductory remarks). It also happens to "produce better quality work" and "create an alternative to the prevalent industrial model of workplace organization" (Christie, 1991, p. 5).

[48] Inter Pares is an international development organization with 14 full time staff located in Ottawa. Inter Pares means 'among equals' in Latin. The group works with "social change organizations around the world who share our analysis that poverty and injustice are caused by structural inequalities within and between nations, and who are working to promote social and economic justice in their communities" (retrieved from the website: www.interpares.ca on June 2, 2009).

Other organizations, including my organizational base, the Centre for Community Organizations (COCo), work with an alternative structure. At COCo we were motivated by a frustration with the more traditional hierarchical model, an interest and sense of obligation to explore innovative, alternative and progressive ways of working and, a commitment to the distribution of power. This 10 year old nonprofit has recently developed and implemented a collaborative model. The approach is, of course, not without its challenges. Nevertheless, it is seen as an important step to exploring new ways of organizing a more just and equitable social life.

Being truly alternative is difficult because of the forces exerted by the status quo. However, it is not the most important, nor the only way for local organizations to show the path toward a more just society.

Values Drive the Work

A fundamental challenge for local organizations is to be explicit about whether they even want to work for social justice. This question is often not explored in organizations. Work accomplished is not evaluated in relation to social justice values. Often, the work does not begin with naming the values that motivate it. This is in part because much of the writing on the organizing work of community organizations remains at the technical level of “managing”

organizations, on the practical steps in organizing and storytelling about community development processes[49].

Some would argue (including Saul Alinsky, 1971) that organizing work needs to be ideology free. Yet, I and others (Fraser, 2005; Ife and Tesoriero, 2006; Shaw, 2008) argue that without understanding what core intentions drive the work, choosing strategies and tactics is useless. In fact, others would argue that there needs to be clarity about what drives the work so it can go beyond the scope of local organizations; so it can be political; so that organizations can even begin to do politics (Beaudet, 2009). Understanding which intentions drive the work is a fundamental challenge and a contradiction that many local community organizations face. Fraser (2005) helps us understand its importance by pushing us to define our approach to community participation. (She has a model with four approaches: anti communitarianism, technical communitarianism, a progressive approach and radicalism). Others present analogous ways of looking at approaches (Briskin, 1991, Fisher, 1994; Rothman, 1974; Shaw, 2008; see Appendix A for details). What is important is that by defining our approach, the values that drive the work surface. While we may not go as far as having an overt ideology for social change, being able to identify the beliefs and values that underlie the work are important. Clarity can then exist about whether we see our work for social justice within Rawls (1971) redistributive approach or Harvey's (1973) transformative approach.

[49] For example: Weil, 2005; Wharf & Clague, 1997. Also see National Voluntary Sector Research Symposium (2000, p. 4) for a discussion of the challenge.

The Role of a Social Justice Mission

Do organizations need to have a strong social justice mission to work for social change? Given all of the points made in this chapter, one might assume that organizations do.

However, Building the Movement engages with organizations that have a desire, but often little history of social change work. They accomplish this work because they believe local community organizations do have a role to play in social change. Their rationale is built upon three beliefs. They believe that most human service agencies are already organized around a mission to bring about some kind of change (although it may be limited to helping individuals' access services). They believe these organizations have regular contact with a lot of people and therefore the potential for a significant constituency. And they believe there is a vast social service infrastructure in the U.S. to support organized change (Building Movement Project, 2006). Do organizations need a clear social justice mission or can social justice work come out of an expressed desire to move towards this type of work?

Building the Movement suggests that having a desire to do social justice work is an adequate place for organizations to begin engaging in social change work. They came to this conclusion by evaluating the impact of their "six-step transformation process" applied by local organizations to help them move towards social justice work. (See Appendix B for an overview of the process.)

The process involves having a desire and awareness of social justice issues, developing a vision and a strategy, and then implementing and evaluating/re-planning the work.

Does this approach work? Can local organizations, particularly those with a limited history of social change work, undertake this vocation? Given the longitudinal nature of social change, the answer is unclear. However, a recent report on case studies (Brady & Tchume, 2009) provides examples of five community-based organizations that have moved towards social change work after applying the Building the Movement process. The examples highlight that most organizations had a "thread" (p. 49) or concern about social justice before consciously moving into social action work. This finding is verified by other literature that stresses that having basic social justice values is an important starting point (Brooks, 2005; Chetkovich & Kunreuther, 2006; Fraser, 2005; DeFilippis, Fisher & Shragge, 2009; Shaw, 2008).

As a result of the Building the Movement work, the process of making changes at the local level was documented. For example, Bread for the City [50] has now created a formal structure to embark on advocacy issues and has involved clients in that process. Becoming an additional voice for change at a broader level was also documented. Specifically, two of the case study groups became involved in the U.S. Social Forum as a result of the work with Building the Movement.

[50] A Washington, D.C. organization offering health, legal and social services as well as food and clothing to low-income residents.

The study highlights how incorporating social change into a social service setting is a process. It involves many different paths and an ongoing struggle. As Brady and Tchume remind us: “Though organizations struggled to find their own balance between social change activities and service delivery, there was enormous energy and commitment to this work, especially to the possibilities of finding a more democratic form of providing services and amplifying constituent voices” (2009, p. 5). Those of us seeing a role for local organizations in social change work can applaud this work and its results, however limited and preliminary they are.

Conclusion

Working for social justice at the local level can be done in part through consciously supporting social movement work. It also calls for the specific practices of seeing service through a different lens while acknowledging the challenges and contradictions inherent in the work.

Moreover, it requires a belief we can make change happen. Murphy (1999) suggests we can keep the belief in the possibility of change by “transforming ourselves” as we “transform the world”. He challenges us to live the change we want to see, and be, not only at the organizational level (as he does at Inter Pares), but also at a deeply personal level.

This raises the ultimate challenge to local organizations. A belief in social change work must go to the personal level of the people involved and be

manifest at the local level to be carried to a broader level. While living with the challenges and contradictions of trying to do this work, we need to continue to imagine, speak about and push for progressive social change. We also need to acknowledge that local organizations have a limited role in social change work and that working more explicitly in social movements at the margins of society or perhaps in the political arena are other important places for work on social change to take progress and place.

With this review of the literature as a backdrop, the next section takes the reader through the methodology used in the study. The rest of the thesis presents the study and my analysis of what the research tells us.

Chapter Four: Methodology

The research question for this study is "How do local community organizations contribute to social justice work?" This question grew out of my personal and professional experience in the community sector and my frustration with what I saw as a shift away from social change work. I was also discouraged with the erosion of rights and progressive thought all around me. I wanted to understand how I can work more effectively with local organizations to support their social justice work. Moreover, there is little known about the work of local community organizations; and even less about organizations working in English in Quebec. This research seeks to contribute to this lack of knowledge.

Secondary questions that support my primary question explore specific factors of how organizations might contribute to social justice work. They include questions about organizational foundations (i.e. the history of social justice work); the external context (e.g. the socio-political context, the relationships with partners and social movements); people and systems; programs and services; and funding. (See Appendix C for the interview guide.) Specifically, I am interested in how organizations begin to engage with social justice work. Was it part of the founding of the organization or can it be integrated into the organization over time? As well, how does the dominant socio-political context impact on and change the work? What do organizations do to counter-balance the dominant neoliberal trend? How do relationships with partner organizations or social movement organizations influence the work of local organizations and who

are these other organizations? I am interested in understanding the skill set leaders in social justice work have and how organizations structure themselves to conduct their social justice work effectively. Part of this questioning includes curiosity about the kinds of programs and services provided and how they support the social justice work. Finally, the literature speaks about funder influence on local community organizations. I am interested in how this is played out in organizational life and how it impacts on the social justice work.

This study used a multiple case method (covering more than one case, Yin, 2009) to explore the role of local community organizations in social justice work. The approach was chosen because of the type of research questions I had. As Pare (no date) and others (Yin, 2009; Creswell, 1998) remind us, method follows question. The unit of analysis (Yin, 2009) or case was local organizations, not individuals nor coalitions of organizations. This choice was made purposefully as my paid work is at the organization level and I wanted to inform my practice.

Case study is an appropriate method to use when questions about “how” or “why” are asked, when control over behavioral events is not needed and when the focus is on contemporary events (Yin, 2009). Case study therefore fits well with the questions and situation within which this study took place. The main question was ‘how’ without the need for control over behavior. I wanted to focus on contemporary events (how do local organizations currently contribute to social justice work). Yet a historical perspective was important because of its impact and contribution to the understanding of the current work (Fisher, 2001; Mills, 2010). Therefore, referring to historical documents and conducting several

interviews with people who could provide context from the past set the stage for the present.

A multiple case study method was chosen over a single case study because multiple case studies provide more compelling evidence (Yin, 2009). Literal replication was chosen over theoretical replication. This approach was chosen because it seeks to study cases that might predict similar results, in contrast to theoretical replication, which seeks to find cases that might predict contrasting ones (Yin, 2009). Given the small number of cases (two), I decided literal replication would be the most appropriate approach.

This chapter now presents the research steps I used, providing the rationale for choices made and outlining the challenges encountered at each step, along with their resolution.

The Research Process

Once the questions and method were established, the study followed a typical process for research (Creswell, 2003; Stake, 1995). I organized the steps into four main categories: preparing for the data collection; collecting the data; data analysis; and report writing. Although the details are presented here in chronological order, the process was not strictly linear. First, I knew both organizations before undertaking the research. Therefore, the start and end dates were slightly arbitrary date with data collection in all the steps, some even before the research officially began.

Second, the steps of the research overlapped. Literature review was ongoing. Analysis of the interviews began before all the interviews were completed, as these depended on the availability of study participants. This meant I could use emergent findings to inform subsequent interviews. McMahon's (1996) article on her experience of studying mothers, Hyde's (1994) reflection on her research experience studying nine feminist social movement organizations, and speaking with one of my advisors gave me a sense of security. While needing to keep track of what I was doing, following a clear linear process was not always possible. I needed to accept what McMahon calls "the arbitrary boundaries of time and space" (1996, p. 320). Research is a slice of the rich and complicated life stories of organizations and individuals. I "entered" and "exited" the process and the steps within it based on arbitrary boundaries.

The four categories in the research process, the key choices made and challenges encountered at each step are now presented.

Preparing for Data Collection

Which organizations to study?

True to many graduate school studies, at the beginning of my doctoral studies I played with the idea that I might study local community-based organizations from other countries, from other provinces, and throughout Quebec. Reality hit in several ways, leading me to focus on organizations in Montreal that work in English.

The first reality check was that I wanted to reflect on my own practice; which is Quebec-based. I have spent over 30 years working and volunteering with community organizations within the Quebec context. This is the context I want to better understand. From my reading of Fisher (2001), I knew the importance of history and context on local social justice work. The Canadian context differs from that of other countries. And within Canada the distinctions in history and context between Quebec and other provinces is striking. I did not want to undertake a comparative study between countries or provinces; preferring to understand the Quebec context. Therefore, to do justice to my intent, I realized I needed to focus on Quebec. I also had to recognize that I was doing this study as a part-time student and had neither the time nor the financial means to travel far for appreciable periods of time to collect data.

The final reality check was when I realized my comprehension of French is too limited to include organizations that work in French. This became clear while taking a qualitative research course as part of my doctoral studies. The course involved working with other students, analyzing results of interviews we had each done. I kept missing or not understanding nuances in words and phrases in the work that students presented in French. I felt I would be handicapped by this during the interview process and would need to spend a lot of time in the transcription phase to fully understand what had been said. Therefore, given the focus of my practice and specific research interest, and the constraints I was facing, studying organizations that work in English in Montreal made sense.

I defined local community organizations and social justice work in relation to this study. (A discussion of this is found in Chapter One.) I then told colleagues I was looking for organizations that represent “good practice” in social justice. By this I meant organizations that applied a discourse of social justice and whose contribution to social justice “wins” could be identified. I compiled a list of organizations people suggested. The two organizations eventually chosen were mentioned repeatedly. I had had interactions with both organizations, and had even worked with one (in my role with the Centre for Community Organizations). Therefore, it was easy to ascertain that they met the criteria of being a local community organization working for social justice in accordance with my definitions. A check of their websites and mission statements confirmed this.

I was looking for good practice because I wanted the study to be an affirming endeavor; not a critical analysis of what’s wrong with local organizations. Perhaps I took this approach partly because we live in an age of asset-building (see Chapter Two). But, on a conscious level, the choice was made because I wanted to instill a sense of hope and possibility about local organizations working for social justice. I was feeling hopeless and had questions about how to best support organizations to work for social change. Studying good practice therefore made sense to me when I saw so few positive examples from which to learn. However, I was reminded of Hyde’s (1994) concern about not wanting to pass judgment on organizations that she admired. She did not want to be critical of organizations which were working in “harsh political and economic circumstances” (p. 184), yet she wondered whether she was avoiding

her responsibility. I felt similarly. I wanted to shed light on positive directions for the social justice work of local community organizations. I was encouraged to read Campbell's (2006) study of the Toronto Board of Health where she clarified "my analysis is not itself a critique" (p. 94). Let me echo this statement.

The results of this study do give rise to criticisms of the work of the two organizations studied. However, through the considerations of my methodology and presentation, I encourage the reader to focus on what we can learn, rather than a critique of the organizations themselves. I have done this through the use of anonymity, contextualizing the criticisms and identifying how the work of these organizations highlights good practice in social justice work.

Ethical considerations and approval.

Ethics approval for the study was sought during the late fall of 2006. Approval was granted January 2007. No major ethical concerns were raised by the Ethics Committee about the study. (The Summary Protocol Form that was submitted to and approved by the Applied Human Sciences Ethics Committee, Concordia University can be found in Appendix D.)

The most important ethical consideration I had was about the identification of the organizations and the study participants. As previously mentioned, I chose anonymity early in the process. Therefore, the organizations are called "A" and "O" and information about participants has been altered to further protect their identities.

Yin (2009) suggests that disclosure of the identities of both the case and the individuals is the most desirable because the reader can then connect their information to the case and footnotes and citations can be checked if necessary. In relation to this case study, I decided that I wanted readers to compare their experience with local community organizations in general, without needing to know neither the people nor the specific cases. In fact, by putting the ideas and the information at the forefront and the specific people and organizations in the background, my hope is that the reader will focus on the former. My intent is to share the lessons we can learn on how organizations work on social justice, rather than on the specific cases.

Study participants were free to talk about their experience with other organizations, to identify or solidify points they made about how community-based organizations work for social justice. Therefore, comments about organizations that are not part of the study are woven into the data and the analysis, attempting to bring forward the ideas, rather than the specifics about the people or organizations I studied.

A second ethical consideration was my position within the study. I was not a member nor staff person of either organization. Yet I had relationships with the organizations. Therefore I was an “outsider/insider” (Connolly & Reilly, 2007). I knew enough to be considered an “insider” by many colleagues in the community sector. Yet, when I was in the organizations I was an “outsider”. Conducting research with insider information is well documented in qualitative research; particularly feminist research (see Behar, 1993; Olesen, 2000). The literature

highlights the importance of putting some thought into the conflicts that could emerge from placing oneself in this position. Therefore, I told people with whom I had contact within the organizations about the subject of my doctoral study. When comments were made or discussions held that illuminated ideas for the study, I clarified with people that I was shifting my focus away from work to my role as a doctoral student. When I was away from the organizations and speaking about my research, I spoke in generalities about the organizations, respecting my commitment not to make their names public.

Entry.

Entry into the organizations was easy. After obtaining ethics approval, I asked several potential participants whether they would agree to be interviewed as part of my doctoral research. I told them (in writing as well) that I was exploring how local community organizations relate their work to the broader issues of social justice work and that the interview would focus on the work of their organization. I let them know that I would not specifically identify them or the organization. I suggested that although I was not looking for the organization's approval of the research (given the anonymity and the focus on good practice in general), informing key people in the organization about their involvement might be a good idea. No one refused or hesitated to be interviewed. Several interviews did take a while to set up, because of lack of availability of either the study participant or myself. Senior staff and volunteers in both organizations

were aware of my work and several people not being interviewed approached me to share their insights on the topic I was studying.

Review of the literature.

As part of the course load for my doctoral studies I began a documented review of the literature in 2004. I recorded all of my readings using the computer program *Endnotes*. The program allows me to categorize the books and articles I have read that address specific themes (such as social movements, history, etc), write notes about the entry and create reference lists that can easily be inserted in papers. Therefore, I did not conduct a comprehensive review of the literature previous to embarking on the data collection. Rather, I identified emerging themes from the interviews and read about them as needed. For example, when study participants spoke about the importance of learning in social justice work, I began to read Griff Foley's work on how people learn in social movements.

In the end, I relied on three sources of literature. The history and political context of the work of local organizations and their relationship with social movements was one. Research done on local organizations and their social justice work, focusing on the U.S., Canada and specifically Quebec was the second. My third focus was research methodology literature, focusing on qualitative research and case study methodology.

Data management.

Endnotes was helpful in keeping track of what I was reading and how it contributed to the study. I also kept a journal (Richardson, 2000). It documented on what I was working, my observations, thoughts about the methodology (e.g. who to talk to, how to ask questions differently, etc.), theoretical thoughts (how the work I was doing related to the literature) and my reflections and questions about the study.

The journal was very helpful in documenting and keeping track of my reflections, relating them to the literature I was reading and identifying thoughts I was having about the differences and similarities in the interviews. The journal was less helpful to me when I tried to review what I was working on and when (the "historical record", Richardson, 2000). This is because I did not take good notes on what I was working on which prompted my reflections; I often did not date the journal entries and I regularly went back to old journal entries and inserted thoughts without documenting the date and the event that prompted the thought.

Interviews were audio-taped and transcribed verbatim. The tapes, transcribed documents and subsequent coding information will be destroyed after my doctoral work is completed, along with my reflective journals.

Data Collection

Case study employs interviews, observation and document review as the key components of data collection (Stake, 1995). For this study, the primary

source of data collection was semi-structured interviews with staff and volunteers in the two organizations. Yin (2009) reminds us that interviews are “one of the most important sources of case study information” (p. 106). Interviews were augmented with observation (which led to several “informal interviews”), a review of pertinent documents, and personal journaling of observations.

The interviews.

I set four criteria for the choice of study participants. First, was that I was looking for people with depth of experience, people who would have lots to say and well-developed insights to share. Second, I was looking for representation at staff and board levels as I thought they might bring different perspectives to the research question. Third, I was looking mostly for people with current involvement in the organization but also wanted some representation with knowledge of the history of the organization. Fourth, I was looking for some gender balance, wanting to hear from both men and women. I felt these four criteria would provide good representation from the organization, particularly hearing from both staff and board with a depth of experience.

People who had suggested the two organizations had also been asked who might be good interview candidates. I began with these names and asked study participants who else they thought I should interview. McMillan (2004) calls this a snowball or network sampling.

I matched the suggestions I received to my criteria list and, as I began the interview process, consulted with one of my advisors. In total, I conducted 13 interviews. Two of the interviews were carried out as part of a qualitative research class I took in the fall of 2005. These became my pilot interviews[51]. The remaining interviews were conducted between September 2007 and August 2008. The following chart is the breakdown of whom I interviewed.

Table One: The participants

	Organization "A"	**Organization "O"**	**TOTAL**
# of study participants	6	7	**13**
Current involvement in the organization	5	6	**11**
Past involvement in the organization	1	1	**2**
Staff*	4	5	**9**
Board member	2	2	**4**
Men	2	1	**3**
Women	4	6	**10**

*The Executive Director was interviewed along with front-line staff such as community organizers and program coordinators.

NOTE: "A" and "O" will be used throughout the thesis to identify the organizations.

[51] I had ethical clearance from McGill University for these interviews.

As the table illustrates, the people interviewed fulfilled the criteria I had developed. I documented a rich experience and depth of knowledge among the study participants. However, given the dominance of women in the community sector generally and in the two case organizations specifically, there was an imbalance in gender participation. This could not be avoided.

At the start of each interview participants signed a consent form (which they had previously received by email). The form is located in Appendix D. The interviews elicited the story of the organization's social justice work through open-ended questions that began with "tell me about some of the social justice issues the organization has worked on". Secondary questions (the context, networks, role of education, etc.) were asked if they were not brought up by the study participant during the sharing of social justice work done by the organization. (See Appendix C for the interview guide.) Each of the themes raised was then explored with the interviewee as needed to understand how it contributed to the social justice work. The interview guide I used was developed and piloted with the two interviews conducted as part of a qualitative research course I took in 2005. The interview guide did not change in any substantive way after it was piloted. Each interview took approximately one and a half to two hours to conduct.

The interviews were taped (with permission) and transcribed into a word document with line coding. I did the transcription myself. Although it was very time-consuming, it proved to be a very thorough way to reacquaint myself with the data. The study was being conducted on a part-time basis which involved

significant lags in time between interviews and also between interviews and the analysis phase. Producing the transcriptions kept me thinking about the study. Transcribing the interviews myself also kept me close to the data.

The challenge I faced during the interviews was to improve my interview skills. I was appreciative of the pilot interviews. They taught me to “Shut up, leave more quiet spaces and ask more open-ended questions”. Appropriating questions such as ‘What do you mean by that?’, ‘In what way?’, ‘Tell me more about that…’ and ‘An example would be…’ into my vocabulary was helpful. In parallel to conducting the interviews for this study, I was also fortunate enough to work on two projects that involved conducting interviews. These provided a good training experience.

While some suggest the researcher should be “unbiased by preconceived notions” (Yin, 2009, p. 69), others, particularly feminist researchers, argue that the challenge is to acknowledge and name our “personal, political and professional interests” (Ellis and Berger**,** 2002**,** p. 851**;** see Hyde, 1994 and McMahon, 1996 also). I agree with the latter. My position as an “insider” to the community sector, and coming at this study with over 30 years of experience, made it unrealistic to think that I would not have my own notions of what was important. The challenge was to acknowledge my biases and work actively to challenge them. Before embarking on the research, I wrote down a list of assumptions of which I needed to be aware. They spoke about:

- How difficult it is for local organizations to do social justice work unless it is part of the original (or well-entrenched) vision and mission.
- How advanced capitalism has profoundly shaped the way community organizations operate and how funders influence and structure the work in insidious ways.
- From my perspective, organizations working for social justice must have a historical and socio-political analysis that guides the work.
- Educational work and mobilization is a high priority for local organizations working for social justice.
- Relationships with networks (tables, regroupements, etc) have a strong influence on the way social justice issues are seen and worked on within and by local organizations.
- Leaders are often not well trained in political analysis and lobbying work.

I documented what study participants had to say about my assumptions as they told the story of their organization's social justice work. When they did not talk about the topics my assumptions covered, I asked them about these as part of the secondary questions. I also questioned these assumptions in my journaling, during discussions with one of my advisors and when triangulating the data in the analysis work.

The interview process was closed after 13 interviews had been conducted. I concluded I had saturated the data collection process when I began noting a

repetition of themes in both my personal journal and while transcribing completed interviews. Saturation is reached when no new important information is obtained (McMillan (2004). Moreover, no new names were identified by study participants. (Neither organization was large; the pool of potential staff participants was 12 people at the most.) Finally, when discussing some of the emerging themes with one of my advisors, we decided that there was enough data to close the collection phase of the study.

Observation.

As previously mentioned, I had a relationship with each organization. I had actively worked as an external consultant with one of the organizations and attended public events in their buildings or met staff and volunteers at community meetings. This gave me access to discussions that I otherwise might not have had. As a result, I was able to observe the organizations in different contexts. This led to discussions with individuals and informal groups in hallways and during coffee breaks at meetings and events. These discussions ("informal interviews") were often insightful. When I found myself in these situations with questions about the organization's social justice work or when people said things that I wanted to note for the study, I asked people if it was OK if I "changed my hat" and entered the conversation from a research position. In all cases I was given verbal consent. The data collected from these informal interviews is woven into the findings.

Document review.

Documents I accessed included information taken from the website of each organization, public documents about meetings or events and historical documents from newspapers and books. I also looked at documents other organizations had produced (i.e. statistical information on the communities within which the organizations are located). The most helpful documents were found on the websites (i.e. historical information, how the organization describes its work and mission) and in documents and books referring to its work produced outside of the organization. All documents accessed were of a public nature.

Using reflexivity.

Reflexivity can be defined as thoughtful, conscious self-awareness. It is required as our experiences can skew findings in undesirable directions or block out the participant's voice (Finlay, 2002). Reflective practice is an important tool in qualitative research (class notes; Creswell, 2003; Hyde, 1994; Stake, 1995). To this end, I found my journal helpful during the entire length of the study (in fact, I found it helpful throughout the entire doctoral process including taking courses and working on my comprehensives). The journal documented the questions the work raised, encouraged me to reflect on them in relation to my assumptions going into the study, and allowed me to them to see if they were emerging from the study participants or from me and other parts of my life.

Meetings with one of my advisors also supported reflexivity. As a "reflective other" (Connolly & Reilly, 2007), my advisor questioned and

challenged my assumptions and findings. The fact that he knew the organizations I was studying made for rich discussions.

Data Analysis

As interviews were completed, I began transcribing them verbatim into electronic documents. This allowed me to stay close to the data and connected to the study between interviews. All along I had been jotting down links between comments study participants made, themes I thought I was hearing and identifying new themes or subthemes. Much of this jotting down occurred while sitting in my car after having concluded an interview.

Once interviews from one organization had been completed and transcribed, I began the formal stage of analysis. I applied Strauss' (1987) coding method to data analysis. I first went through each interview and identified ideas or labels within that interview. Strauss refers to this as open coding. It is a way of condensing masses of data into categories. These ideas were then axial coded; meaning that codes or titles were assigned to themes of data. Lastly, using selective coding, what appeared to be major themes was selected and then compared and contrasted with the data. I did this with each interview, within each organization and then with all of the interviews together[52].

[52] I researched the possibility of using a computer-assisted analysis program (e.g. NUD*IST, Invivo, Endograph). However, after reading Seale (2002) and talking to several people who had used voice-transcribing technologies, I decided I wasn't comfortable enough to use a computer program.

I used one color pen per interviewee (i.e. black, green, red, purple, yellow, orange and blue pen or pencil) to open code a line-numbered transcript of each interview. I then cut up a copy of the interview and made piles of axial coded themes, moving themes around as I changed my mind about where each piece belonged. Names were given, and changed, for themes. Finally, I mapped the themes that emerged, showing central and peripheral themes and links between them. This work was fun and creative albeit detailed. My “low tech” approach meant I had piles of bits of paper all over my office. However, it worked well in that I could pick up any cut-up section of an interview and identify from which interview it came (because of the color) and in what context it was said (because of the line coding). Every time I re-worked a theme, I had the direct quotes to ensure I was staying close to the data. However, I don’t think this approach would have worked if I had many more interviews to analyze.

A “note to self” in my journal talks about the challenge of staying close to the data and how fraught the analysis was with personal bias or my “ways of seeing the world”. For example, one journal entry during the data analysis period reported: “How do I code statements about members not going to coalition meetings? Is it about coalitions, local strategy, who runs/owns the organization or a theme I can’t even see?” To decide how to code I developed the reflex of always going back to the original data to ensure I was respecting, as much as possible, the context, the language and intent of the study participants.

Triangulation of the data in qualitative research is fundamental. This requires multiple sources of evidence to be compared, to ensure the findings are

credible. It also involves having different people looking at the data and applying different theoretical perspectives to it (Anderson & Arsenault, 1998; McMillan, 2004; Yin, 2009). For this study, triangulation was conducted in several ways. First, the data were triangulated within each organization by comparing what different study participants said and how that was supported by written documentation. Next, triangulation was done through comparing and contrasting my observations “from the field” (in my journal) and the data from the interviews. I looked for congruency and contradictions in messages. Then the data were triangulated across the two organizations by going back to direct quotes to ensure accuracy. Lastly, I worked with others to identify themes. This occurred during my course work and, to a small extent, with one of my advisors who knows both organizations. Working with others to identify the themes was a rich experience.

Report Writing

Writing up the case study began in January 2009 and spanned approximately eighteen months. The biggest challenge I had was creating blocks of time to write. I experienced continual frustration with feeling I could not put enough concentrated time into the writing because of other commitments. I never found the perfect solution and finally backed myself into a corner by applying a university deadline to complete the writing. I worked seven days a week, morning, noon and night. At the end I was exhausted. But the writing was done. I’m still not sure how the writing process could have been less frustrating.

Summary

A typical research process was used for this multiple case study. It proved to work well. Some challenges were encountered. The most notable centred on the choice I made to provide anonymity to the organizations and the study participants. This and the other challenges identified are well documented in the literature as typical concerns in the research process. None of the challenges substantially affected the research.

The presentation of the context within which the organizations work (Chapter Two) and this overview of the methodology take us to the research itself. In the next chapter, the organizations and the specific context within which they work will be presented. Subsequent chapters present the data and the analysis of the case study.

Chapter Five: The Organizations

Two organizations were chosen to explore the role of local organizations in social change work. This chapter presents the organizations and the communities to provide context for the research findings presented in the next chapter.

The two organizations were chosen because they are good examples of local organizations working for social justice. They are not necessarily representative of the sector. They are, in fact, unique because of their long history, their work with primarily the English-speaking community in Quebec and their ongoing commitment to social justice work. It is precisely their work with the English-speaking community in Quebec and for social justice that makes them interesting examples to explore the role of local organizations and social justice work.

Organization O

Situated in a low income area of Montreal, founded over 80 years ago as part of the settlement house movement, working primarily with the minority English-speaking population, Organization O has provided, over many generations, a haven and home-away-from-home for many citizens in the

community. In the tradition of settlement houses, its multiple services include a community meal program, an after school program, preschool programming, women's development programs, spiritual development programs and community organizing.

As one study participant said:

> What do you mean Frances when you ask when did I get involved? I've been here forever. I came here as a preschooler, and the lunch program once I started going to school. My Mom was a volunteer in the kitchen. I babysat the director's kids. I came to the after school program. As a teen I was involved in the roof top gardening. I worked in the day camp and participated in 'Out Working'[53]. Now I'm active as a volunteer and my family comes to the Supper Program. With breaks when I wasn't living here, I've always been involved! This place educated me (board member).

This is similar to the story of many of the people involved in Organization O. In a typical week, the door of the building opens frequently with moms and their preschoolers coming and going, individuals on their way to the lunch program or coming to chat with someone at the Citizens Rights Group, members of the Intellectually Challenged Adult Group participating in their activities, and kids arriving for the after school program. Most of the people coming through the door have grown up in the community and in the organization. Increasingly, newer residents, recent immigrants or refugees and people not having English as their first language are coming through the door.

Sometimes it gets a bit congested in the hallway, as people make their way into the main room for lunch and the monthly event; a celebration of International Women's Day, an update on the status of a possible new low

[53] A workplace integration program.

income housing project or a call to mobilize because a government service is threatening to leave the community or a bus line might be re-routed and people don't like the idea.

Everywhere you look there are posters reminding you to think of the environment. In summer, tall sunflowers grow in the little space there is for soil and plants on the side of the building. A discreet cross hangs near the entrance and a small "spiritual" room, inviting you to remove your shoes and sit quietly or join a discussion group, is located upstairs, along with offices and activity rooms.

The 12 staff members coordinate service areas or provide maintenance and administrative support. An Executive Director oversees the staff, works on funding and links with the church funder. Along with the other staff, he participates in various community-wide projects, tables and regroupements. A 13-member board of directors governs the operations of this nonprofit organization. The board is comprised of church and community members, with church appointed members holding a majority of the voting positions.

The mission of Organization O has always been to support local citizens in their development. The current mission statement speaks about "seeking justice through empowerment, education and social action". Earlier versions echo these themes, using the language of the day. Empowerment, education and social action; three key words that find their way into the daily discourse of those interviewed as staff, former staff and senior volunteers for this study.

As a registered nonprofit organization with charitable status, Organization O is closely linked to the church body that funds it, although this link has

diminished over time. Of the $600,000 annual budget, the church funds just under 40%. That proportion has been dropping over the years, as church revenues decrease. The rest of the budget is generated primarily from foundations, government grants and fundraising. Funding is a constant challenge.

The church presence can be felt through its funding, its majority voice on the board of directors and its Christian influence on programming (i.e. the spiritual group, serving the poor). However, many people don't realize the organization was founded and is supported by a Christian church and that it is part of the settlement house tradition in Canada[54].

The Citizens Rights Group is an independent nonprofit that has been housed in the building for many years. Organization O has lent staff time to the group, and until recently there was a close relationship between the two organizations. Yet, over time, having a separate entity has allowed the rights group to speak out on more controversial issues, something Organization O might not feel comfortable about or entirely free to do.

Organization O is an active member of the local "table" of community organizations. Through the table, it is involved in developing an alternative urban development plan (alternative to the City of Montreal's plan), fighting local issues such as the recent closing of the post office, keeping the local schools open, and

[54] It was founded as part of the settlement house movement but "slipped into the category of an institutional church after Church Union was established" (Irving, et al, 1995, p 72). Nonetheless, the history of Organization O, in most aspects, closely parallels that of the other settlement houses in Canada.

participating in province-wide issues such as the “Zero Poverty Campaign”[55]. Organization O is not afraid to take positions on its own. When community economic development (CED) came to the community in the 1980s, Organization O proved a vocal minority voice of concern about the viability of CED. More recently, without the full support of all of its community partners, it led a fight to stop a local business development. It is not afraid of conflict.

In summary, Organization O is an old organization in an old building with a vibrant and active social justice mission that is implemented, daily. There are lots of people with purpose bustling around the building, a visible push for being an environmentally sustainable building, and multi-purpose rooms full of supplies and people. It is an active participant in the community and often leads on issues of concern to the citizens.

The community itself has a strong sense of identity. This comes from several factors, such as a rich history of activism that can rhyme off its successes and a shared history of poverty among many citizens. As well, the multiple generations of families living in the community and the small size of the community reinforce a strong, vibrant sense of identity. This is despite historical differences between how the French and English have seen and lived issues in the community (CourtePointe Collective, 2006).

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[55] Coming out of the World Summit on Social Development in Copenhagen (1995), the Bread and Roses March throughout Quebec (1995) and the Sommet sur l’économie et l’emploi (1996), the women’s movement and community sector developed the campaign in response to the governments “zero deficit” program (Ninacs, Béliveau & Gareau, 2003). It calls for the elimination of poverty.

This is a community where people sit outside on the front steps and walk to get around the community. They are not afraid to confront those in positions of power to make demands and question decisions. It's a community that has been at the forefront of innovative community-based responses and solutions to social problems (e.g. low income housing, alternative health and legal services, community economic development).

There are over 30 community-based organizations in the area working on issues as diverse as urban renewal, cooperative housing, non-formal education, etc. For over 25 years they have worked together (and fought with each other!) in a local coalition (table), defending the rights of citizens. Organization O has been an active member of the coalition, often one of the few to bring the voice of the English-speaking population to the table.

Currently English-speaking citizens make up 31% of the population in the community. This is a significant decrease from the 1950s, when the English- and French-language working poor were more evenly represented. The decline of the English-speaking population began with election of the Parti Québécois in the mid 1970s and the subsequent anglophone migration from Quebec.

If hard times foster strength in community, then this community is a living testament to that strength. The community itself has undergone major changes, from working class to welfare and now becoming gentrified. It was working class until the 1950s; people were poor but most had jobs in the industrial plants located nearby their houses. With the loss of manufacturing industries in Montreal in the 1950s, the area slid into becoming a welfare community.

Currently, almost 50% of the community lives with low income, under $29,000 for a family (Gouvernement du Québec, 2004b). It has also has experienced a significant slide in population, from 28,000 residents in the 1940s to 13,000 currently (Gouvernement du Québec, 2004b).

More recently, the community has experienced gentrification. Because of its location close to downtown, higher income people have been moving into the neighbourhood, renovating older homes or setting up condominiums, causing gentrification to become a concern. As one staff person describes it:

> You know, there's a different set of needs being presented in the community now. There's a tension now. […….] so everybody then gets to analyze and discuss what that means in terms of the impact of gentrification on the community, what it means to be a community member, what it means for the future of the school, what it means for their identity or the issues around low income people and what it means in particular for people's rights to continue living in this community. And that happens at the board, at the women's discussion group, the spiritual development group, so it happens in all those places (Executive Director).

Gentrification has been slow compared to other communities, in part because of the high proportion of social housing. Cooperative housing started to be promoted and implemented in the late1970s. It was a community strategy put in place to discourage gentrification. The ability to be so forward-thinking is due in part to the longstanding existence of collaboration among the community organizations, leading to the formation of the local "table" in the early 1980s.

Given the availability of lower cost housing, immigrants have increasingly been attracted to the community. They now make up 14% of the population, with most coming originally from Congo and Bangladesh. This is a transient

population, leaving after several months or years, something Organization O is beginning to reflect on in terms of the programs it offers and the impact on citizen activism for the future. There is concern that with a more mobile community (gentrification and immigrants resettling) and less low cost housing (therefore fewer low income people), the history and tradition of activism is being eroded.

This is the local context within which Organization O works for social justice. It provides the reader with background information to understand the data that were collected (see Chapter Six).

Organization A

Organization A was founded as a nonprofit alternative service organization (see Chapter Two) in the late 1970s with the specific mission of working for "social justice, equality and non-discrimination, and empowerment" (from the mission statement) using an approach of individual rights advocacy and community organizing. The mission and approach have been consistent over the past 30 years.

On any given day, the activity in the room reflects the rhythm of the organization. While people wait for individual counseling, posters on the wall exhort them to attend a community meeting on social housing and counselors informally chat with people about a postcard campaign concerning welfare rights. English, French and a smattering of other languages fills the room as people wait to see a counselor to discuss individual concerns: these include a lack of repairs

needed in their apartment, a form the welfare office has told them they must fill in, preparations for a hearing with Immigration officials, etc.

The individual rights drop-in counseling service is a major part of the work. The service assists individuals in resolving problems with government services or businesses in relation to basic needs: adequate income, health and shelter. In a typical year, 8,000 in-person counseling sessions are conducted (along with more than 10,000 phone counseling sessions) on welfare rights, housing rights, immigration issues, etc. by volunteer counselors, students and staff. It's a large undertaking that involves upwards of 60 volunteers, students and staff, lots of educational work about government rules and regulations and a detailed administrative system to supervise the volunteers and document each case.

Community organizing has been the other constant part of the alternative service approach over the last 30 years. Organizing work has focused on numerous issues including housing, welfare rights, and refugee organizing at the community, municipal, and provincial levels. For example, Organization A has recently fought for access to health care insurance for new immigrants who can rack up hefty medical bills during the three-month waiting period between entering Quebec and receiving access to insured medical services (Quebec Health Insurance plan). The mobilization of citizens began locally and grew beyond the community. It involved collaboration with other local organizations, support from organizations across the province and a campaign targeted at the provincial government level.

The organization has also been actively advocating for social housing. This issue arose because there is little social housing in the community. Rents are higher than the Montreal average ($606 versus $570 for a comparative dwelling), and much private market housing is in need of major repair (Hanley, 2004). Given a typical two-year wait for the Rental Board to hear complaints about a landlord who has neglected to perform repairs, the drop-in counseling service was hearing from numerous people looking for ways to secure decent housing. Social housing is one response to the problem. Organization A is working with other organizations to petition for social housing on a vacant tract of land.

Other avenues of advocacy for improved housing have included petitioning the Rental Board. However, this approach has led to little change and the organization has shifted its focus to demanding social housing and, more recently, working on developing adequate private market housing as an innovative response to the need for improved housing. Organization A has a history of innovative ways of working. One of the best examples is the leadership it provided for homeless people to be able to receive their welfare cheques via a community organization (in the face of regulations requiring a “fixed address”).

Attempts are made to connect the problems identified by those coming to the counseling service with the organizing work. Housing questions are a prime example. Not all of the organizing, however, emerges from issues identified through the counseling service. The work on welfare cheques for the homeless is an example. It was identified via the experience of senior volunteers elsewhere.

The two elements of the work (counseling and organizing) are connected through a common approach of empowerment. Local citizens coming to the counseling service are provided information but encouraged to make their own informed decisions. When appropriate, they are also encouraged to become volunteer counselors and to become active in the community organizing work; hence, encouraging and supporting individual, organizational and community empowerment.

Organization A has charitable status and is funded by foundations, government support and fundraising efforts. For its 30 years, it has received strong financial support from one foundation in particular and therefore has a long and deep history with that foundation. It is also funded by Centraide (United Way in the rest of Canada). It has been rather unusual compared with other community organizations that work in English in that it has received provincial government core funding support since the 1990s. As a nonprofit, it has a board of directors. The board consists of volunteers, people formerly active in the organization and other local citizens. The board strives to work with a consensus decision-making model although the organization is structured in a hierarchy (albeit a flat one: the executive director and everyone else).

History and Growth of the Organization

Unlike Organization O which has remained fairly stable over the years, Organization A has experienced growth. For example; the number of

consultations it gives has more than doubled since the 1990s[56]. It has moved from a single to multiple funders. The staff team has grown from three to more than 10 full time employees.

The growth reflects the broader shifts in the Quebec community sector. The time of its founding, at the end of the 1970s, was a period of proliferation of social experimentation including the formation of many new organizations. In the 1980/1990s, Organization A lived through the period of greater recognition in what became known as "the community sector" by the government followed by the professionalization of the sector. It was one of the few active organizations working in English when working in coalitions began. It evolved from being an organization with little hierarchy to three distinct departments: the counseling service, community organizing and administration.

As well, with the deeper entrenchment of neoliberalism in the post-2000 period, Organization A has been challenged in responding to the growing need for counseling services and also challenged to have "wins" in its organizing work.

The Community

Organization A is located in a culturally diverse, low income, transitional community in Montreal (Hanley, 2004; Lang, 2004). The community has historically been the first home for many immigrants and refugees, including the

[56] Due to an explosion of needs when the federal and provincial governments imposed massive cutbacks that affected the basic safety net of many people. See Chapter Two for the context.

Jewish population at the turn of the century and after World War Two (Robinson, 2009). There are currently more than 100,000 community residents, with origins from more than 130 nations. Over 40% of the population lives below the poverty line. Education levels are higher than the average in Montreal, yet unemployment is higher than the Montreal average. The housing stock is getting older and many buildings are in dire need of repair (Hanley, 2004).

Within this low-income, culturally diverse, transitional neighbourhood there are also pockets of high income areas of housing and important public institutions. As well, many nonprofit organizations and small community groups exist. The local Corporation de développement communautaire has 43 members. In addition, there are many cultural associations such as the Caribbean Cultural Festivities Association and many national organizations for people from Asia and Africa. Many have been created to work with specific cultural communities.

For many, the neighbourhood is a community. Although located physically just beyond the boundaries of Montreal's downtown, the perception of many residents is that it is far from the city centre and a neighbourhood unto itself (Hanley, 2004; Lang, 2004).

As one study participant put it:

> The neighbourhood really feels like a small city. I work with kids and the kids say "Oh, we're going to Montreal' and it's like they're going to another city. The community has a very strong community sense. People who were kids seven years ago are the camp leaders, the animateurs, and even if they are living in another part of town, they come back to this neighbourhood because they want to work with the youth here because they have a very strong attachment here. So, there's a very strong sense

> of community that is not based on where your parents are from (community organizer).

It is within this context that Organization A works for social justice.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented the organizations and the local communities that provide the background to understand the social justice work of the two case study organizations. The organizations have different histories and work in very different communities. Yet, they have an analogous past of working with community members to fight for social justice through service delivery and community organizing work. In different yet similar ways, they have had to confront funding challenges and shifting community realities. In comparable ways, they have also had to negotiate relationships with other organizations in the community and beyond.

Using this information as a backdrop, the next chapter presents the themes generated from the study on the social justice work of these two organizations.

Chapter Six: Research Findings

This case study is focused on the role of local organizations in social justice work. The two organizations studied were presented in the previous chapter. They provide the backdrop from which to call attention to the role of local community organizations in social justice work. This chapter reports on the findings of the study. The primary sources of data were interviews with thirteen people. Secondary sources of data included observations, informal interviews and documents. Nine themes relating to the social justice work of these organizations were identified. These are explained and explored here. I conclude by identifying four categories that speak to how local community-based organizations can work for social justice. These four categories will be analyzed in Chapter Seven.

A Social Justice Mission is Foundational

Social justice is a foundational part of the mission of both organizations. They describe their missions as: “Social justice, equality and non-discrimination, and empowerment” (Organization A) and *“…* engaged in seeking justice through empowerment, education and social action” (Organization O).

Both organizations have always been grounded in social justice work. Moreover, many of the people interviewed began their story about their organization's work on social justice issues with a reference to the mission statement. It seemed to be an anchor for them to discuss the work of their organization.

One study participant spoke about the importance of having a social justice mission by contrasting the organization with another in which she had been involved, where social justice work was not embodied in the organization and was not part of the mission statement. When there was strong leadership from committed individuals or committees in place, she said, the social justice work was successful but the work "came and went" depending on the people involved. This is not the case of the two organizations in this case study.

The Broader Context Profoundly Shapes the Work

Almost everyone interviewed spoke about how broader forces profoundly shape the social justice work of their organization. By broader context, they refer to the political and social context of neoliberalism, funding for the community sector and their understanding of the impact of professionalization on the social change work of their organizations.

The Political and Social Context

Given the political shifts that have transformed the sector since the 1960s (see Chapter Two), the observation of a long-time volunteer rings true: "It's a

different kettle of fish than what it was. It's much more difficult to work on the kind of change we are talking about. In fact, I don't see the revolution coming. I honestly see it going."

The current neoliberal context makes imagining social transformation difficult, implementing social reform a lot of work and maintaining or regaining rights a challenge. Several people spoke about the reality of working on social change within this context. They poked fun at the idea of what is now seen as "progressive social change". For example, one person said: "The current situation (laughter)… it's a little bit different now. The focus of social justice is just so much weaker than 20 years ago".

People spoke about the difficulties of working on social change at a time when it is not popular to speak about deficits or problems (within the appreciative approach that has taken over) and where identity politics dominate. (See Chapter Two.) One community organizer said:

> I think there are two basic approaches in how you approach social change. There is one where you have a whole set of values about everything and it's about expressing your culture and your values so you don't have a very practical outlook for change—it's about educating people. And then you judge in terms of how ripe society is for important changes in terms of to what extent people share all of your values.
>
> Another approach is to choose key issues around which to have decisive battles. Health care is an example. We suspect that a majority of the population agrees or could agree with the view that progressive people have—if we present it in the right perspective. The changes won't be 'the revolution that changes everything' but there can be far reaching changes. In this approach it's not about convincing people, it's about putting it in a way that people relate to it and winning what we can. Some people say other people oppose the privatization of health but not for the right

> reasons, as they are not against neoliberalism. Well, as long as they oppose the way health care is moving, we can work together to fight it. This fight is not the revolution that changes everything but it is the fight for far-reaching changes.

The impact of the current political and social context on social justice work and the framing of the work in relation to this dominant paradigm is seen, by those who spoke about it, as profoundly affecting social justice work because of the emphasis on staying appreciative, rather than working from a problem-solving mode, and because of the focus on expressing values (identity politics), not fighting for change. (See pages 30-31 for a discussion of this.)

The broader political and social context also shapes decisions about when to move forward pushing for change. As an example, when speaking about a campaign that Organization O was leading, a community organizer said that around 2003:

> … what happened in Quebec was that mobilization around the re-engineering[57] agenda took over in the community sector and it was our view that it would not be possible to have a campaign that would focus on just welfare issues—you had to be part of the broader concerns—so we decided to promote our work on welfare issues through educational means and not as a campaign, for a while. We decided to join in with the re-engineering work led by other groups to oppose the plans to privatize social services and all that. But, we are still maintaining the dossier. Eventually, we might campaign on that again.

[57] In 2003, the Charest Liberal government set out to "re-engineer and modernize the Quebec state" through the implementation of numerous neoliberal policies. The community sector formed Le Réseau de vigilance and worked to counter-balance and reverse government decisions (Laforest, 2006).

Study participants said that choosing the right time to push for a change is crucial. The broader context has a tremendous impact on any potential outcome for an issue. These elements include: what the rest of the community sector is working toward; issues in society in general; and/or issues with the government in power (i.e. an election, a new policy coming into effect, etc.). Therefore, the broader context needs to be analyzed and decisions on the timing of campaigns or actions need to be taken accordingly.

The Funding Context

Study participants made several points about the impact of funding on the community sector in general. (The impact of the organizations funders is discussed later in this chapter.)

First, obtaining funding as an organization that has a social change agenda is complicated by society's general lack of interest in social change. "Organizations are under-funded and that's one way we are controlled" is how one staff member describes it. More specifically, a senior volunteer said: "Big money is identified with interests that are impacted on negatively if you are out to achieve social justice; that's why we are not well funded." For this person, there is an understanding that, although the organization works on securing funding, it does not anticipate finding new large or regular sources of funding.

Second, obtaining funding was identified as complicated because of the law governing charitable status. (See Chapter Two, page 16 and pages 35-36).

Both organizations examined in this study have charitable status. In its absence, they would not be eligible for most of their funding**.**

For Organization A, reflecting on the relationship between having charitable status and working for social change is an item regularly discussed at board and staff meetings. Lobbying work is closely tracked and quantified for annual reporting to the Canada Revenue Agency. It is taken into consideration when strategizing on community organizing issues. As one person summarized: "With charitable status, we are potentially sites of containment. You know, the fear of losing your charitable status either because you're doing too much political work or having it so that you don't do political work and yet there's stuff that could be perceived as political work." Funding, as it relates to charitable status, remains an ongoing and complicated subject of discussion within the organization.

Overall, participants were realistic in acknowledging how funding shapes the organization:

> So it's very important that we don't idealize ourselves as being outside of those relations of power that keep the status quo. No, we're part of that. We have to continuously negotiate that and make strategic judgments about where's the risk, where is it not. How can we push the limits of that risk so it's not so risky for us and other community organizations as well? (Executive Director)

Funding is needed. However, complications it raises are acknowledged.

The Professionalization of the Work

In Organization A, there were two words that sparked self-reflection for people on how the changing use of language in the community sector reflects the shift towards professionalization as part of the broader context shaping the work. The words were “case” and “professional organizer”.

In relation to “case”, a former Executive Director spoke about a shift towards professionalization in the mid 1990s when there were significant increases in the number of people coming for support because of more stringent federal government policy and regulation changes. With the influx of more complex cases, staff began to replace volunteers in the provisioning of services:

> People began to follow cases. We began to use the word cases. It was a preoccupation for me and for some other staff obviously. Because I felt we were becoming an organization that was assuming a social work function, a casework function. More in terms of advocacy of course, but nonetheless, I didn’t think that was our role. We professionalized somewhat I guess.

The legacy of this change is still with the organization as it struggles with the professionalization of volunteering and the challenges of engaging local citizens beyond simply being users or clients of the services.

Other people mentioned with concern about how the language of organizing has shifted within their organization. One person spoke about the formerly-used word “community organizer” to the currently oft-used word “professional organizer”. The discussion came about when he made a slip of the tongue in describing himself as a “professional organizer” and I asked him about the use of that term. Another person said: “Just calling them professional

organizers shows how far we moved from the original ideas behind community organizing".

Within the acknowledgement of the shift to "professionalization" of organizing, when asked, people did distance themselves from the way professionalization is generally perceived within the community sector. A former staff person says:

> We didn't go through the same thing that many organizations went through in Montreal and Quebec. It was different in the sense that people who could not get jobs in the public sector would end up in the community sector, not because they had the values of the community sector but because that's what was available. And I don't think I'm talking about the same thing for us, that professionalization, because people were actually hired for their commitment to social change, even if they were working in services [… but] we professionalized something. I guess it is part of the professionalization. Although the people we hired were political people and had that sensitivity. It's just that the crises in people's lives, the enormity of difficulties that people faced, particularly with some of the major policy and program changes, was seen as a responsibility by staff members […] and they did really want to give high quality service and so they did become so called experts to respond to the needs.

Despite the distancing from the professionalization of the sector, one former employee said:

> We're getting into the professionalism of creating workers in a way that is scary; these people that have all these skills to do all these things, to do a good job but their commitment in their heart and soul is not the principle of why they are hired. And the more that happens, the more difficult it is to do movement building.

In summary, study participants identify how the broader context has shaped these organizations, from the current neoliberal political context, to the funding context and the professionalization of the work. They can name specific examples of how their organization has been shaped by the broader context.

An Alternative Model to Live the Social Justice Mission

Since they were founded, both case study organizations have employed an alternative service model of services and community organizing to accomplish their social justice work. As one Executive Director said:

> Right from the beginning 30 years ago, there was a decision to offer immediate services, to help people better understand and actually exercise their social rights. To respond to people's immediate difficulties in a very direct way and at the same time as well to work with people collectively, particularly of the neighbourhood, to better understand the social causes of the difficulties that they are experiencing and to work on solutions to those social causes. So that's right from the beginning we have always been that way. We have never been just services or just community organizing. It's always been part of what we do, part of how we achieve our mission.

For these organizations, linking service and community organizing is crucial because:

> … the limited progress you can make unless you go beyond the landlord, traffic control, or the recreational services in the immediate neighbourhood. When we talk about people's basic needs, usually you're talking about social policy and not just local conditions (former staff person).

Services are seen as helping individuals with their specific situation but organizing for changes in social policy is needed if genuine change is to take place: changing housing rental laws; changing traffic patterns in a community; or creating recreational services that are truly owned by the local citizens. As one volunteer expressed it: “You need to organize so that you are raising the bar of that individual’s rights”. She was referring to the difference between providing services that inform people about their rights in relation to the rights of a landlord and changing government policy so that tenants have more rights to adequate housing.

Many community organizations work with an alternative service model. How the two organizations in this case study actualize the relationship between services and organizing is unique to each.

Organization A

People from Organization A spoke about the alternative services and organizing model consistently through the lens of an empowerment framework with a surprising degree of similarity, right down to the examples used to illustrate the different types of empowerment, from individual to community empowerment. Their description echoed the work of Ninacs (2008) described in Chapter Three.

One person depicts the organizational approach as one of four equally important levels of empowerment: individual; in small groups; in the community; and as societal empowerment within Montreal and Quebec:

> Empowerment at an individual level, so for example, our counseling services seek to be coherent with the value of empowerment in our constitution. So the counselors will not tell someone who comes in with a difficulty what to do. The person will be providing options to enable that person to better make a decision, their own decision ultimately. So we don't tell people what to do. We will provide referrals, individual advocacy, with their permission, get on the phone with their welfare agent to ask why their cheque was cut and so on and ensure that a person's entitlements are respected. Ultimately we are trying to seek the empowerment of that person at an individual level.

At the group level:

> Our committees bring together people who are concerned about the same issue. Through processes that involve facilitation and community organizing to really work towards the empowerment of that group, so that people will take the microphone at a public meeting with officials. This will reflect their empowerment because previously, they may not have ever imagined that they could go up the microphone and ask a question and there will be other committee members sitting right next to them saying "Go for it." and, "You asked that question really well." and so on.

Committee work was often referred to as the example of group empowerment.

At the neighbourhood level, empowerment takes place because of the organization's work to help cofound neighbourhood-wide organizations and networks. For example, the work on developing a community-wide coalition to address community-wide issues more holistically led an executive director to say:

> [We are] instrumental as cofounders of neighbourhood-wide organizations so that the neighborhood has as stronger voice; so that there's more a measure of control of what happens in the neighborhood. That's a testimony I think to the empowerment at the community level. And so not anything can just happen to our community because there's going to be an overall organization which includes a lot of organizations in the neighborhood that will say: "You can't do that. We won't let you do that or we insist that this be done." And we'll be taken seriously as there's a rapport de force, of legitimacy developed there that people in power have to take seriously.

And finally, at the broader level:

> Then there's the wider empowerment, beyond the local. The level of empowerment with social movements, that sense that "We can be strong. We can have a greater say at a Quebecois level, at a Canadian level through social movements, through linking up our wider coalitions.

Within this strong commitment to a services and organizing model through a well-articulated empowerment approach, people spoke about several challenges. First, and raised most often, people identified how difficult it is for individuals who have received services to move into volunteer counselor positions to provide information to community members. Volunteer counselors need to know local laws; be bilingual; to fully understand a cultural and political system, as is the case for immigrants or refugees, in which they did not grow up; and have the time and interest in volunteering. These skills present real challenges to involving recipients of services as volunteers. As a staff person said:

> The criteria you have to meet to be a counselor works against the idea of incorporating the local immigrant community because of its very high criterias and very North American way of seeing this. It depends on if you speak French and English, if you can be efficient also, knowing all the laws, which means reading all the manuals but, even more, understanding a system which you did not grow up in and you don't even know, so you have to learn it.

As a result, there are few local community members moving into volunteer counseling positions. This highlights the challenge of personal empowerment.

There was a poignant example given of a young woman who had benefited from the counseling service returning to the organization to ask for help in finding a place where she could volunteer to "give back" to the community in

appreciation of the support she had received. She could not imagine becoming a counselor and did not even consider it a possibility because of the skills required. She volunteered elsewhere.

Study participants spoke about the difficulty of having the local immigrant population become active members and leaders in action committees, in part because of the challenge of working in a cultural system that is new to them. One volunteer expressed frustration over the lack of participation from the myriad of cultural communities with which there are organizational connections. She spoke about how the places and opportunities existed for these people but that they were not taking them:

> If we accept the fact that social change will be brought about, the influence for it, not from just a few professionals, you know—staff people, professionals—but the people involved, we should be asking the question "How are they responding? Are they ready to take over? Are they ready to assume responsibility and the leadership? Are they ready to take their place?" And I find the answer frustrating.

Several people also spoke about the challenge of having local citizens active in the broader work of collaborating with other organizations to work on shared issues. The challenges identified were: having the time, specifically availability during the day for meetings, a strong knowledge of French, and enough interest to work at that level. It was not named as part of the problem of professionalization, but was raised in relation to empowerment. Several people did express comments similar to those of a community organizers: "although it is important to have the member participation, it doesn't have to be at that particular point (coalition work) necessarily". But they also said that members need to be a

big part of the work: "… they need to be part of the action. It's harder for officials to criticize when they are confronted by real citizens telling them about real issues".

Actualizing an empowerment approach with a services and organizing model was also identified as challenging because local citizens tend not to live in the community for a long period of time, making it less likely that they will remain involved with the organization. However, this is part of building the larger movement and having "trained citizens" in many different communities.

At the heart of the question of empowerment may be the question people raised about whether the organization is "member-based or member-led". Examples were given of staff and members disagreeing over which issues to work on; whose voice should be heard when making decisions and choosing which dossiers to pursue. One example shared by several interviewees was when some members of a committee wanted to work on fighting for the right to buy single bus tickets. (The transit commission wanted to phase out the purchase of single tickets, making it harder for low income people to be able to afford taking the bus). At the same time, new more stringent legislation affecting welfare was being implemented; staff felt the work should be at the policy level. Would members provide the leadership to choose the issue to pursue (member-led) or would staff take the lead with member involvement (member-based)? In the end, in this case, "a little bit of both issues but not enough of either" was chosen and therefore the lack of clarity persisted about the role of members.

When asked whether the challenges of a services and organizing model has raised the need to work with a different or adapted model, people uniformly said “no”. One former staff person spoke about how “… these challenges have always existed. That is constant. These debates are not new at all”, although there was recognition that the use of counseling services had experienced a sharp increase during the 1990s as government reforms reduced the rights of citizens putting extreme pressure on volunteers. The response? To have more staff involvement in the service, to find more counselors (local citizens or not), and to cut down on the areas of counseling provided. One staff person said:

> I don’t know. I don’t think we can close the counseling service. I see what good it does in the immediate future of people, yet I do feel that in the long run it hurts more than it actually helps. And I don’t know if we can do community organizing and counseling services in the same organization. I just don’t know.

Several participants spoke about strategies currently employed, within the services and organizing model, to address these challenges. Hiring a person able to recognize, train and support volunteers was identified as the key strategy. Orientation, mentoring and training sessions were named as tools. More recently, informal work sessions (to make banners, stuff envelopes, etc.) have been set up as another strategy to encourage and support volunteers by providing a more informal space for them to volunteer. The impact of this strategy is, at this point, inconclusive.

Several people shared stories of when they had questioned the model. They all said they were given the message not to: “I don’t know if this model can

work but I realized I can't get the discussion to go any further so I stopped questioning it".

Services and community organizing as the model to live its social justice mission is a conscious and historically-based choice for Organization A. Yet, there is recognition of the challenges it raises in truly empowering local citizens.

Organization O

In Organization O, there appears to be a clear and shared understanding that although services and programs are what the organization does, they are simply the means and method to work for social justice:

> Service to welfare people is a necessity but it is not the goal. It is trying to help people to see what their options are themselves and to be the ones that speak out. But the services are also a way to develop a base and the idea always has been, and still is, to build a movement for social change (former staff member).

Over time, services are adapted based on needs but, more importantly, appear to be based on their effectiveness to help work with people toward social change. Several examples were given of how services have been challenged to adapt or change to continually reflect the goal of working towards social change. For example, there is some discussion about the future of a long-standing pre-school program. The program helps prepare children to enter the school system, something that is needed given the disadvantage children from low-income families often have, particularly if they have not attended daycare. The program also works with the mothers. There are parent discussion groups. Parents take

turns assisting the teacher in the children's program. They organize the fundraising for the program. They elect a "parent rep" each year from among themselves to provide leadership should there be any problems or concerns between themselves or between a parent and the organization. Shifting demographics in the community have led to an increase in the number of recently-arrived immigrant families participating in the pre-school program. Many of these families are not available to participate in the parent activities because of paid work, French language training and/or getting their legal status in order. However, they want and need the program for their children. This has led to discussions among the staff to clarify what the "minimum requirement" of parental participation should be acknowledging that parent participation is essential and that not all parents can participate at the same level. It is envisioned that if the children participating in the program increasingly come from new immigrant families, the program may need to shift in the way it currently functions. People in this organization spoke with an openness about the program changing but clarified that creating space for low-income families to be active in community issues, via the pre-school program, is important. The program is seen as the means, not the end, to work for social justice through empowerment.

Another way that Organization O works with services and organizing is through its relationship with a citizens' rights group. It has historically provided staff support and space to the group. The two organizations have mutual interests but are legally independent. During the interview, this link to the citizens' rights group was seen as vital to Organization O's social justice work: "It's very

important and I always felt the support of rights has always been the heart of the social justice work here" (board member).

Without the support of Organization O, the rights group would probably not exist. In other Montreal neighbourhoods, these types of groups disappeared when there was no "mother organization" to support the work during lean financial times. Without the rights group, Organization O would be missing the close links to city and province-wide actions on reform and the knowledge that comes from providing hands-on support to people living precariously.

The support given to the rights group is particularly pertinent because of the lack of other similar groups in English-speaking Montreal. Because of the lack of this type of service in other communities, people come to Organization O's building for support from many other communities.

More recently, Organization O has provided space and support for another group in the community that fights for rights. This group works in French. There is very strong collaboration between the citizens' rights group, Organization O and the francophone group. This type of collaboration illustrates how anglophone and francophone organizations can come together to collaborate on shared concerns.

Several people spoke, in general terms, about the shift they have seen in recent years with community organizations focusing on programs and services as the goal, rather than the means towards a larger goal of social change. As one person said: "Organizations now often seem to be more defined by what they do than who they are. They have service, not rights, as their mandates […].

This colours their work on social change". In this shifting context, the ability of Organization O to maintain its focus on programs and services as a means to the end of working for social change was credited to the "oral history" of the organization; the stories from the past that clearly situate the work as social change work and not service delivery work. Preserving this oral history has been greatly enhanced by the movies made and books written about the community. As well, with generations of families active in the organization, stories are passed down during meetings and training sessions.

The focus on social change has also been facilitated by the fact that much of the organizing work has mobilized those using the services. Thus, it is grounded in the services. For example, fighting to save local institutions and organizing on issues of poverty reduction has simultaneously mobilized citizens active in the pre-school program, parents of children in the after-school program and clients of the citizens' rights group.

Organization O sees services as a means to the end of working for social justice. As needed, it adapts its services to work according to its mission. It creates viable opportunities for citizen involvement beyond being simply participants in services. It also actively collaborates with other organizations preoccupied with social justice issues.

Summary

Both organizations have historically provided services and done community organizing as a way to live their social justice mission. People involved in the organizations acknowledge and strongly adhere to this alternative service model.

On the one hand, in Organization A there are concerns that deep citizen engagement and empowerment is difficult because of the way the model is implemented. There are places for citizens to engage but because of the skills and time required they don't take full advantage of them. It is hard for those who are concerned about the model to ask the questions in ways they can be heard, allowing the organization to make changes and stay focused on the social justice mission. The lack of clarity about whether the organization is member-based or member-led is raised as one of the fundamental questions.

In the other organization, there is flexibility about questioning and shifting services as needed to better respond and adapt to changing realities, while retaining the focus on social justice as the goal. There is a strong and historical link of working with other organizations on maintaining or enhancing the rights of citizens.

A key aspect raised by people in both organizations is the challenge of structuring services to stay focused on the social justice work, and not on service delivery as an end in itself. This requires a flexibility and openness to making changes in the service delivery within the clear mandate of the mission.

A second key aspect raised is the challenge of having space for citizens to fully engage in the organization. In Organization A, places have been identified for citizen engagement (volunteering, sitting on committees) but these places require time, skills and knowledge. They are not being fully taken by citizens. In Organization O, opportunities to engage in the organization are built into the structure by having citizen involvement at all levels (i.e. parent committee, parent representative).

A third key aspect raised is the challenge of involving citizens in broader social justice work, through collaboration with other organizations. In Organization O, this work has grown out of and is grounded in the services. In Organization A, this work involves daytime availability, an ability to speak French and an interest. It is more difficult to engage citizens in it.

The Funder Influences the Social Justice Work

The two organizations have a shared history of longstanding non-governmental core funding. However, they have different trajectories in terms of how their funding has evolved. The fourth finding of this research is how their social justice work has been shaped by their specific funding realities.

Organization O is unusual among community organizations in Quebec in that, with its roots in the settlement house movement, most of its funding has historically been from a church. This reality permeates the organization's life and was discussed by most of the people interviewed.

Organization A is also unusual among community organizations in Quebec in that it has grown over time from a single funder (a foundation) to the current funding from three levels of government (municipal, provincial and federal) which includes both core and project funding, as well as funding from foundations and a well-developed fundraising program.

The different situations of the two organizations, as heard through the voices of those interviewed, are presented next.

Organization A

Organization A reflects the complexity of the relationships with funders as an example of the general concern that funders increasingly drive the community sector agenda. (See Chapters Two and Three.)

This was documented on two levels. On an overt level, funders affect the organization through the opening and closing of programs and projects as determined by funding. A typical example is a three year project for local organizing, which involved door-knocking and mobilizing people based on the issues discussed during the door-knocking phase. It ended once the grant expired. This is the norm with project funding, despite the positive evaluation of the door-knocking program.

On a more covert level, people interviewed spoke about the ways a funder providing core funding surreptitiously influences the organization because staff will consider potential funder reaction when planning the work.

This was manifest in several ways. First, potential funder reactions influence how the organization positions itself publicly. There is conscious thought given to the possible reaction of a funder should the organization's name come up in the media. Study participants gave examples of involvement in sit-ins and protests. There is, at times, a conscious choice to do the more controversial work "through a coalition's name, not ours" because "When we go under the name of a coalition there is less of a risk for us" (community organizer). There is organizational concern that the funder might react negatively, yet:

> We have never been in a situation where we have been told if you do that you are going to lose your funding or something like that although I do think we are moving into a context where that is going to be much more likely (a community organizer).

Second, potential funder reactions influences organizational strategizing. As one staff person said:

> One big problem is, and one thing that makes the work really heavy, is that the organization is always scared about what the funder is going to think, so everything goes really slow. You can have a really good idea but if it's a little bit too much out of the ordinary or very media-oriented or drastic, it will probably get stalled from the inside with that excuse.

On the other hand, one study participant alluded to how the organization might use the funder as "perhaps an easy excuse to not actually have a discussion around values and views".

Funders shape Organization A, overtly and covertly, much as the general funding situation shapes the community sector in broader ways.

Organization O

The church funder and Organization O share a desire to focus on social justice work: “The church has a social justice tradition. We are a terrain to live out that tradition” (staff member). This shared focus on social justice work makes the relationship viable but not without its own challenges. This study documented in several ways how the church influences the social justice work.

First, the impact of decreasing church funding on the organization was the discussion most often raised. Because of decreasing church revenues, the budget for outreach work is diminishing. There is increasing pressure on the organization to diversify its funding sources. This has entailed developing new organizational skills in funding development, allocating time to funding work and locating potential funders.

Another challenge raised by several study participants was the impact of having more than half of the board of directors coming from the church and all of the board members needing to be approved by the church before joining. While concern was raised over the lack of local citizen control at the board level, people also spoke about how supportive the board habitually is of directions and recommendations coming from the organization, with church-appointed board members tending to defer to community members and staff on decisions.

However, over the years there has been pressure from the church funder for certain changes in the organization. Two that were mentioned were the pressure to move towards a salary scale (as opposed to the same salary for

everyone with provisions for family size and needs) and pressure to conduct a review of the organization. On the salary scale issue, a board member said: “They finally battered us down three years ago—no more egalitarian salary”.

On the pressure to conduct an organizational review, one was undertaken although the organization had a lot of control over what was reviewed and how. One of the outcomes of the review was work to develop more written policies. A staff person saw this as a positive outcome.

A third challenge one study participant spoke of repeatedly was the obligation of the organization to support the funder by doing outreach and educational work in the church, specifically with congregations. There was a sense that this work is important to maintain funder support. However, the organization is weak at working on this, despite its commitment to reach out to educate those living beyond the community. Lack of time and lack of a close relationship between the staff and the church were identified as some of the reasons why this obligation is not very well being met.

A fundamental principle of the organization appears to be in identifying potential funding sources that are a good match, not simply because of the dollars available. As an example, recently the organization began receiving funding through Emploi Québec. There were absolutely no program changes required and now participants and the organization receive remuneration. Another example is a foundation providing financial support to a children’s program:

> … with no strings attached. We keep getting publicity from them that we assume we are supposed to put up but that was never part of the agreement. We're not against it, we're just not going to say it's their program (staff member).

Organization O is in a unique funding situation with its historic dependence on primarily one funder. The values for social justice that it shares with the church make the work viable. Decisions concerning priorities for the work do not appear to be influenced by the funder. However, with diminishing church funding foreseen in the future and the lack of a strong penetration of the organization into the church's congregations, this relationship may become increasingly challenging, that other funding may or may not counterbalance.

Summary

Despite different trajectories of funding histories and sources, in both organizations the social justice work has been shaped by the funder. For Organization A, the opening and closing of funding envelopes affects the number of staff that can be hired and the types of work that can be conducted. More covertly, work that looks like it might be too controversial is accomplished through a coalition rather than through organizational work. As well, possible reactions of the funder are considered when strategizing on issues.

For Organization O, a shared foundational focus on social justice work makes the relationship with the primary funder viable but not without its challenges. These include the need to diversify funding as financial support from the church decreases, the church's influence on organizational decisions affecting day-to-day functioning (salary scales and conducting an organizational

review) but not on work priorities and orientation, and the obligation of the organization to do outreach and education within the church.

Success Means Having Concrete Wins

Despite the challenges of working for deep change in a neoliberal context, those who spoke about success talked not only about their belief in the importance of "winning" but they were able and quick to give concrete examples of "wins". Many of the wins are with individuals, helping people get access to services to which they have a right or improving the basic quality of their life through, for example, getting repairs to their apartment. While there was an acknowledgement that these wins are not transforming society, study participants could also identify concrete social reform wins that maintained or improved the lives of people (not as individuals but collectively). This theme was raised in many of the interviews.

Some of the social reform wins mentioned included the campaign to stop additional cuts to welfare payments, gaining the right of welfare recipients to not pay for prescription medicines and recovering pension rights for seniors who go to their country of origin for several months at a time. These victories were mostly described as wins that "stopped things from getting worse". They were often won within a discourse of identifying the need for larger social reform or change but were worked on because they would improve people's lives and because that particular win could be achieved at that point in time.

This strong belief that issues can be won is grounded in, and stems from, the experience of these organizations in obtaining wins. A person from Organization O said: “We have this history of making things happen here so it’s not impossible to think of those things”. Another study participant, from Organization A, said: “We’ve won in the past and we can win again. We have nothing to lose”.

Participants identified several key elements to achieve concrete success. The first was to frame the issue to have a broad appeal while also having clear strategies and appropriate tactics. In Organization A, there is a sense that many issues can be won if they are initially framed correctly. This is however also one of the biggest challenges. As one organizer said: “There’s enough people convinced of what needs to happen, of major things, but we have to find a way to give it an expression, an angle, a lever that will make that the strength, to materialize it”. As an example, to frame the fight against a local business development project, the organization identified how the project worked against the interests of local citizens, home owners, neighbouring communities and society in general.

In the same example, an important part of the strategy development was to counterbalance the project promoter’s media work. Therefore, the organization spent time going door to door speaking with citizens about the proposed project and gathering signatures against it. This educational and mobilizing work was time-consuming but paid off once the issue was in the public eye:

> It completely closed the door to trying to manipulate public opinion. The fact was we had the signatures to show the opinion of the community. They had money but we had the people on our side. It was not the only aspect of importance to winning but it was a crucial one (community organizer).

Several participants also spoke with frustration about the need to find new ways of working or of becoming more creative in the development of strategies and tactics. One staff person said: “Our strategies are scripted. We need new ones”. A volunteer said: “We need to ensure we don’t follow the rules. Being polite never got us anywhere. We need to demand our rights!” A third said: “We should always be testing the limits, always pushing the boundaries. That’s our role”.

For Organization O, a key element of having a win is to make a specific demand. There is frustration with coalition work because campaigns often become a wish list from every organization; not a specific winnable demand.

> We used to think, in a lot of coalitions, that we should add up all the concerns and demands and have a long list. But what happens when you do that is you are limiting the number of people who agree with all the demands. So, in the community, you are not increasing your base. On the other hand, you can have huge numbers of people supporting you on one basic demand. But that means keeping the demand focused and realizing that some will not support you (community organizer).

The example used was fighting for numerous specific changes in the welfare law or fighting for “a guaranteed minimum revenue” for everyone.

For one organizer, the goal is not to find consensus about all the changes that are needed but to choose important battles and frame them in a way that there is enough support for a clear and specific win. “This means not everyone is supportive of the goal. Some organizations may pull back and not every “M et

Mme tout le monde" will be behind the campaign. "That's acceptable for Organization O. However, there is a feeling that many other organizations don't want to or can't deal with the negativity and conflict that inevitably arise in identifying a specific demand.

Finally, there is a belief that timing is important to have success. Whether it was the federal government downsizing programs and services in the mid-1990s or provincial government re-engineering in the post 2003 election period (overtly privatizing the public health care system), study participants frequently spoke about how "The changes cried for a response" and "We don't always have control over the agenda we are working with".

Social Justice Work Must be Done in Collaboration with Others

Working with other organizations, via partnerships, coalitions or informal networks, is a fundamental element of working for social justice for the case study organizations. People said: "Local organizations by themselves can't do it", "You don't work alone, just like within groups, you don't have an autocrat that works alone, you don't do programs alone, you don't work as a community organization alone", and, "There's an absolute need for those social movements at a wider level to actually affect social justice change". The comments echo the belief in empowerment; that this must go beyond individual empowerment and move towards societal empowerment, affecting many citizens.

Examples given of working collaboratively with others focused on working in coalitions, either in community-based coalitions or with issue-based coalitions such as housing, health care and/or anti-poverty work at the regional or provincial level. Most of the examples focused on the very local community level.

There was little discussion about collaborations other than coalitions (i.e. partnerships, memberships, etc.) or collaborations at broader levels. The one significant example given was a historical one: collaborating to form new groups to work on welfare support in communities with large anglophone populations (GMAPCC, see Chapter 2). Are collaborations other than within coalitions or beyond the local level seen as less important or do they simply not exist? I will return to this point in a subsequent chapter. How people participating in the case study see the role and challenges of coalition work is elaborated below.

Through the sharing of the story of their organization's work on social justice issues, people identified several roles for coalition work. First, coalitions were identified as the "lead" organization for coordinating the work on campaigns, often providing the core leadership. When they raised this point, people spoke primarily about coalitions of local organizations coming together at the community level to tackle local issues. For example, in one of the communities, a community-based urban renewal plan is being developed. The coalition is the lead organization.

Another role identified for coalitions is to support the local community organization to go beyond the specific situations it works on. This involves doing

policy work. FRAPRU (see Chapter 2) was spoken about specifically. The job of coalitions in developing an alternative social analysis, bringing organizations together and organizing a lobby effort was seen as particularly beneficial for small organizations that have very limited resources and provide services. Coalitions were also identified as important spaces for local organizations to reflect on their role in relation to the broader context, to connect the "local to the global", to see "the forest not only the trees".

As previously mentioned, for one organization coalitions are also seen as having a strategic use as the public face for issues when the organization does not want to be perceived as the leader. An example was given of working for the rights of "illegal" refugees. At a public event, people spoke as members of the coalition, not as representative of the organization as there was some concern about a funder's reaction to the overt support of "illegal" refugees. While questions may be asked about whom the coalition represents, speaking through a coalition seems to work for the local organization.

For the same organization, coalitions can also play the role of addressing broader issues than it can on its own. One organizer said: "… they [a coalition] try to do more of a global approach of sensitizing the "M and Mme tout le monde". I think we need to do different things for our community. So the coalition talks more to those kind of people, and, on our own, we do different things".

In Organization O, there is an attempt to deal with issues in a way that people, both those living locally and others can connect with it. The organization

actively encourages diverse interests to come together on a specific issue. To achieve this, a lot of work is put into identifying the specific demands that everyone can rally around. An example is the work done to stop a new local business development plan from being implemented. While not organized via a coalition, work was done to build partnerships and collaborations with organizations across the province and connecting some very diverse interests (i.e. Muslim groups, anti-gambling groups and organizations that work with the Chinese population).

The Challenges of Working in Coalitions

The ability of a coalition to function effectively appears to have an important impact on its member organizations. In one of the communities, the well-established coalition of local organizations has a long history of activism. It provides wonderful support to the work of the local organization. Another coalition, this time working at the provincial level (FRAPRU) was referred to several times as illustrative of a well-functioning coalition. Four important elements were identified for a well-functioning coalition: a permanent staff with good analytical skills; a long history of understanding the context within which it operates; promotion of critical reflection among its members; and a well organized decision-making process.

Problems develop when coalitions don't function well. Participants provided several examples. First, not having coordinating resources at the coalition level presents a difficult and vexing problem. One of the organizations

allocated staff resources to coordinating a coalition because of a leadership vacuum at the coalition. This role is one for which the organization, as a local organization, does not have the required funding. So, this took resources away from the local work of mobilizing people and doing educational work. This was particularly challenging because the membership of the local organization did not participate actively at the coalition level. It was hard for the organization to see the benefits of the time put into coalition work when there were unmet needs at the local level; therefore, without a properly functioning coalition, the local actions had no way of being connected to the broader issue.

Second, the lack of a clear decision-making process at a coalition level was cited as a major challenge. A time-consuming or ineffectual decision-making process slows down the ability to act at opportune moments or in coordination with other organizations, hindering maximum impact. Examples were given of missed opportunities because of the slow decision-making process in one coalition; meetings were held only monthly and, with the summer break, this meant that opportunities to take action were missed. In another example, it was discovered, just as the coalition was ready to go public with a position, that consensus did not exist. The decision-making process had been ineffectual in that it did not include bringing the position back to member organizations early on in the process to ensure consensus.

Third, some people spoke about the need for tools (e.g. pamphlets, animation guides, discussion guides, etc.) to link the local work to the broader context and ensure that the local concerns are always linked to coalition actions

(the local is global). In the previous example of ineffectual decision-making, when organizations did not bring the coalition's draft position back to their organization for discussion early on, tools would have helped local organizations tie their work to the broader context and garner support for the coalition's action. In this example, one group in the coalition voted against the action. Therefore, at the last minute, the coalition scrapped the action. It lost an opportune moment to go public with the issue, and had to begin the work of developing a shared position all over again. One can only imagine the challenge of developing trust and collaboration after an incident like this.

Even a well-functioning coalition lives with differences and challenges. Relationships are not always easy. Disagreements arise about what positions to take. In one of the examples, the community coalition did not have full member support to fight an urban development project .Therefore, the coalition did not formally support the work and another more loosely formed coalition was established to work on the issue.

For Organization O, this is normal. Conflict is accepted. On occasion, not working with the usual partners on specific dossiers is the way to go. In fact, for Organization O, developing collaborations appears to emerge from having specific demands and then finding partners who support that demand rather than having a coalition assume the leadership in developing the demand and the member organizations joining in.

Time is also needed to develop consensus or negotiate a common position. This occasionally means not moving forward or at least moving forward more slowly than Organization A wants to. This was particularly prevalent in examples given of working in formal coalitions where frustrations arose over the slow speed at which issues brought forward by Organization A could be worked on at the coalition level.

To work effectively in coalitions, time and skill is required. However, interview participants were clear that being active in coalitions is an important part of the work and not to be lost. “We began to be involved. It was a way to have an impact on social issues” (former staff person). Yet, few examples of coalition action or other collaborative work were given beyond the local level.

Grounding the Work in the Local Community

The historical and persistent focus on local community members fully engaged in the social change work was a theme raised by participants from Organization O. They all spoke about this. The stories of social justice work were rich with examples of listening to, talking with, involving, and responding to the interests and concerns of community members in everything the organization is doing. As well, having community members take leadership roles, as volunteers and as staff, surfaced as a key way of grounding the work in the community. As one staff member said:

> The community kind of dictates what needs to be done. The leadership comes out of the community. I think there has always been a feeling of being here for the community, helping with the things that the people are working on and also being able to discern the things that need doing and to give that a push. It all comes from the community.

Listening to, talking with, engaging community members, and responding to their interests and concerns in everything the organization does can be seen in the way strategy for working on issues is developed. The process appears to be organic and emergent. It starts with people's concerns and interests. It involves many different types of interactions with people from the community: through formal meetings with structured groups (i.e. the citizens' rights group, the board, community meetings) and many informal conversations among people (testing out ideas). It evolves naturally over time. As an example, when the citizens' rights group was reflecting a number of years ago on the future direction of its work, a member came up with the strategy of fighting for the right for a guaranteed minimum revenue for everyone. The idea was simple but no one had thought of it. It became the backbone of the work for several years. The development of that strategy involved:

> … lots of different levels of strategizing and discussion. The core group was maybe 15-20 people most of the time in two groups and then we would have discussions with the whole group and then with smaller groups of four to five people and one-on-one. And then we had a committee with other organizations, so lots of different levels (community organizer).

A newer staff person said: "This organization is really great in engaging people, not only people that are interested in that cause, but knowing how to make it personal for lots of people and getting them involved".

Engagement with community members is helped by the ownership of the organization that many community members feel. One study participant said: “There is permanence about the work here; people stay and live here and continue to catch the spirit and perpetuate it”. People spoke about how “citizens are out there every day talking to people and bringing those discussions into the organization” and “They talk with one of us and we take it home and it spreads” (a volunteer). There is ongoing dialogue, not just discussion, between the community and the organization.

Engaging with community members is also helped by the fact that many staff members are themselves community members. They live in the community their organization serves and have strong informal networks within it. They bring into the organization the reflections they have with their family and friends and, in turn, mobilize their family and friends around issues.

Having people from the community in leadership roles, as volunteers and as staff, helps ground the work in the local community. At the volunteer level, community members are often encouraged to take on leadership roles. From getting up and expressing their opinions at a public meeting, to being on the board, to taking the role of spokesperson with the media, there is a conscious focus on the voices of community members expressing the need for the changes being sought. As one example, in the fight to save a local school, a staff member spoke about how:

> The mothers were terrified of speaking in front of a camera but now that they have gone through that a couple of times, they are way more able. At first they said “you do it” to each other but then they started saying “If you

> say this, I'll say that" to each other. We did some informal training with … Now they are able to stand in front of the camera and I don't need to do that.

Community members are: "feisty, articulate and passionate about their stories" (staff person). They provide excellent "media bites" (i.e. "I was born, bred and buttered here"). In providing a leadership role with media, they reinforce their leadership role in the community and ensure their interests are at the base of the social change work.

Hiring people from the community also helps ground the work in the local community. Local hiring has historically been an important aspect of Organization O's work: "Hiring was done carefully. We hired for all kinds of reasons but our primary commitment was to hire people from the community, to hire those that had the potential and could be helped and supported to have the skills" (former staff person).

Hiring from the community helps the organization to be grounded in the community, in large part because the staff is the community. Staff members live the same process of empowerment as the participants. The story of a study participant who is staff member illustrates this well:

> The director at the time asked me why don't I start a program? Now I really thought he was going right out of his tree because I didn't even finish Grade Nine. I was a volunteer mom, then a cook in the kitchen and now they wanted me to run this program! But here I am! I am a better person because of this place. It's a miracle. It's become more than a job, it's my life.

There is a voice of caution about not relying too heavily on staff to provide leadership, even if they are from the community: "Your ears can be tickled and you can be swayed if you get remuneration" (a board member). But hiring locally

does help ground the work in the local. Moreover, it provides positive role models for other community members.

This focus on local hiring appears to be increasingly challenged. Several participants spoke with regret about more-recent examples of hiring from outside the community. One staff person said: “at that time, almost everybody here was hired from the community. Now, it’s changing. But one of the main purposes was to hire people from our community”. Pressure from the funder and general pressure to offer a more “professional” service seem to be behind this change. Hiring “people with compassion” was referred to by various people as the current focus of hiring.

A changing community challenges the ability of Organization O to stay grounded in the historically poor community as more diverse people move into the community (specifically higher income home owners). People spoke about the importance of shifting the work to meet the needs of a changing community, but staying focused on the poor (i.e. immigrants, not “the rich condo owners”).

In summary, for Organization O, working for social change stays grounded in the local because leadership comes from community members. As active “owners” of the organization, as participants, volunteer leaders, board members and staff, the people living the issues lead the work on social change. This reality is threatened; in part by the general professionalization of the field with the focus on skills (not necessarily commitment) and in part by the shifts the community is undergoing. This manifests itself in Organization O as more people are hired “from the outside”.

In Organization A, another reality exists. People spoke about a desire to ground the work locally:

> … to be nourishing the base […] to be working with people affected by the issues and it's really important to rage against injustice because it's just so unjust. I think one of our roles is to be working with those people most directly affected by the issues in a way that collectivizes and engages people in an exploration of the social basis of the difficulties that they are experiencing individually and the means, through small or large groups, committees, assemblies, to explore what are the social bases of this and to provide avenues for people to be able to act and affirm the power they have (staff person).

However, it is challenging for the organization to be grounded in the local community. Many of the volunteers and members are not from the community. It's hard for local citizens to be highly involved because of the volunteer requirements. Local citizens do not appear to be "active owners" of the organization. Through examples, people spoke about how strategy emerges based on the needs and interests of various players: staff, volunteers, the organization, other organizations, and coalitions. Local citizens were not mentioned. For Organization A, staff interests seem to play a pivotal role in the focus of the work: "There is a lot of staff driven initiative in this […] and based on who the staff are, it is more or less political" (former staff person).

This perhaps helps us understand why Organization A struggles with involving local citizens. The issues being worked on may be relevant to the local community, but the work is not always grounded in the community, with the community providing the leadership. As well, there appears to be no attempt to hire people from the local community. Rather, what seems to be sought in hiring

are people with an awareness of the issues the community. The focus appears to be grounded in the issues; not the people.

Concern can be heard in the voices of people interviewed from Organization A concerning the lack of grounding in the community. As one staff person says:

> I have a lot of discomfort with the professional role and what is a professional organizer and what are we supposed to be doing. You know, there are obviously the things that you do trying to keep things on track and that's right that you have a role to play that's true, but particularly in situations where you are dealing with really a marginalized community—I mean, when you are working with people on welfare there's all kinds of power dynamics that play there. There's all kinds of questions about what is the role I am supposed to play and what is the best way to approach it and what is or is not being reproduced anyways in terms of power dynamics.

Volunteers echoed this thread of discomfort: "It is wonderful to see the professional staff active in presentations and doing things but it seems to me their most important job is enabling of us to do it. And that seems to be very difficult." There was frustration expressed over connecting with and being focused on the community.

Making Connections Between People: Across Differences and Focusing on Social Justice Issues

For Organization O, the strongest theme running through most of the interviews was about the importance of always making connections as a way of working on social change. This was not spoken from experience by people affiliated with Organization A.

People from Organization O discussed the importance of connecting people to each other, to the organization, to other community organizations, to the funder, to other communities, to provincial work and even internationally to work on social change. Focus was put on connecting people across differing perspectives. The "differing perspectives" across which to make connections that people spoke about were poor/not poor, community members/others, funder/funded, citizen/paid employee. The reasons given were that making connections provides opportunities for discussion and learning, and for building solidarity across lines of potential differences in the work for social change. A director said:

> Our base is the community and out of that we can make connections […]. We always raise questions about anybody just going off as an individual to be involved in a national or provincial organization that doesn't have connections or desires to be connected to the base as well. Often, we find ways to raise questions by bringing people with us. When I'm invited to go somewhere, I bring someone from the community with me. People from the community talk and that is a way of making those connections that are so very, very important.

Providing people with differing perspectives the opportunity to make connections for discussion and learning permeates not only the discourse of the

people interviewed, but also the work of the organization. People spoke about how their perspective changed because of conversations in which they took part when they were active in a program, community event or international exchange visit. They spoke about how hearing the experiences and perspectives of others helped them understand their own experiences and created new ways of understanding issues.

Study participants spoke about how these opportunities for making connections are structured to make space for exploring differences in positive ways. One staff person said: “We all come with our prejudices and own issues. It’s about having the opportunity to talk about them openly and honestly”.

People identified connections made across differences in positive ways: from working to create a welcoming space for people walking into the building, to using a popular education model, to continually trying to link individual issues with social policy problems both within and beyond the community. As an example, at the citizens’ rights group, when the time is appropriate, people coming for individual support are engaged in conversations about how changes in social policy might have a positive impact on their individual lives.

Building solidarity was identified as key. An organizer (referring to the work to stop a large business development project from being built in the community) said:

> You can be an anarchist or a Muslim and disagree on lots of things but you can agree on some of the issues we have worked on. Some people say you need to have an anti globalization analysis to be part of the struggle but to win issues we need a majority of the population with us.

> For me having people agree in the specific issues we are fighting for, even if it is for differing reasons, is good enough.

The link between the organization and the funder is an illustration of the building of connections and solidarity across lines of difference. The church has a strong presence on the board and is committed to linking the organization's work to activities in the church. Different opportunities for making connections and building solidarity have evolved over time, allowing for interactions and learning across funder/funded lines. They include discussions at Organization O's board meetings and within programs and activities that the organization and the church respectively have when participation or visits across funder/funded lines occur. One participant spoke explicitly about how, as a person affiliated with the funder, his perspective changed in his early years of involvement with Organization O from seeing the organization's work as charitable work to seeing it as social change work because of the many opportunities to talk and work with people in the organization. This led to a deeper understanding of what was going on. Maintaining this solidarity between funder and funded is ongoing work and seen as important. Referring to it, one study participant said: "And that is really key. If you are really trying to work for social change, you have to work at all levels that you have access to".

For Organization O, making connections appears to be primarily focused on the issue of citizens' rights. As one person said: "Citizens' basic rights are the main priority. I see it as being a way in which we connect all of our work. It is a base to understand poverty and political policies and how they affect people". In

Organization O, making connections is not seen as “simply” creating networks or relationship building, but as a way to consciously work for social change through providing lots of opportunities for exchanges, learning and building solidarity across lines of potential difference.

To create connections between people across differences and focus on social justice issues, Organization O creates many and different kinds of spaces for people to engage with the issues. This is done through: “conversations among staff, in staff meetings, in workshops, it’s looking at things not just individually or just looking at your own program and isolating that. It’s making the deeper connections with the rest of the world”. It is also done via community assemblies, board meetings, women’s discussion groups, etc., “all the spaces where dialogue happens” (staff member). Examples were given of making connections with Third World issues through exchange visits. Creating space for discussion is a way of building shared understanding of the societal changes needed and testing ideas for how to push for the changes in ways that people can engage in the issues. The idea of demanding a “guaranteed minimum revenue” is an example. As already discussed, this demand came about as a result of many different kinds of meetings and conversations among people in the community.

In Organization A, the same need to make connections is identified. As one former staff person said:

> We need to provide people with the opportunity to think about the issues and come up with a different analysis and different answers. People don’t

> think. They read the paper. They follow mainstream analysis. The need to believe that change is possible!

A current staff member reiterates: “We can provide the educational work for citizens to become active in social movements”.

However, few examples were given, other than public meetings, of this being enacted. In fact, in the service delivery there is a sense from a volunteer that: “There is no time to talk” with clients beyond their immediate needs and the realization that “Staff and volunteers spend hours and hours and hours on individual cases. It’s hard to move beyond the individual and work on the collective level”.

At the community level there is a strong sense, among some, that there is no time to be with people. One organizer said:

> I have a hard time finding the time to go walking the neighbourhood. The last time I did that was during my lunch hour last week. I went to the bank. And walking there, one, I could think. I thought, Oh, I’m going to go to [an organization] because it’ll create links and maybe I’ll catch M, but maybe not. And I brought back a few things they’ve just printed and talked to them and why don’t I ask N that works in the community centre to come to a meeting tonight so that the community center can be involved. So I ended up walking to the bank and really thinking going out is good but, in our productivity, if I can’t really list anything at the end of the week I feel really shitty.

Making connections is spoken about as important but not acknowledged as productive. In a context where producing immediate results is what counts, the work of developing connections, starting with the informal level, seems to be negated to the detriment of the long-term work.

Leadership with a Social Justice Analysis Perspective

A final theme the research raised about the role of local organizations and social justice work was the strength of having those in leadership positions working from a social justice analysis perspective. The two case study organizations highlighted this theme in different ways.

For both organizations, having an analysis of social justice seems to be a criterion for employment. In Organization O, this appears to be specifically for the director's position. As one board member said: "It all comes from the helm. If the leadership is ethical, motivated and hard working for social justice issues, then the staff, volunteers and the community become involved". Stories were shared with me about how directors hired over the years were questioned about their social justice analysis before being hired.

Given the focus on hiring locally, front line staff appears to be hired for their openness to social justice; even if there is not a strong understanding of it. As an example, one person told the story of hiring (rather junior) staff and asking questions to gauge interviewee's reactions to working in a social change organization. Questions were asked such as 'If you saw (racist incident), how would you react?' Interviewee's were also asked their opinions on changes needed to welfare. Candidates were chosen, in part, because their answers to these questions illustrated an understanding of social justice or at least an understanding that racism and inadequate welfare support is wrong. There is

recognition that in hiring locally, staff needs to be supported to develop their social justice analysis. Many staff are also hired with little formal training. The job of the director was described as one of supporting the staff team to develop their skills and deepen their social justice analysis.

Interviews also highlighted a more recent concern that hiring is beginning to be based more on skills and less on coming from the local community. Concern was expressed by several people that the organization is losing an important opportunity to empower local people and that the pressure to hire for skills is coming from “outsiders moving in”, not from the historic lower-income population. It appears that “hiring people with compassion”, not specifically a social justice perspective, is also being sought by the organization.

In Organization A, hiring staff with a social justice analysis perspective is seen as important. Training and experience also seem to be vital.

In terms of having the volunteer leadership with a social justice analysis, the two organizations also have a different course. Interestingly, in Organization O, there was generally little talk about “volunteers”. Leaders in community action issues were spoken about as citizens or local residents. People helping in the services were referred to as “the parents” or simply as “the people helping with ...”. There was little said about these people’s social justice analysis skills other than at the board level where there is some deference from church-based members to the analysis and positions of the local citizens on the board in relation to making decisions about community action issues. However, there was

lots of talk in the interviews about how the organization develops people's analysis of social justice through working on issues. Public meetings, informal discussions and ongoing organized groups were mentioned.

Paradoxically, in Organization A, people highlighted the high level of technical skills required of volunteers, specifically in the counseling service. Bilingualism, knowledge of laws, and knowledge of Quebec government systems were mentioned repeatedly. Social justice analysis skills were not mentioned. Yet, having an analysis of social justice was witnessed in the volunteers who participated in the interviews and in other volunteers via supplementary contacts with the organization.

However, with the focus on technical skills, identifying potential volunteers with social justice analysis skills becomes tougher. Again, the poignant example given by a staff person of a young woman who benefited from the services:

> She said "I want to give back. Do you know if there's somewhere, you know, a food bank, I can volunteer at?" And I was trying to tell her, yeah here. But we didn't create a space for her. Even if I was saying it, she couldn't see it. And she still can't imagine volunteering here and one reason is that she is not bilingual.

In summary, in both organizations staff and volunteer leadership appear to work from a social justice analysis perspective. One organization does not hire locally, focusing more on social justice analysis skills as well as training and experience. In the other organization, staff are habitually hired from the community (although that's changing) with an openness to social justice and often without a strong technical skill set and/or formal education. There is a clear

understanding that nurturing and deepening staff's social justice analysis is important.

Opportunities for Nurturing an Analysis of Social Justice

In both organizations, opportunities are built in for leaders to reflect on their personal analysis of social justice in relation to the organization's work. In Organization O, this takes place in staff meetings, board meetings, community meetings and in numerous informal discussions among people. There seems to be a conscious effort to make meetings places of learning. Staff meetings were described, less as places for coordination and management, and more as opportunities for discussion and learning. Community meetings are held regularly and planned with a popular education approach to encourage social analysis. Staff and community members participate equally in these meetings, with the leadership shared among different groups in the organization. People also spoke about many informal discussions they had with others where they were pushed on their social justice analysis or were encouraging others to think more deeply.

In Organization A, reflection on social justice appears to be relegated more to specific places such as retreats and special staff meetings, although informal discussions abound about the ways of seeing the work. People spoke about debates and disagreements, rather than discussions. The dialogues seem to be fraught with angst and differing perspectives. Meetings appear to be formal and serious. People spoke about tensions within the organization. They are frustrated by not being able to question the organization's basic internal

functioning (specifically the service and organizing model as a way of working on social justice) while being encouraged to question society's ways of working. This raises an uncomfortable paradox for them.

In summary, for both organizations it is important for the leadership to work from a social justice perspective. Specific places (e.g. retreats, staff meetings) or spaces that seem to be opportunities for learning (e.g. informal discussions, meetings focused on learning or using a popular education approach) are created to help this take place.

Conclusion

This collective case study has identified nine themes that people spoke about in describing the social justice work of two community organizations.

The themes are now organized into four broader categories that speak to how these local community-based organizations work for social justice. It is these categories that will be analyzed in the next chapter. The categories are:

- the impact of the broader context on the social justice work of community-based organizations;
- the impact of the organization's structure on the social justice work;

- strategies in social justice work; and
- leadership through a social justice lens while remaining grounded in the community.

I will now introduce each category, briefly summarize the key points made in this chapter and identify the discussions that will be explored in the next chapter.

The Broader Context

The larger political context, the funding context, the community sector, and the communities in which these organizations operate are all part of the broader context which has an effect on the social justice work of these organizations.

Language has subtly shifted the way people see work as they begin to have “cases” and identify themselves as “professional organizers”. The organizations are pushed to professionalize with the hiring of people for their technical skills, not their connections to the community.

The impact of the broader context is explored in the next section, examining how local organizations can maintain their focus on social justice work when there is relentless pressure to stop working for broader change and to professionalize services.

Organizational Features

People identified three organizational features that shape the social justice work. They are:

- the foundational role of a social justice mission;
- the alternative model of service and community organizing to live the social justice mission; and
- funder influence on the social justice work.

An alternative service and organizing model has historically been used by both organizations.

In one organization, people identified the model as challenging. Citizens do not move easily nor in large numbers from client to volunteer, from volunteer to community leader or from community leader to paid organizer. At the heart of the challenge are indicators that the organization is service-oriented, staff-driven and member-based (but not member-led). Questioning the core assumptions and underlying rationale of the model is discouraged.

In the other organization, the model is less rigid. The focus is centered more on the social change work, using programs and services as a means towards the social change ends. There is historical support for an independent citizens' rights organization. This support is seen as fundamental to the social justice work of the organization.

To varying degrees, in both organizations funding has an enormous and in many ways pervasive influence on the organizational decisions made. In one

organization, there is overt funder influence on the types of services offered and covert funder influence on how the organization positions itself on issues and in planning the work. In the other organization, the main funder influences the work positively because of shared values but potentially negatively as it pulls back from funding. (Funder influence will be explored in the section on the broader context.)

Two key points that merit further discussion in relation to organizational features of local community organizations doing social justice work have been identified. First, these organizations have historically had a social justice mission. What does this say about working for social justice in an organization that does not have a preoccupation with social justice grounded in its history? How do organizations with a social justice mission protect and nurture it?

Second, within the alternative services and organizing model, people identified the difficulty of engaging citizens when they don't take their place in the organization (as volunteers, in leadership roles) and how engagement does take place readily where there are lots of spaces in which to be active (as a participant/volunteer, on a committee, in community meetings). This raises questions about the positive and mitigating forces of the alternative service model. It also raises questions about what the difference is between giving citizens formalized places (service volunteer, on the board, etc.) from which to engage in social justice work and providing spaces (community meetings, as a participant/volunteer) that foster engagement. These two points will be explored in the next chapter.

Strategies for Social Justice Work

People spoke about four themes that address strategizing in social justice work. The themes are:

- success means having concrete wins;
- collaborating with others;
- grounding the work in the local community; and
- making connections between people across differences and focusing on social justice issues.

Two key points emanating from these themes will be explored in the next chapter. The first is that people said working with others to achieve social change is fundamental. This involves time, skill and partner organizations. Other than several coalitions, not many potential partnering organizations were identified. If collaboration is so important, why is it not done more often?

The second point is about having concrete wins. Despite the challenges of implementing social change in the current neoliberal context, these organizations believe that they can achieve important social reform wins and they do. How do community organizations win at social change when winning back lost gains or achieving social reforms (not social transformation) seem to be the only possible routes?

The two other themes raised about strategizing will be explored under the discussion of “assigning place or giving space” (see section above). They are the value of engaging with people locally and connecting people across differences.

Leadership

This case study illustrates the importance of leadership having a social justice perspective and being grounded in the local community. How does an organization, in a professionalized neoliberal world, stay connected with the local community and develop a social justice analysis perspective? This will be explored in relation to the role of learning and reflection opportunities.

Chapter Seven: Analysis of Findings

The previous chapter identified themes raised by study participants about the social justice work of their local community organizations. Four categories were identified, speaking to how social justice is fostered by local community organizations. In this chapter these categories are analyzed in relation to the literature. In the final chapter, conclusions will be presented about the role of local organizations in social justice work.

The Broader Context: "It's The Air We Breathe"

In interviews following the publication of *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (2007), Naomi Klein speaks about how difficult it is to imagine a political and social context different from what we have been raised in and within which we live. She says: "I'm trying to present an alternative history of the ideology that is the dominant ideology of our time, so dominant that we don't see it. It's the air we breathe" (www.edrants.com/segundo/ show #140).

The concept of the broader neoliberal context being so dominant, with the community sector so embedded within it that it is like "the air we breathe", is a captivating analogy. It illustrates how interdependent the community sector and the broader society are to each other; how the broader society breathes life into

the community sector; and how the community sector reflects and mirrors prevailing societal, and from a state funding perspective, political values. This analogy resonates with many ideas raised by those participating in this case study. For example, “seeing the revolution going, not coming”; poking fun at the idea of what is seen as “progressive social change”; and raising concern about the current emphasis on appreciative, value-based work (rather than fighting for political changes) illustrate the embeddedness of the community sector in dominant culture. In the way I am using the analogy, it can also suggest that the community sector can “breathe out” progressive social change into the broader society, meaning local organizations can influence the broader context by introducing into mainstream society new ideas or new ways of working.

Literature amply confirms that the broader social (and political) context negatively affects the social justice work of local community organizations and becomes the air we breathe in the community sector (DeFelippis, Fisher & Shragge, 2010; Deslauriers & Paquet, 2003; Hyde, 2000; Ilcan & Basok, 2004; Ledwith, 2005; Shaw, 2008; Tarrow,1980). For example, Ledwith (2005) speaks about how community work has become diluted by dominant reactionary theories, leading to “ameliorative rather than transformative approaches to practice” (p. 28). She suggests our community development practice will remain uncritical as long as it relocates us within the same social relations. She urges us, through praxis, to challenge “the air we breathe”. DeFilippis, Fisher and Shragge (2006) summarize this position as follows: “communities need to be understood as simultaneously products of both their larger, and largely external,

context, and the practices, organizations and relationships that take place within them" (p. 673). "Activities of the ruling penetrate relations in community life" (Ng, Muller & Walker, 1990, p. 314) is Ng's version of "it's the air we breathe". Shaw (2008) speaks of how "community does not exist in a political vacuum, but reflects and reinforces the dynamics of power within particular contexts and times" (p. 34). Specifically on the question of funders influencing "the air we breathe", recent Canadian studies (Canadian Centre for Philanthropy, 2003; Canadian Council on Social Development, 2006; Parazelli, 2004; Scott, 2003) warn us about what Pross and Webb (2003) call the "important if subtle" (p. 79) influence of funding of community organizations.

So, how do local community organizations stay focused on social change work when the air they breathe is neither receptive nor inspiring with respect to that goal, yet these groups are immersed and embedded in it? How do they influence and perhaps reshape the broader context? Can they breathe different and more progressive ways of thinking and working into the broader context? For the organizations in this collective case study, several points were given. These are now explored in relation to the literature.

Funding Sources Are Key

Funding is a key determinant for community organizations to stay focused on social change work. Case study participants spoke with frustration about the lack of interest in funding social change work and the complications of working within the Canadian charitable accreditation framework and its taxation context.

The importance of funding is also well documented in the literature. Time and time again, we are reminded of the difficulty, yet importance, of securing adequate funding while protecting the organization's autonomy (Brady & Tchume, 2009; Brooks, 2005; Chetkovich & Kunreuther, 2006; DeFilippis, Fisher & Shragge, 2009; Ilcan & Basok, 2004; Incite!, 2007; Ng, Muller & Walker, 1990; Pross & Webb, 2003; Scott, 2003). Yet, as explored in Chapter Three, government and foundation funding channels can discourage, with an array of actions varying from the subtle and imputed to the overt and direct, the social change work of local organizations. This suggests the importance of working on funding development in ways that help an organization remain focused on social change work. Fighting for core funding is perhaps a key strategy. Core funding (at least in Quebec) provides internal autonomy for organizations to shift practice, as needed, to keep their focus clearly on the mission (Canadian Centre for Philanthropy, 2003, Scott, 2003). However, even this type of funding is challenged because of its covert influence (Côte & Simard, 2010; Deslauriers & Paquet, 2003).

Moving away from needing funding is, perhaps for some organizations, another strategy to consider. This involves becoming more volunteer-based, less structured and more specifically focused on the social change work. This would clearly prove challenging for many local organizations (and professionals within them who might prove less than enthusiastic to sacrifice, in whole or in part, their salaries), but perhaps would be worth considering when the focus is social change and one key impediment is funding restrictions.

Obtaining core funding or moving away from being funded are not simple steps to put into practice. Yet, if organizations are to remain focused on their social justice work, the core issues underlying how the work is funded must be explored and addressed.

This case study also suggests that organizations need to understand the dynamics of the funding they do receive. This involves questioning the intent of the funder; how the funding can be shaped differently to better support the purpose of the organization; and the impact the funding will have on the social justice work.

In turn, this may require questioning the organization's internal, and perhaps unconscious, suppression of social justice work based upon perceptions or misinterpretations about the limits and possibilities of the funding. An example provided in the case study is an organization using the funder as the reason to not move forward on an action without gaining more understanding of real or perceived displeasure and consequences to funding. A second example comes from my work at the Centre for Community Organizations (COCo). Organizations with which we work appear to often restrict their advocacy and lobbying work based on overzealous (and sometimes ill-founded) concerns about Canada Revenue Agency's (CRA) regulations. Perhaps organizations need to be more proactive in engaging in social change work without worrying so much about CRA regulations.

Hiring

In Chapter Six, case study participants spoke about the importance of hiring people with a social change perspective. As shown in Chapter Three, the literature supports this (Brooks, 2005; Chetkovich & Kunreuther, 2006; Fraser, 2005; Ife & Tesoriero, 2006; Parazelli, 2004; Shaw, 2008; Shragge, 2007b).

Several studies suggest that hiring people who live the issues goes a long way toward helping to stay focused on the issues (Brooks, 2005; Chetkovich & Kunreuther, 2006; Parazelli, 2004). Others suggest that we need to identify the values potential staff bring to the organization (Chetkovich & Kunreuther, 2006). Organization O does this through its hiring process.

Some authors go so far as to suggest that hiring staff on the basis of university degrees, not values, can be antithetical to community work and social change (Ife & Tesoriero, 2006; Parazelli, 2004; Shaw, 2008). These authors raise challenges about the negative implications of a specialized body of knowledge that is held exclusively by professionals, and often does not overtly recognize or acknowledge ideology. This approach reduces the learning to a technical set of competencies, from the perspective of a non-politicized, non-ideological process. Hiring staff who have (or can develop) an analysis of social change is one way to stay focused on social change and counter-balance and perhaps influence the air we breathe.

Use of Language

Being conscious of and questioning the language we use is another way of becoming more aware and sometimes challenging the air we breathe and remaining focused, or rather, re-focused, on social change work (Foley, 1999; Fraser, 2005). This was raised in this case study with reflections about the terms "case" and "professional organizer".

Foley (1999) refers to the analysis of language at two levels: the analysis of key words within a struggle and the analysis of how language is used to maintain and reinforce dominant discourse. Internal questioning of what is considered a win, as documented in Organization A, provides an example of analysis of key words within a struggle. Another example is the lack of a clear definition of social justice (which can range from redistribution to transformation and working for individual or collective justice) within local organizations. Referring to paid staff as "professional organizers" is a telling example from this case study to illustrate how language can be used to maintain and reinforce the dominant discourse. The study of the use and impact of language is a field unto itself. (For example, see Chomsky and Otero, 2004.) For this case study, it suffices to note that the use of language is one element that subtly influences and frames, often unconsciously guiding actions while simultaneously constraining and limiting them, the accomplishment of social justice work. We need to become more attentive to the language we are using; more profoundly consider and define it; more frequently question its origins; and be more open to

understanding the meta-implications of our use of words on the work for social change.

For organizations in this case study, funding, hiring, and an awareness of the use of language are three core aspects of which to be constantly mindful in staying focused on social change when the air we breathe, and in which we are embedded, is not inspiring, nor receptive. Two key points emerge: the importance of understanding the dynamics of funding (specifically fighting for core funding and considering working more from a volunteer base) and ensuring that leadership has social analysis skills that reflect a core commitment to social justice. However, this hardly seems enough. What else can we do to counter-balance the effects of the air we breathe? Let's now explore several other strategies.

Counter-Balancing the Effect of the Air We Breathe

The literature and this case study raise some additional promising ideas and questions about other strategies community-based organizations can consider to help remain focused on social justice work. The role of developing social analysis skills, modeling alternative structures, and the importance of working from a perspective of relationships of power are presented here.

Developing social analysis skills.

Creating opportunities for people to develop social analysis skills of the air we breathe is an important component of "the way forward" (Ledwith, 2005 p. 171). This doctoral work has helped me do that, to understand in a deeper way

the fundamental importance and profound impact the broader context has on the ways forward for my work. However, doing a doctoral degree is not a realistic nor a desired option for many people. Organization O works on developing social analysis skills at staff and community meetings. This uses meetings as places of learning, often with a popular education approach. It also involves fostering spaces for informal discussions to push each other on their social analysis or encourage people to think more deeply. How can we encourage the development of social analysis skills?

Literature that questions the status quo is available. (For example see: Chetkovich & Kunreuther, 2006; DeFilippis, Fisher & Shragge, 2010; Incite!, 2007; Ledwith, 2005; Shragge, 2003). Organizations exist to support us in social analysis reflection[58]. However, these places for reflection deal with specific elements and do not provide a holistic approach to developing social analysis skills. They do provide a starting point. Commitment is called for to reflect, integrate it as part of the work we do and create the spaces for it to happen within our organizations and with other organizations. As an example, Organization A operates its services four days a week. The other day is spent, in

[58] For example, in Quebec the Carrefour de participation, ressourcement et formation (CPRF**)** leads reflections on globalization. The Centre de formation populaire is working with others to reflect on the impacts and possibilities of the current economic crisis. The Centre for Community Organizations *(*COCo*)* works on the role of community organizations in relation to service and advocacy work. Relais femmes promotes a feminist critique. The Rad School of Montreal occasionally organizes sessions on provocative thinking on other ways of organizing. The Réseau Albert St-Martin has been experimenting with inter-sector training on the social action. University of the Streets (part of the Institute of Community Development, Concordia University) offers a wide range of discussions on social issue topics.

part, on meeting as a staff team to reflect. The organization also holds board and/or staff retreats, on a bi-annual basis. Creating these types of spaces for reflection is difficult to do when services constantly demand attention. We might do well to remember that community organizations cannot respond to all the needs in our communities, but we can learn how to respond to some of the needs and, through reflection on the services we do and don't offer, think with other organizations to develop an analysis of what the more long term solutions are to issues faced by and lived in our communities.

Modeling the world we want to see.

As important as developing social analysis is, counter-balancing the effects of the air we breathe involves moving beyond analysis to challenging the status quo. Reflection and action (praxis) are required (Foley, 2004; Freire, 1970; Ledwith, 2005).

One place that we can do this is within our own organizations, to render them less shaped by the broader context and more of a model of the type of world we envision. As identified by a staff member in Organization A, this means raising, mediating and dealing with difficult discussions and contradictions within our own organizations in order to make changes where possible.

Some organizations do this by transforming themselves into more democratic structures. Inter Pares and COCo are examples examined in Chapter Three. Participatory management practices (Bartle, 2007; Plunkett & Fournier, 1991; Senge, 1990) and flat hierarchies (Buffum, 2005) provide other ways

organizations are trying to create models of the type of world we envision. These are examples of making changes within the traditional organizational structures with which we are familiar. Others pose more fundamental and penetrating questions about making changes to traditional organizational structures. For example, Hill (2005) asks us to call into question the governance structure of nonprofits, specifically the role of boards of directors. Others call for fundamental changes to the Charities Act (Voluntary Sector Initiative, 1999; Ontario Council of Agencies Services Immigrants, 2002). However, because of the broader political context, these initiatives are not showing many indications, at this point in time at least, of making much headway[59].

DeFilippis (2004) pushes us to look further at alternative models of ownership, not simply structuring our work differently within existing models or adapting the models. He challenges us to reach beyond the nonprofit model and more fully explore collective ownership and self management (cooperatives) as a model that allows us to live more fully in the world as we want it to be; still within the neocapitalist meta-framework but pushing its limits further. While this vision pushes well beyond the scope of this research project, it should not be left by the wayside or simply forgotten.

Klein (2002) challenges us to "… change minds by building organizations and events that are living examples of what you stand for" (p. 125). To be clear,

[59] Unfortunately, in fact, things can be seen as moving backwards, given the proposed reformulation of laws governing nonprofits (federal and provincial) and the recent tightening up of the interpretation of charitable requirements.

doing this alone is far from enough to bring about social justice. But active experimentation and innovation with alternative models are part of the answer to the question of how, more concretely, to work for and begin to work for social justice at the local level.

Working from relationships of power.

Deep or transformative change involves changing relationships of power (Foley, 2004). While there was little talk about issues of power in this case study research, it is a fundamental concept with which those who want to counter-balance the impact of the air we breathe must engage.

Even the literature is scant on the treatment of power from an organizational perspective (versus a societal, group or individual perspective). McAdam and Scott (2005) attribute this to the Weberian influence on organizational studies literature, which sees power as institutionalized and built into structural designs while shaped by norms and ideologies. DeFilippis (2004) attributes the lack of power analysis in community development work to the mindset of "community asset-building" and "capacity building" that dominates the current-day organizing discourse. These approaches do not consider questions of power. DeFilippis speaks about the problems that neoliberal communitarianism[60] raises, particularly that such an approach continues to exclude low-income people from gaining control over their economic life. He

[60] A belief that community development work is conflict-free, depoliticized and not about community control but about the integration of individuals through the development of positive social relationships (DeFilippis, 2004, p. 53- 58).

suggests that “community development needs to reconnect with its goals of community control, but it must do in a way that understands capital, capitalism, and class in American society” (2004, p. 56). Along with Fisher and Shragge (2006, 2009, 2010), he raises concerns that with the current emphasis on community connections and service provision, little attention is paid to macro structural factors, macro power relations and developing a critical political meta-perspective. These authors suggest that the current role of community service organizations complements and fortifies existing power relations and structures. They critique the lack of a clear vision of social change, grounded in political analysis, within community organizations. They highlight the shift away from Marxist and Regulationist positions, to neoliberalism. They underscore the need to maintain conflict at the core of community organizing activity (not necessarily constant conflict, but the recognition of its potential). They conclude: “for social change to happen, conflict over power must be a key orienting direction of community organizing (DeFilippis, Fisher & Shragge, 2010, p. 171).

Other authors concur. Foley exhorts us to recognize “the connections between theory, ideology and power relations” (2004, p. 14). Shaw attributes the dominant community development paradigms as having “inevitably been framed within existing relations of power, aimed at adaptive approaches to social inclusion” (2008, p. 27). This calls for more radical work that exposes and transforms structure and relations of power which systematically marginalize and exclude. Jesson and Newman conclude: “It’s always about power” (2004, p.

262). Perhaps we should heed Flacks (2004, p. 152), who warns that to fail to have a theory of power is a great weakness.

The limited discussion about issues of power in the interviews conducted for this study profoundly illustrates and illuminates how the air we breathe has influenced and shaped local community organizations, constraining their sense of the possible and in fact often rendering it invisible. Consider how rare it is to hear the subject of political ideologies even raised among local community organizations. It is this absence of tackling the foundation of social action and issues of power that speaks more than eloquently of the current situation.

More telling yet, and even more rare, is to hear stories of organizations connecting their work to political aspirations as another way forward in shifting relationships of power. Beaudet (2009) suggests that the work (via social movements) is political but does not "do" politics ("…est "politique" mais ne "fait" pas de politique", p. 216). Since transformative change involves altering relationships of power, local organizations might do well to consider "doing" politics. In so doing, it must be recognized, the "covert' elements of funding might well emerge more overtly!

Frameworks exist to assist us to explore and better understand power (e.g. Ife and Tesoriero, 2006; Lee, 1997). ACORN provided a lived example of working with power. Organizations must take the time to engage in developing an understanding of power and change in relation to their work, assuming they truly want to engage in transformative change.

This section has explored how the broader context has a dominating impact on local organizations working for social justice. We are reminded to be mindful of the dynamics of funding, of whom and how we hire and how our use of language reflects and shapes how we see the work.

We also need to be wary of the overt and covert influences of funders. The development of skilled, imaginative and courageous leadership is vital, as is the integration of social analysis within the shaping of our work and our priorities. We are reminded of the importance of modeling the type of society we envision by developing organizational structures that reflect the kind of world we want to see, working with a framework of clear, explicit and accessible political ideologies while developing an analysis of the relationships of power. We are influenced, of course, by “the air we breathe” but we can also change the air around us by breathing a difference into the world.

Core Organizational Features that Shape the Social Justice Work

This section discusses how organizational features shape the social justice work of local community organizations. The air we breathe is not only the broader social and political context influencing the work, as detailed in the last section, but also the internal organizational context, the way organizations choose to structure themselves as they embed within the broader society. Internal organizational features that support social justice work were documented in the case study organizations, in several ways. The impact of funding on the structure is one way. This has already been explored in the discussion on the broader context.

People identified two other ways that core features of their organization affect the social justice work. One is the importance of having a mission that is historically and persistently focused on social justice work. The second is the way a service and organizing model shapes the engagement of people in social justice work. Working from a service and organizing model raises questions about the difference between giving citizens formalized places (i.e. as service delivery volunteers, board members, action committee members) from which to engage in social justice work and/or creating spaces (i.e. informal opportunities, educational community meetings) that foster engagement. These findings are analyzed in this section.

A Social Justice Mission at the Heart

Having social justice work at heart has been a feature of both case study organizations since their inceptions. People identified this as a key element of the organizations' ability to maintain a social justice vision.

Little has been written about the links between the founding purpose of community organizations and their current work. One exception, relevant to this case study, is a comparative study of organizations in France and Quebec. Patsias (2006) examines citizen's committees in the two locations and shows how practice is closely tied to the group's identity. This, in turn, is influenced by history. Specifically, she identifies the associative (or consensus-building) nature of the inception of the organizations in France, leading, over time, to an apolitical vision. The "community nature" of the inception of the two organizations studied in Quebec (looking not only at individual needs but the existence of a social change agenda, which she calls "un projet de société", p. 51) is identified as leading to a more overtly political vision in the latter two.

This link bears more study and raises several questions about the historical focus and ongoing commitment to social justice work. The first, and most important, question for this case study: How do organizations that believe in social justice work protect and nurture it? But there are other questions to explore: can local community organizations not grounded in a social justice mission move toward having social justice work as part of their role? How

fundamental is the founding purpose and mission of an organization on the current work?

How do organizations protect and nurture their social justice work over time? Telling the organization's social justice story from a mission perspective offers one way. Accepting new funding with the prerequisite that it provides a real benefit to the organization's core mission is another. Both reflect examples from this case study. They illustrate ways to avoid mission drift. Mission drift, the "shift in the intention of the work in exchange for scarce resources" (Struthers, 2003, p. 4) is an increasing concern to nonprofits, particularly when funding requirements encourage mission drift (Canadian Centre for Philanthropy, 2003; Ng, Walker & Muller, 1990; Parazelli, 2004; Pross & Webb, 2003; Scott, 2003; Struthers, 2003). The single largest difficulty many Canadian nonprofits report is "in dealing with the changing funding environment" (Canadian Centre for Philanthropy, 2003, p. viii), hence the concern about mission drift.

The literature suggests several ways to reduce the chances of mission drift. One is to have the board of directors specifically mandated to provide oversight to protect the mission. This puts the board in the position of "keeper of the mission", which in any event forms part of the legal obligations of a board of directors. This "soft" approach (Struthers, 2003) provides a contrast to another approach, that of building firewalls. Firewalls are a "protective mechanism that [...] can be built into structure and practice [to prevent mission drift]" (Struthers, 2003, p. 11).

Struthers identifies two possible types of firewalls. The first is to have sufficient funding to be able to refuse a funding source that may lead to mission drift. This can play out in different ways from one organization to the next. There can be a decision to not grow beyond a certain size so that, in the event of a new funding source, the ability to "pick and choose" which funding most closely aligns with the mission can be enacted. There can also be a decision to not accept funding from any level of government that exceeds a specific percentage of the total budget. As well, many organizations make the decision to have diversified funding sources (e.g. not more than 50% of the total budget from one source and having at least three separate major sources of funding).

The second type of firewall is to ensure a governance structure that has the membership of the organization restricted to users of the services. This serves to keep corporate and government interests at arm's length. For example, many community organizations prohibit government representatives from becoming board members. This is built into the by-laws of these organizations. (Moreover, to receive funding from specific government programs in Quebec, people who work for the government are prohibited from sitting on the board of directors; hence lessoning the possibility of more overt funder influence.) However, it does not prevent more conservative or service oriented users from altering the direction of the organization. To counteract this problem, some regroupements in Quebec (e.g. L'R des centres de femmes) requires that each member organizations adhere to a policy that clearly states a social change philosophy and goals (L'R des centres de femmes du Québec, 2003).

There are other complementary ways for organizations to continually strengthen the connection between their social justice work and the mission. One is to consciously connect planning and evaluation work to the mission. In my work with local nonprofits in Quebec, I have been making the connections between the daily work and the mission more prominent, spending less time on detailed action plans and quantitative evaluation processes and more time on discussing how the daily work connects to the mission. This “soft approach” (Struthers, 2003) supports keeping the focus of the work grounded in the mission.

Another way to prevent mission drift is to hire people who possess, or who are open to developing, a social justice perspective. The ownership for the social justice mission is then distributed among more people. Some organizations have “statements of agreement” where each staff member is required to sign a contract that includes a statement of the values and mission of the organization. While the role of leadership in promoting and nurturing social justice work is explored in more detail later in the leadership section of this chapter, it is interesting to note here the approach of ACORN with respect to staff and mission drift. ACORN had a clear-cut division of labour between staff who provided services and the staff who were responsible for and performed the organizing work. The integrity of the organizing work was protected by hiring different employees for service work (rather than redirecting organizing staff) and giving organizing jobs more prestige and status within the organization. ACORN

identifies this as a crucial part of “halting mission drift from organizing to services” (Brooks, 2005, p. 268).

When I first began working in the community sector in the 1970s, I distinctly remember the saying was “I’m working myself out of a job”, which for me meant that wrongs would be righted and there would no longer be a need for community organizing. That social transformation did not take place. The community sector is now a professionalized sector, populated with people, like me, whose entire career has been spent in the sector, while the revolution (to reflect a case study interview) appears to be ‘going’ away, rather than ‘coming’ closer. In this context, allowing mission drift to take place for the sake of holding onto jobs and ensuring organizational survival can be understood. However, it is still not acceptable. Some would go so far as to say that “nonprofit careerism derailed the revolution” (Donnelly, 2004, p. 1). This discussion engages in the debate about our activism being altruistic or job-security based. It challenges us to a profound and searching self-examination of our most deeply held values and to adhere to them—in particular when career interests conflict with the mission through which we have framed our lives.

So, can nonprofit organizations not grounded in a social justice mission move towards becoming more social justice oriented? An example raised by a participant in this study (Chapter Six, page 126) suggests this is problematic, that a social justice mission needs to be foundational, independent of who’s involved because direction can be easily lost when leaders promoting social justice leave the organization.

As explored in Chapter Three, Building the Movement believes this foundational framework is possible and works with nonprofits to help them incorporate progressive social change along with their service work. Building the Movement has documented examples of organizations that have moved towards more social change oriented work. They have also documented that most of these organizations had a “thread” or concern about social change issues prior to consciously moving into social action work (Brady & Tchume, 2009, p. 49).

Therefore, how fundamental is the founding purpose and mission of an organization to the current work? This case study suggests it may be important. Building the Movement work suggests there must be a thread of concern within the organization’s antecedents. Does it matter? Minkoff and Powell (2006) caution us to be careful about putting too much emphasis on what the mission statement states. They note that these are public documents that respond to “pressures to conformity” (p. 592); particularly when there is a high dependence on external sources for legitimacy and support, including funding. Additional research is required to answer this question more fully. However, it is clear that having a social justice mission at the heart of the work is one way to help local community organizations stay focused on the work for social justice.

A Model That Shapes the Engagement of People in Social Justice Work

This case study illustrates how a service and organizing model shapes the engagement of people in the social justice work of their community organization. Study participants spoke about the rationale for, and the challenges presented by, the alternative service model that their organization has historically used.

There has been some recent (and renewed) interest in understanding the impact of organizational models on social change work (Buechler, 2000; Chetkovitch & Kunreuther, 2006; Hyde, 2000; Lounsbury, 2005; Minkoff,2002; Minkoff & Clemens, 2004). This case study reflects that interest.

Two specific points are now examined. The first is the notion of using a service and organizing model to work for social change. Then, exploring how this model can affect citizen engagement by "giving place" or by "creating space" is examined. This is one of the most striking findings of this case study.

Employing a service and organizing model to work for social justice.

Piven and Cloward (1977) remind us of the importance of looking at the structures we use to do our social justice work: "…if features of social context influence the course of movements, so too do the organizational forms that are developed within movements" (p. xv). When study participants discussed the service and organizing model of their organizations, most of them concluded that the model supports the social change work of their organization. Being flexible and shifting services, creating spaces for citizen engagement and collaborating with other organizations were recounted as ways to successfully actualize the

model. In one of the organizations, there is some hushed concern about the model actually suppressing social change work because of the difficulty of engaging and empowering citizens.

A service and organizing model is a commonplace structure in North American community-based organizations (Minkoff, 2002, see Chapter Two). There are both positive and mitigating forces to implementing this structure. On the positive side, offering services solves problems for some people, in the immediate moment or for the short term. The provision of services provides organizations with a connection to people, as well as a place and a context from which to mobilize. Service provision provides the organization with a knowledgeable and credible base from which, and with which, to work and to document both anecdotally and statistically the issues that people are living (Brooks, 2005; Building the Movement Project, 2009; Chetkovich & Kunreuther, 2006; Whitmore & Wilson, 2000). Moreover, organizations can provide a space to test ideas of how life could be better for people through working differently (e.g. working democratically; running alternative programs such as cooperative housing; or providing pre-school programming that has significant parent involvement). These are important roles to take on for local community organizations.

On the mitigating side, some argue that service provision can undermine the long term need for change (Chetkovich & Kunreuther, 2006; DeFilippis, Fisher & Shragge, 2009). The services context can become all consuming and shift the focus of the organization away from being a means to document

problems, organize with people and push for social change. Funders play an important role in shaping services to become the focus, rather than or instead of the groundwork for social change organizing. As Chetkovich and Kunreuther (2006) note:

> Change-oriented service agencies [...] may have great budgets, but they also have significant commitment to service activity that must be provided with these funds. If they are to engage in social change activity, it must be embedded within the service model or supported with resources squeezed out of whatever margin exists (p. 150).

The challenge is to find ways to provide services that, while supporting the daily struggles of people lives, also can serve to mobilize and document the reality of the issue(s) and shift the focus to the organizing aspect of the work. Creativity is needed. For one organization in this case study, a balance between providing services and organizing for social change appears to be present. For the other organization, finding a balance is an ongoing debate between the service providers and the community organizers, one that most people interviewed say must be accepted as part of the historical choices made about the model. However, as Minkoff (2002) reminds us “organizers and activists need to remain cognizant of […] changes, either to be proactive in seeking out and taking advantage of new models or vigilant in maintaining their organizations in the face of institutional shifts” (p. 398).

In conclusion, this case study suggests that organizations with a service and organizing model have a place in social change work. However, services need to simultaneously illuminate an alternative to the status quo and should be

seen as a means to work on social justice, not a one-dimensional service-provision end unto itself.

Giving place or creating space.

When speaking about how the service and organizing model supports social change work, people in one of the case study organizations said the model is challenging when it comes to engaging citizens. They spoke about the formalized places from which citizens could engage in social justice work, but also how difficult it is to have enough citizens engage within the organization. The places for citizen engagement were identified as service volunteers, joining committees and participating on the board of director level.

In the other organization, people described the model as focused on social change work, with services being flexible and a vehicle to work on social change (not an end unto itself). Some people talked about how the organization creates spaces that foster engagement. These spaces include community meetings, being a participant/volunteer, etc.

The difference in the words used to describe citizen engagement (place, space), the uniformity of the word use within each organization and the emotional tone I heard attached to these two words stayed with me. I set out to explore the dimension of what lies underneath these words.

“Space” and “place” are referred to in different ways in the literature. Urban geography and some community literature (Beatley, 2004; Kirsch, 2005) speaks of the importance of place. They refer to having a sense of home or

belonging when, in a globalizing age, there is an assumption that people can pack up and go live where the jobs are (Beatley, 2004) or when their community is threatened (Kirsch, 2005).

For the purposes of this discussion, space and place are referred to in ways similar to Shaw's (2004) use of the words; place as structured and space as liberating. In this case study, place was spoken about as being a rigid or bounded definition of citizen engagement. As community can be critiqued because its boundaries exclude some with the inclusion of others (i.e. communities of women, see Fraser, 2005; Shaw, 2008), giving place to people can be similarly . By this, I mean that relegating citizens to time-bound volunteer tasks requiring specific skills or sitting on committees that require having skills to function well in meetings can "put people in their place" and exclude active or heartfelt engagement. It is the effect, if not necessarily the intent. For Shaw (2004): "place structures social relations just as, conversely, social (and economic) relations structure the parameters of choice in relation to place" (p. 31). In other words, putting confining definitions on how citizens can engage limits the dimension or scope of their engagement while the "air we breathe" in the broader social and economic context its the possibilities we can even see or imagine for people's engagement.

On the other hand, space is where "people can assert, celebrate or contest their 'place' in world" (Shaw, 2004, p. 34). Community meetings, blurring of lines between participant and volunteer, informal discussions and citizens

moving into staff positions are all ways that spaces are created for citizen engagement in Organization O.

Another way to define and give importance to creating space (over place) is to see the creation of spaces as a means for organizing for social change. This concept comes from the work of Evans and Boyte (1986) and Fisher and Kling (1987). Lamenting the lack of ideology, at least, overt ideology, in organizing, Fisher and Kling echo Evan and Boyte's call for "free social spaces […] where people come to talk things over, ancient beliefs in inherited rights can be transmuted into collective action and demands for political autonomy" (Fisher & Kling, 1987, p. 33)[61].

Foley explores how to create spaces for citizens to discuss and develop a collective vision for social change. In his study of three neighbourhood houses in Australia, he highlights the importance of "liberated spaces in which women have opportunities to explore their experience and build women-centred, nurturing relationships" (1999, p. 63). This takes place through participation in house activities where the women gain skills, knowledge, self-awareness and an understanding of the complexity of interpersonal relationships. As well, they become clearer about their own values, others values and the role of conflict. More importantly, for the purpose of this case study, "They learn that wider contextual and structural factors shape what happens in the neighbourhood

[61] Just Associates (2006) have another way of looking at space, with: closed space (where decisions are made by an elite group); claimed space (room to negotiate); autonomous space (such as the World Social Forums); and invited spaces (where select people or groups are invited to participate in consultations with officials).

houses. Much of this learning is informal, incidental and embedded in other activities" (p. 63). This underlines the importance of informal (learning from experience) and incidental (learning while engaged in other activities) learning, embedded within organizations with explicit social justice values and when spaces are created for citizens to engage with organizations.

Senge (1990) details how this work can be fostered when he speaks about the difference between dialogue "to enter into genuine thinking together" (p. 10) versus discussion, which involves persuasion and having a "winner". The challenge is to create spaces for dialogue that lead to not only developing a collective vision, but also to undertaking actions that can define and challenge "the air we breathe".

The challenge is to create spaces in local organizations for this informal and incidental learning to take place through real dialogue with and among local citizens. While these types of spaces are not the primary factors of movement building (Fisher & Kling, 1987), they are one dimension that local organizations can provide toward supporting progressive social change.

In summary, core organizational features, such as the mission and working with a service and organizing model, can impede or implant more deeply the social justice work. The extent and/or scope depends on how central we make the social justice work. The "air we breathe" can be challenged within organizations via their internal core functioning. This can be done, in part, through keeping a social justice mission strong and central to the work and

through creating questioning and liberating spaces, not only places that encourage people to engage and struggle with the deeper issues. Local organizations can also challenge the air they breathe internally by remembering that services are a means to inform the work on social justice, not simply an end unto themselves.

Strategies for Social Justice Work

The first two sections of this chapter explored how the air we breathe influences the social justice work of community-based organizations and how community-based organizations can influence the air they breathe.

The last two sections of this chapter focus more specifically on themes that examine specific elements of how social justice work is carried out in local community-based organizations. This third section examines strategies for social justice work. The final one looks specifically at the role of leadership within local community-based social justice organizations.

Two points highlighted in the case study and relating to strategies for social justice work are now explored. First, study participants spoke about the fundamental importance of collaborating with others. The few examples given were almost exclusively those of several local coalitions. Why so few examples? And, of these, why mostly examples of local coalitions? Participants also spoke of the challenge of “winning” when winning back lost ground or re-taking gains that had evaporated, or maintaining rights, not social transformation, seemed to

be the only possible routes. What then, can we do to "win" issues? An examination of these two areas follow.

Collaborative Work

Case study participants said working collaboratively with others is one strategy to stay focused on social change work and increase chance of success. Yet, few examples of coalition, or other collaborative work, were provided . Coalition work was also spoken about as difficult because of the challenges of doing effective work given the need for long-term, permanent and skilled leadership, very clear and timely decision-making processes and tools for local organizations to use. Funding is required for these structures to be viable.

Others agree that working collaboratively is vital to enact social change (Chetkovich & Kunreuther, 2006; DeFilippis, Fisher & Shragge, 2006, 2010; Fisher & Shragge, 2000, 2002; Lamoureux, 2009; Smock, 2004; Sites, Chaskin & Parks, 2007). In fact, Shragge sees "alliance-building" as one of the four key traditions[62] of the community movement (2003, p. 136). He notes its fundamental significance for building power beyond the local in order to enact change. He also highlights the weakness of alliance-building becoming "an organization of organizations" that does not mobilize core constituencies. This weakness was discussed in the case studies.

Smock also sees working collaboratively as vital, reminding us of the limitations of a community-based approach because structural problems cannot

[62] The other three are: democracy, education and mobilization.

be solved or resolved at the local level. For her, to be successful at the local level, the work must "transcend its neighbourhood focus […] with the creation of (a) a supra-local infrastructure of well-networked organizations; and (b) an overarching ideological framework that challenges society's dominant economic and political arrangements" (Smock, 2004, p. 227). As noted in the case study, this requires a strong leadership skill set to hold together various organizations in a network with a shared overarching ideological framework that can find and then effectively express voice to challenge the air we breathe. This is not an easy task.

To be clear, it's not only up to local organizations working collaboratively to push for social change. In fact, these are not even the central places from which social change can emerge. It is essential that organized networks go beyond regrouping only local community organizations; with leadership, clear decision-making and a capacity to create space for analysis and collaborative action. Uniting community and social movement efforts are needed (DeFilippis, Fisher & Shragge, 2010). Informal groups, working at the margins of society, creating submerged networks, where the ideological foundation for the social movement can emerge, are needed (Smock, 2004). "Boundary-crossing" settings are, in addition, needed (Sites, Chaskin & Parks, 2007). These include opportunities to cross: social boundaries (immigrant and native-born or class boundaries); spatial/political boundaries (across neighbourhoods and/or cities or connecting the local work nationally); sectoral boundaries (i.e. housing and social welfare or labor and community) and scalar boundaries (for example: scaling up

successful work to more far-reaching venues creating connectives that bridge the local and extra-local). Social change is the responsibility of many, with local community organizations as one of many places from which to support the work for social justice.

However, Smock begins, as do I, with local community organizations. She sees them as one of the most effective (and realistic) starting points for movement development. Yet, one of the elements needed for them to be able to do their work is collaborative relationships with broader organizations. These currently appear to exist few and far between across the Canadian context. Moreover, Embuldeniya's (2001) finding that 57% of civil society leaders don't consider coalition or umbrella organizations in Canada to have the capacity to represent the interests of their members is disconcerting.

The surge in activism on global justice since the early 2000s (anti globalization) provides an example of the opportunity for social justice work collaboration between local and broader organizations. However, there was a noted void of discussion about this by participants in this case study. Just one participant remarked, with a tone of intrigue, how there are no concrete links between the local organizing work and the global justice movement. Although some study participants spoke about their global justice activism, they framed this as entirely separate from their paid or volunteer work in the local organization. Hwang (2001) and Martinez (2000) explore this specifically through the lens of cultural diversity, in both the Seattle and Quebec City anti globalization demonstrations. They identify an absence of educational work at

the local level; the barriers of time and cost to attend; the restrictions of work or childcare; and the dominance of “white college students protesting, and not the issues of working class people of color” (Hwang, 2001, p. 2) as factors contributing to the clear and visceral lack of more diverse participation. DiFilippis (2004) lends support to the analysis of Hwang and Martinez. His prime example is of the Kensington Welfare Rights Union organizing, which brought a large group of people to the 2000 anti-globalization rally in Washington, D.C. An education and mobilization campaign was set up to work specifically on participation in the rally.

The lack of links is also very apparent in Quebec, even though, (more than in the rest of Canada) a vast network of multi-textured connections among local community organizations and the broader organizations that represent their interests operates to bring educational programs to local organizations. While this vast network of collaborative structures can provide organizations with connections to broader social change work, many of these network organizations are quite focused on supporting their members (local community organizations) with knowledge and lobbying for organizational survival and development (i.e. knowing about funding sources, collaborating collectively to denounce government funding policy changes, etc. See Côte & Simard, 2010, p. 8). It is not apparent that these collaborative structures are being mobilized as effectively as they could be as a platform to work beyond supporting their members on issues of organizational survival to collaborating on social justice issues.

Also, healthy functioning of these networks takes time away from working at the local level. (See Chetkovich and Kunreuther, 2006, p.144 for a general discussion of this concern.) Moreover, most of these networks bring together staff, not citizens, highlighting Shragge's concern about difficulties in mobilizing citizens.

However, some examples of collaborative structures working for social change do exist. The World Women's March provides one example of local organizations coming together across social, spatial and sectoral boundaries, through existing tables, coalitions and regroupements in Quebec to work for social justice. Launched in Montreal in the late 1990s by the Fédération des femmes du Québec, this world movement has become an active voice for social justice at the provincial, pan-Canadian and international level. Their purpose is to "connect grass-roots groups and organizations working to eliminate the causes at the root of poverty and violence against women" (www.worldmarchofwomen.org, Introduction Pamphlet, retrieved June 29, 2009). Unfortunately, this represents one of the sparse number of examples of collaborative work for social justice that has successfully engaged citizens active in local community organizations on a more global basis.

The World (and local) Social Forum provides another example of a potential space for local organizations to come together across social, spatial and sectoral boundaries to work for social justice. Two Quebec Social Forums have been held, the first in 2007 and the second in 2009. It provides a "public space that is critical, participatory and inclusive. […] It is a space for meeting and

exchange between social movements. […] It is necessary to facilitate convergence of claims and strategies of resistance of social movements […] also an area dedicated to education" (Forum social québécois, 2009). With over 4,000 people participating in the 2009 Quebec Social Forum, it was a space for developing collaborative relationships. The challenge is to move the dialogue and exchange into a cohesive and collaborative action.

If, indeed, social movements are "collective challenges based on common purposes and social solidarities in sustained interactions with elites, opponents and authorities "(Tarrow, 1998, p. 4), then there is a role for local community-based organizations to be part of this work through participation in broader networks that bring out the voice of local citizens, through a shared ideology, in tandem with concrete demands to push for change. However, more collaborative structures are required. They need to be adequately funded. And skill development of the leadership is called for, if local organizations are to create and take their rightful space in social change work.

"Winning" Within the Current Context

When talking about strategy, case study participants discussed how they struggled with defining a "win" in social justice work. They spoke about the challenge of "winning" when winning back earlier gains that had been lost or improving the current system, without true social transformation, appear to offer the only possible routes of success within the air we breathe.

Others have raised similar questions about how to define a “win” or success. Whitmore and Wilson’s current research on nine Canadian social movement organizations (Colloque sur le renouvellement démocratique d’action et d’interventions sociales, 2008) identifies five ways that success is defined by national social change organizations. The discussion of this research in Chapter Three illustrates how only one of the measures of success (actual change in policies) begins to approach social change work. The other measures of success identified illustrate the impact of being influenced by identity politics (i.e. engaging people, changes in attitudes, raised consciousness, being seen as success) and focused on professionalization (organizational effectiveness). This provides, unfortunately, a particularly poignant example, on a national level, of how the air we breathe is so embedded within our organizations that we cannot imagine real, fundamental social transformation as a possibility.

Case study participants also spoke with frustration about the need to find new ways of working, of becoming more creative in strategy and tactical development in order to push for deeper, more profound wins. There was a sentiment that “we keep doing the same thing but somehow expecting different results”. Again, they are not alone in their frustration, and their expression of it. As an example, across the global justice movement a plethora of articles has criticized participants for using the same strategies over and over again (e.g. marches) but not developing or using other organizing techniques (particularly between major marches) in order to further the promulgation of demands

(DeFilippis, 2004; Featherstone, Henwood & Parenti, 2004; Hwang, 2001; Klein, 2002).

Jasper (1997) goes so far as to suggest that having “kookiness” involved in movements might provide “a crucial social role of gaining new perspectives and insights” (p, 223). He posits the possibility of research on this. Smith (2001, p. 13) pushes us to think about more “innovative repertoires”, including working on different scalar levels (i.e. transnational associations; alternative media sources; using “parallel” deliberations to counter official ones such as courts, commissions, and parallel conferences); and innovative use of electronic activism (e.g. Avaaz’s (and others’) recent experimentation with flash mobs. (See wwww.avaaz.com). More work is needed on understanding the relationship between kookiness and innovation and their role in social change work, all in an effort to achieve more “wins”.

One can certainly be skeptical about the possibility of new organizing strategies emerging from within local community organizations, given that this type of innovation usually emerges from informal groups working at the margins of society (Smock, 2004). However, if citizens truly own their space in organizations, who knows what might emerge?

In summary, local organizations are reminded that collaborative work is needed to create a stronger voice for collective social justice. There is a need for more networks in which local organizations can participate; congregate; analyze; develop a shared ideology; and above all implement action. Within the Quebec

context, formal structures for collaboration exist. The challenge is to more fully and consistently lever that structure for social change work, rather than for mostly supporting members with knowledge or lobbying for organizational survival and development.

As well, new and creative strategies and tactics need to be developed should concrete wins be registered in the fight for social justice. Working more in the political arena is one area not to be forgotten or neglected. This is the societal space, albeit far from a “level playing field”, where relationships of power can be challenged. Kookiness and innovation should also, consciously, be given space within strategizing for social change.

Leadership

This case study suggests that leadership grounded in the local community and in a social justice analysis perspective may be an element of how local community-based organizations can work for social justice. As active "owners" of Organization O, participants, volunteer leaders, board members and staff are the community, living the issues. This contributes to the symbiosis between the work and the community: "The community kind of dictates what needs to be done. The leadership comes out of the community" is how one board member describes it. Secondly, for both case study organizations, the leadership has strong social justice analysis skills, particularly among the staff.

Some literature supports the idea of hiring those who live the issues (Alcock, 2006; Brooks, 2005; Guberman, Lamoureux, Beeman, Fournier & Gervais, 2004). Much more literature supports the importance of leadership grounded in a social justice analysis perspective (Brooks, 2005; Chetkovich & Kunreuther, 2006; DeFilippis, Fisher & Shragge, 2009, 2010; Fraser, 2005; Parazelli, 2004). So, how does leadership become grounded in the local community? How does leadership become versed in social justice analysis? These are challenging questions within the current neoliberal context of "the air we breathe" and which we now examine.

Not many organizations require staff to come from the local community (as Organization A had, at least historically), although much feminist and some poverty literature certainly underlines the importance of those living with the issues providing the leadership at both the volunteer and staff levels (for examples: Alcock, 2006; Guberman et al, 2004). The challenge for many local community organizations is more often to find or establish ways for staff to become grounded in the community. Working closely with local citizens, “hanging out”, becoming involved in community activities, and systematic outreach and recruitment are all ways to help staff become grounded in the local reality. This requires organizational support and encouragement. Having staff “hanging out” or talking with citizens on a one-on-one basis needs to be seen and understood as part of staff responsibilities. In an increasingly professionalized environment, this may well prove challenging. As one community organizer in this case study said, and noted earlier: “I have a hard time finding the time to go walking the neighbourhood […] thinking about going out is good but, in our productivity, at the end of the week if I can’t really list anything I’ve done, I feel really shitty”.

However, when staff is grounded within the community, they can speak with more credibility; plan actions based on realities; and reflect the local community with outside networks. They have a better chance of success. The organizer quoted above is a good example. Since being interviewed, he has been able to connect with citizens concerned with issues of legal status for immigrants and refugees. Public actions, with citizen participation, have been organized. At the time of the interview, he felt (after less than a year on the job)

like a “new” staff person. Two years later, actions were being organized with strong local citizen involvement.

What might have transpired if a local, well-connected citizen with a basic commitment to social justice and good support from the organization had been hired instead? Why do organizations make the choice to invest in staff that need time to build community relations, rather than hiring people from the community that, possibly with some additional support on the social justice analysis side, can connect with and mobilize citizens more quickly? There are surely local citizens with good social justice analysis skills in most communities. Is this failing perhaps one result of the professionalization of the sector? These are some of the core questions which this research raises.

Having social justice values provides an important starting point in social change work (Brooks, 2005; Chetkovich & Kunreuther, 2006; Fraser, 2005; DeFilippis, Fisher & Shragge, 2009; Parazelli, 2004; Shaw, 2008). Whether it’s highlighting the “activist character” of staff and members in ACORN’s successful work (DeFilippis et al, 2009, p. 43) or identifying how the approach used in organizing is reflective of social justice values (Fraser, 2005), a multitude of authors underline the importance of leadership with a commitment to social justice and an analysis of how they see change occurring. In Organization O, the staff hiring process takes this into account. In other instances, however, this kind of thinking is actually actively discouraged. (See the discussion on Ilcan and Basok’s 2004 study in Chapter Two.)

Beyond hiring, providing learning and reflection opportunities offers another way to ensure leadership has a social justice analysis perspective (Conway, 2006; Foley,1999, 2004; Ife & Tesoriero, 2006; Lachapelle, 2007; Ravensbergen & VanderPlaat, 2009; Shaw, 2008; Shragge, 2003). There are many ways this can be accomplished. Network organizations can take on this role. Specifically, in relation to this case study, Quebec's broad network of organizations (regroupements, tables and coalitions) already provides places as well as spaces for organizations to work. Because of the structure, analysis can go beyond spatial, sectoral and scaler boundaries (Sites, Chaskin & Parks, 2007). However, taking time to reflect on issues from a social justice perspective appears to be low on the priority list for many of these networking organizations. Most often, meetings appear to focus on discussing aspects of the relationship with the funder.

Formal training can play a role in social justice analysis. There is a valid critique of these programs (Chetovich & Kunreuther, 2006) because they often focus on generic skills and/or on management functions, activities and approaches, rather than social justice analysis skills. However, when they work with social justice organizations to design the training and integrate service learning, they may prove more responsive to the needs of local organizations. Some institutions are already doing a little of this. Examples within Concordia University include the new Problem-Based Service Learning courses offered through the School of Extended Learning and the Graduate Diploma Program in Community Economic Development in The School of Community and Public

Affairs. These are places where what Foley (1999, p. 19) calls an “activist discourse” takes precedence over a “professional discourse” and where issues are looked at in relation to power and change, not only in the context of management and theories. However, these initiatives need to be ramped up if they are to meet the needs of more people working, or interested in working, within and for the community sector.

Lastly, informal and non-formal training can also play a role in providing social justice analysis opportunities. Informal training means engaging and learning with citizens. It calls for staff and senior volunteer leaders to take the time to create many different kinds of spaces for informal discussion and analysis. In Quebec, there are organizations that exist to support non-formal training (see footnote 58, page 190). However, many of these provide only sporadic opportunities. If “education is politics” (Shor & Freire, 1987, p. 46), then conscious training in social justice analysis is required. Opportunities for it need to be created.

When working for social justice from within a local community organization, there needs to be a conscious effort within the organization to hire people with social justice values and to access or create appropriate learning opportunities on a systematic basis to push a deeper analysis.

In conclusion, this chapter has explored elements for local community-based organizations to reflect on their social justice work. It has examined four

categories raised in the research. The final chapter presents six points about the social justice work of local community organizations that this research highlights.

Chapter Eight: Conclusions

This thesis has reported on what the literature and a case study research project say about the role of local community organizations in social justice work. While lessons learned from case study research are not intended for generalization (Yin, 2009), they can provide a source of knowledge that may be transferred to other situations. This chapter shares conclusions generated from this work. It begins by identifying some limitations of the study and questions for further exploration.

Limitations of This Study

There are several limitations to the findings of this case study of two local community organizations. First, it is limited because of the size of the study. It highlights realities and debates within these organizations but the findings cannot necessarily be generalized. It focuses on local community organizations and specifically two that work with a services and organizing model. Studying other types of community organizations (e.g. issue-based) and those working with different models (e.g. advocacy only, as Chetkovich & Kunreuther (2006) included in their study), would yield more robust results.

Moreover, these organizations do not reflect the reality of most local community organizations in Quebec. As Fisher (1999, 2001) and Mills (2010) remind us, history and context shape the very opportunities for working on social change. The work of these two organizations has greatly been shaped by the specific context of working in Quebec, existing for many years and working in English.

This study is also limited by the fact that it looks only at organizations that have illustrated my understanding of good practice. Literal replication works with a small sample but theoretical replication sampling (looking at organizations with contrasting results) could have identified more results.

Finally, this study is limited because the field is changing so rapidly. In the past few months one of the organizations highlighted in the literature review has ceased to operate. ACORN leaves us a legacy of good examples of working for social justice at the local level but is no longer a viable example of a leader in local organizing for social justice. As well, the relationship between the citizens' rights group and Organization O is weakening, even though the relationship was identified as important for the social justice work of both entities. However, none of these limitations take away from the findings related to my work with local organizations in the Quebec context. The frustrations I have been experiencing since the 1990s have been contextualized. I have been reminded of the fundamentals of working for social justice from a local level. Areas that I can focus on in my work as a facilitator of change in the community sector have been identified (see below).

Questions Left for Further Research

Much remains to be understood about the work of local community organizations and their role in society. Therefore, many questions are left to explore. Cataloging, documenting and defining the sector is of little interest to me. Although important, I am more interested in issues and debates that emerge in response to the political and social conjuncture in the work for progressive social change.

Coming out of this study and of specific interest to me are four areas of research related to local organizations and social justice work. The first is a question still left unanswered from this study. Is a social justice mission foundational to the work? The literature is not clear on this. Patsias' study (2006) and this one are too small to be conclusive. This is an important question to explore for my work with local organizations. If having a social justice mission is a key indicator of the ability of an organization to truly work for social justice, it becomes much easier to define the organizations I want to work with. It can help me refocus my practice. I'm hoping my ongoing reading will help me find answers to this question.

Another area of interest this study raises concerns the role of network organizations in social change work. How do successful networks do this work? (FRAPRU and L'R des centres des femmes come to mind.) How can this work be replicated? In what contexts do socially progressive networks form? I hope to

address these questions through my work with the Centre for Community Organizations as we are currently exploring how we can align the organization's work more closely with social movement work.

A third area of interest focuses on processes that help leadership have a social justice perspective on their work. How can we best support those working in local organizations to have a social justice analysis perspective? What is currently working well and why? What kind of training or reflection opportunities would work well in the Quebec context at this point in time? With the Reseau Albert St-Martin recently announcing it is "mothballing" its training activities, this question takes on more urgency.

A last major area of interest is very broad. It centers on how to confront a neoliberal context that is becoming more embedded in society and which local organizations are more entrenched in. How can organizations continue to withstand the influences of this context in their daily work? What do local organizations need to do differently? What is the role of the Reseau Québecois and other network organizations? What are the relationships with politics on one hand and informal, unstructured dissent on the other hand, that local organizations can experiment with to confront neoliberalism?

Conclusion

This thesis focused on the role of local community organizations in social justice work. It highlights six points. First, organizations need to be clear if they see their role as one of working for social justice. If so, clarifying how they define social justice (i.e. redistributive or transformative) and employing conscious strategies that they can evaluate, defend or change helps focus the work. This means accepting that social change work is conflictual, involves attempting to shift relationships of power, and is not easy or simple. Organizations need to engage in the struggle and put their mandate into practice.

Second, this thesis has underscored how fundamentally important it is for local organizations to be aware of how the broader context or "the air we breathe" impacts on social justice work. It shapes the opportunities for organizing. It shifts language to change the meaning of words (i.e. a "win") and to maintain a dominant discourse (i.e. clients and professional organizer). It puts organizations in a funding conundrum; fighting for core funding or considering working more from a volunteer base and acknowledging the covert influence of funders.

Third, part of social change work is to build the world as we would like to see it. This calls for creating truly alternative services and structures; not ones that replicate society as we know it. It calls for innovative ways of pushing for change (perhaps kookiness). It also calls for creating spaces (not defined places alone) for critical reflection from which to move to action. These spaces need to

be focused on the reality of citizens and involve citizens as equal, active participants and leaders in the work, not to relegate them to program volunteers, board or committee members alone. It means embedding the work in a social justice, not dominant society, perspective.

Fourth, services can inform social change work, giving organizations a credible platform from which to speak and a place from which to mobilize and organize for changes in the lived reality of citizens. Services need to be seen from this lens, not as an end unto themselves. Empowerment works best when it gets beyond the personal to the collective level. Doing the service work from this lens is under-used.

The fifth element this thesis has highlighted is that there is a need for broader structures to rally local organizations together under a shared understanding of the changes we seek. Progressive social change cannot happen without connections among people and organizations across social, spatial/political, sector and scalar settings. Local organizations need to more fully take the space they occupy in social movements by contributing to and participating in broader structures that advocate for change.

Finally, leadership that is grounded in local realities and has a social justice analysis lens on the work must be fostered. Conscious informal training from a social justice values-based perspective, regular non formal training, and pushing for more appropriate formal training opportunities is vital if local community organizations are to have a role in social change work.

These elements are inter-dependent and none of them alone will create progressive social change. Forces much larger than local organizations are at play. However, these are areas where this case study has highlighted roles local community organizations can take in progressive social change if they want to own their space in helping bring about social justice.

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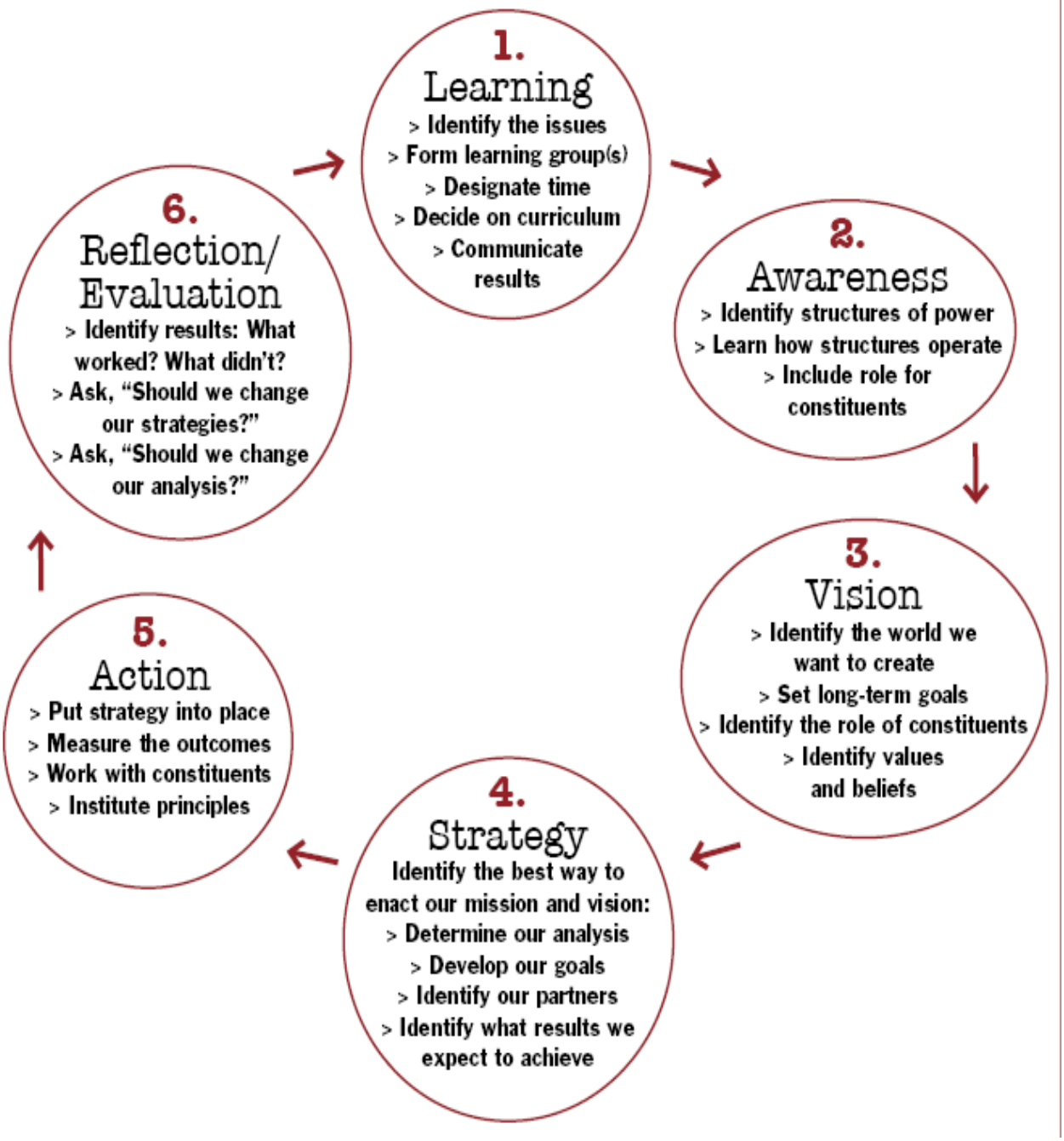
Appendices

APPENDIX A: Models of Community Practice

Rothman (1974)	Social Planning	Community development		Social Action
Fisher (1994)	Reactionary	Conservation	Liberal	Radical
Briskin (1991)		Mainstream		Disengagement
Fraser (2005)	Anti-communitiarianism	Technical-functionalist communitarianism	Progressive empowerment	Activist/radical
Shaw (2008)		Social inclusion		Transformational
	CHARITY	**SERVICES**	**DEVELOPMENT**	**SOCIAL CHANGE**

Compiled by Frances Ravensbergen, 2009

APPENDIX B: Building the Movement's Transformation Process



(www.buildingthemovement project.org/new/entry/33. Downloaded July 1, 2009).

A process guide exists to help organizations implement the steps. As well, staff provides workshops on the process to groups (in Canada as well as the U.S.).

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GUIDE

"The role of community-based organizations in social justice work."

- Who they are, signing consent form, taping OK?, Ready to interview…….

- **Tell me about a bit about the issue(s) you have worked on**……
  - the reasons for choosing this issue
  - how did you (as an org) come to working on this?
  - how do you define 'social justice work'?

- **Socio-political context/ your analysis** of it

- **Networks /coalitions**: What other groups you have worked with over the years and what that has been like?

- **Leaders and their skills**: How has the thinking/ strategizing happened? With who? (**Lobbying** skills? Needed? Developed? How?)

- **Strategy formulation**: How was the strategy formulated? By who? How did it evolve?

- How did **funders and funding** impact on the work? Role?

- Tell me about your **mobilization and education** work

- **Org structure**: How has the org structured itself to do this work? Your thoughts on the effectiveness of this

- Role/ use of **media**?

- **What else** would be good for me to know about the work?

- **Who else** should I interview?

- THANK YOU!

APPENDIX D: Summary Protocol Form for Ethics Approval

Concordia UNIVERSITY

Summary Protocol Form

- ***For faculty and staff research:*** *Submit to the University Human Research Ethics Committee (UHREC), c/o the Office of Research, GM 1000.*
- ***For graduate or undergraduate research:***
  - *For projects covered under a faculty member's previously approved SPF, no new SPF is required.*
  - *For new projects which are supported by external (e.g. Tri-council) or internal (e.g. CASA or FRDP) funds, the supervising faculty member must submit a new SPF on behalf of the student to the UHREC, c/o the Office of Research, GM 1000.*
  - *For new projects which are NOT supported by external (e.g. Tri-council) or internal (e.g. CASA or FRDP) funds, the student must submit a new SPF to the relevant departmental or faculty ethics sub-committee.*

For more information on the above, see http://oor.concordia.ca/REC/human_research.shtml.
If using the MS Word form, please tab between fields (do not use the enter key) and click on check boxes.
If not using the MS Word form, please TYPE your responses and submit on a separate sheet.

Date: January 16, 2007

What type of review do you recommend that this form receive? Expedited ☒ or Full ☐

Part One: Basic Information

1. Names of Researchers:

Principal Investigator: Frances Ravensbergen

Department/Program: Doctoral Student (S.I.P.)

Office address:

Telephone number: 450-247-2433 E-mail address: francesr@sympatico.ca

Names and details for all other researchers involved (e.g., co-investigators, collaborators, research associates, research assistants, supervisors – please specify role):

None

2. Title of Research Project:

"How do community organizations work on social justice issues?"

3. Granting Agency, Grant Number and Title OR Contractor and Contract Title (if applic.):

Ph.D. thesis.

4. Brief Description of Research:
For funded research, please include one-page summary; otherwise, include a brief overall description. Include a statement of the benefits likely to be derived from project. You can address these questions by including the summary page from the grant proposal.

I will interview staff and volunteers in community organizations to identify themes on how members and staff in community organizations accomplish their social justice work. The interviews will be open-ended, soliciting the 'story of their social justice work' as a narrative. I will raise questions about themes I have previously identified within the story telling process.

Themes that will be explored include:
- How they define their social justice work.
- How deeply-rooted the social justice work is in the organization.
-What, if any, links exist with other like-minded work and how they links are enacted.
-How the organization carries out its social analysis and education/ mobilization work.
-How funding shapes the social justice work.

The interviews will be supplemented with secondary data from observation of the organization 'at work', a document review, a literature review and personal note keeping.

Benefits likely to be derived from the project

Practitioners in community-based organizations will benefit from this research. I will offer to return to the organizations that participated to discuss the results of my research. Up on completion of my doctorate, I will continue working as a teacher and consultant, promoting the role community organizations can play in social justice work. As well, I would like to write on this subject, addressing the writing to people active in the field.

5. Scholarly Review of Proposed Research:
Complete the Scholarly Review Form (SRF) if you are conducting non-funded or contract bio-medical research or any other non-funded or contract research involving more than minimal levels of risk.

Not applicable.

Part Two: Research Participants

1. Sample of Persons to be Studied:

Consenting adults. Some will be volunteers in community organizations, some will be staff. All will have experience working with community organizations.

2. Method of Recruitment of Participants:

An invitation to participate will be issued to the board and staff of organizations identified through a purposeful snowball approach.

The organizations chosen for the study will meet the following critiera: a) Responds to the definition of 'local community-based organization' (see below), b) Positions itself as doing social justice work, c) Accessible for me to visit within my time frame.

The individuals chosen for the interviews will be decided by myself based on their level of involvement with the organization's social justice work.

'Local community-based organization': "Structured groups whose promary objectives are not-for-profit and who act as autonomous vehicles for community, social, economic and environmental development in collaboration with others. They function in a participatory, democratic manner seeking to provide responses to and advocate on behalf of the interests if their primary stakeholders and/or promote social change."

3. Treatment of Participants in the Course of the Research:
A brief summary of procedure, as well an account of the training of researchers/assistants.

- The organization will receive information about the research and will contact me if they are interested in participating.
- Interviewees meeting the criteria will receive a confirmation email.
- I will telephone the interviewees chosen to confirm the interview date, share with them the scope of the questions (to help them prepare) and to answer any questions they have.
- The interviews will take place in a private room (at the organization or elsewhere if interviewees prefer).
- Participants will be asked to sign a written consent form before the interview begins. (See Appendix A.)

There are no assistants involved in this project.

Part Three: Ethical Concerns
Indicate briefly how research plan deals with the following potential ethical concerns:

1. Informed Consent:
   Written consent form or written draft of oral protocols must be attached; see instructions and sample.

   This project is seen as minimal risk.
   The written consent form is appended.

2. Deception:
   The researcher must both describe the nature of any deception and provide a rationale regarding why it must be used to address the research question – i.e., is it absolutely necessary for the design? Deception may include the following: deliberate presentation of false information; suppression of material information; selection of information designed to mislead; and selective disclosure.

   Not applicable.

3. Freedom to Discontinue:

   The consent form that participants will be asked to sign at the beginning of the interview states that their participation is voluntary. They will also be reminded that they can end the interview at any time.

4. Assessment of Risks to Subjects' Physical Wellbeing, Psychological Welfare, and/or Reputation:
   This includes low-level risk or any form of discomfort resulting from the research procedure and how it will be dealt with. When it is called for, you should indicate arrangements that have been made to ascertain that subjects are in "healthy" enough condition to undergo the intended research procedures. You should be able to indicate clearly the kinds of risks that may be involved and the action to be taken if someone is unexpectedly put at risk as part of the research efforts.

   Not applicable.

5. Protecting and/or Addressing Participant "At Risk" Situations:

   This project is seen to be of minimal risk to participants.

6. Post-Research Explanation and/or Debriefing:

   Not applicable.

7. Confidentiality of Results:

I will be the only one who has access to the raw data that identifies who said what. In public data any identifying information will be altered to protect confidentiality. Pseudonyms will be used for the names of participants and organizations. The mission of the organization or the location of its work may be altered to protect identities.

8. Data Handling:

Please describe the path of your data from collection to storage to its eventual destruction/disposal. Include specific details on data handling, data storage (format and location), who will have access, and disposal/destruction method.

Audio-taped and transcribed interviews will be kept at my home office in a locked filing cabinet for a maximum of five years or upon completion of my doctoral project, whichever comes first. The data will then be destroyed.

9. Other Comments:
Bearing in mind the ethical guidelines of your academic and/or professional association, please comment on any other ethical concerns which may arise in the course of this research (e.g., responsibility to subjects beyond the purposes of this study).

None.

Signature of Principal Investigator: _____

Date: **January 2007**

Appendix A- CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

Study: The social justice work of community-based organizations.

Researcher: Frances Ravensbergen, Doctoral candidate
Special Individualized Program (S.I.P.), Concordia University

I agree to participate in the study being conducted by Frances Ravensbergen.

The focus of the study is to explore how community-based organizations work on social justice issues. The study is being undertaken as partial requirement of a S.I.P. doctoral program. Dr Eric Shragge, School of Community and Public Affairs, Concordia University is the principal faculty advisor.

I have made this decision to participate based on the information I have received from a written invitation and from a telephone conversation on _____. I have had the opportunity to be informed about details I wanted about the study.

As a participant in this study, I realize that I will be participating in an audio-taped interview that will take approximately 1.5 hours. My participation is completely voluntary. I understand that I may withdraw my consent at any time during the process. I understand that all information I provide will not identify me or the organization specifically in any verbal or written presentation of the data or any publication which may result from the study.

I understand that the audio-tape will be destroyed once the doctoral program is completed or after five years, whichever comes first. I also understand that the researcher will keep the audio-tape and a written transcript of the interview in a filing cabinet with a lock in her home office and that only she and her academic advisor will have access to the data.

I understand that public reports may include quotations of comments I made during my participation in this research project. However, my identity and the identify of the organization I am speaking about will be kept anonymous. I give consent for my personal quotations to be used under these conditions.

I understand that this project has received ethics clearance through Concordia University and that I may contact the Ethics office (514) 848-2424 with concerns or questions about my participation in this study.

Participant's Name:_____

Participant's Signature:_____
Date: _____
I am interested in hearing more about this research project as it progresses.
E-mail address:
Mailing address: