

ORGANIZING IN CRISIS:

A curriculum for community organizers



CREDITS

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Editors: Tashy Endres, Steve Hughes, and Marina Tota

Authors: Anda Serban, Bendegúz Tikász, Dagmara Kubuk, Iwona Nowak, Marina Tota, Mónika Bálint, Nick Graham, Nikola Djordjevic, Oana Preda, Sam Corbin, Sasha Josette, Steve Hughes, and Tashy Endres.

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Cover Image: Community Organiser Adela Matulayová from the Center for Community Organizing in Slovakia, serving as first responder in the Roma community Slovenská Ľupča at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. Image credit: Center for Community Organizing.

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INTRODUCTION

WHY ORGANIZING IN CRISIS?



Crises can change the world – for better or for worse. They can change us personally. They can profoundly shift the way we look at old problems. They can shift power relations in our communities in the blink of an eye. Those on top may find themselves knocked from their positions of power. New people and new ideas may unexpectedly emerge to provide leadership within society.

Crises are inevitable. This is especially true in the times we are living. We face a climate crisis, war, racist state violence. Only the most privileged can side-step a crisis, and sometimes even they are not immune. Therefore, as organizers we must be prepared for crisis moments. If we are not prepared, someone else will be, and their plan for shaping our communities may be very different from our own.

This curriculum offers a guide for organizers, activists and educators who work with communities affected by crises. It includes frameworks, tools, practices, and case studies to understand, prepare and develop a sense of agency so that we can respond effectively to moments of crisis.

The role of crisis in social and political change

Historically, movements for social change have made huge gains and achieved wins in the face of crises. But these windows of opportunity are not open for organizers alone. We have seen dictators and authoritarian movements consolidate power during crises, using them to legitimize crackdowns and oppression. Crises open up opportunities that we can take advantage of – or not – and it's up to us how ready we are to respond to them with agency, purpose, and strategy.

The writer and political analyst, Naomi Klein, famously coined the term "shock doctrine" when she critically examined the spread of "disaster capitalism" – or the application of neoliberal policy in the wake of natural disasters or other major societal disruptions. Proponents of this free market orthodoxy viewed crisis moments as opportunities to advance a governing philosophy (neoliberalism) that would be unimaginable to the population in normal times.

Using an approach they referred to as "shock therapy," neoliberal thinkers like Milton Friedman advocated for seizing on crisis moments to coerce acceptance of a new way of ordering social relations. In the case of the neoliberal project, this always resulted in a greater concentration of wealth and power in the hands of the few, at the expense of the many.

“Only a crisis - actual or perceived - produces real change. When that crisis occurs, the actions that are taken depend on the ideas that are lying around. That, I believe, is our basic function: to develop alternatives to existing policies, to keep them alive and available until the politically impossible becomes the politically inevitable.”

Milton Friedman, key architect of neoliberalism

On the other side of the coin, author Arundhati Roy, when reflecting on the Covid crisis, referred to the "pandemic as a portal." She addressed the ways in which other pandemics of ages past had led to major social advances.

“Whatever it is, coronavirus has made the mighty kneel and brought the world to a halt like nothing else could. Our minds are still racing back and forth, longing for a return to “normality”, trying to stitch our future to our past and refusing to acknowledge the rupture. But the rupture exists. And in the midst of this terrible despair, it offers us a chance to rethink the doomsday machine we have built for ourselves. Nothing could be worse than a return to normality.”

Arundhati Roy

Crises can be moments when our organizing plans are thrown out the window, groups fall apart, and communities become paralyzed with fear and anxiety. Or, they can be opportunities to create large scale change. Our readiness to step into moments of crisis depends on our preparation and our strategic orientation. Organizers who want to challenge divisive discourses that feed on fear to promote racism, neoliberal politics, authoritarianism, warfare, and oppression must understand and prepare for the crises to come if we want to build a more just and sustainable world.

This curriculum offers ten strategic orientations that organizers can use to prepare and respond to crises to build social resilience, agency and power of communities.

The European Community Organizing Network's work on organizing in crisis

The European Community Organizing Network (ECON) started focusing on organizing in crisis in 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic. The world was in a state of disorientation and disruption, and organizers in the ECON network were struggling to find a way forward in the chaos. ECON hosted strategic sessions with its members and partners to reflect on how to respond to the pandemic, and to moments of crisis in general.

In these sessions, documented in the publication *The European Organizing Movement Responds to Crisis* (Hughes, 2020), ECON played the role of holding space for organizers from member organizations who were serving as frontline workers, to help them process their emotions, to problem-solve challenges and to get support on how to respond in their organizing work. In those sessions ECON members shared stories of how their community organizing initiatives in different countries had been affected by Covid-19, been put on hold, and shifted online. They inspired each other to respond in different ways and to keep supporting their communities despite the radically different circumstances.

Among the reflections from those conversations, one organizer summed it up very clearly: "if we don't show up for our people now, we may as well not bother showing up for them ever". This reflection captures well why it is important to organize in moments of crisis. But the question is how? And the organizers who gathered during those sessions during the early pandemic raised other questions as well:

- How do we respond with concrete actions in a moment of crisis?
- How do we adjust our original organizing plans during a crisis?
- How do we make visible affected people in moments of crisis?
- How do we deal with trauma, emotional distress, and grief during crises?
- How do we use moments of crisis to strengthen collaborations and grow our organization?
- What demands can we make from government institutions during a crisis?
- How do we communicate about crises and influence narratives?
- How do we engage people in alternative ways of organizing during crisis? (e.g., online)

ECON continued building on those conversations and facilitated various workshops on organizing in crisis both online and offline at different events with ECON members and partners. Over time, the idea of elaborating further the frameworks incorporating the lessons learned and feedback gathered along the way inspired the development of a curriculum on organizing in crisis.

This curriculum is the result of deepening conversations and collaborations with ECON members, organizations and partners. We collected frameworks, practices and tools that could be useful for organizers and educators who want to develop and strengthen their capacity to organize communities in times of crisis.



Figure: Fire Drill Fridays, Washington, 2019 (Source: Ted Eytan, CC BY-SA 2.0)



CHAPTER 1

Strategic Orientations to Crisis

Moments of crisis are times of great disruption. Knowing what to do in these moments can be the difference between victory and defeat.

Strategic Orientations to crisis

The content is built around a core framework of “strategic orientations to crisis”. These orientations to crisis are rooted in the idea that we can take nothing for granted. The good or bad that emerges from a moment of crisis flows directly from the degree to which we are prepared to meet the moment with strategic clarity and tactical flexibility.

The material for this framework is based on a publication by the Grassroots Power Project called *Stepping into the Moment: The Coronavirus Crisis as an Opening for Transformative Change*. The materials were adapted and expanded by the authors and editors of this curriculum and informed a set of modules covering the following strategic orientations to crisis:



1. BE PREPARED:

We can only take advantage of crises in this way if we prepare ourselves ahead of time.

2. BE NIMBLE:

We need to prepare our organizations to be nimble, or agile, so that we’re ready to change the way that we’re working when the crisis hits.

3. CENTER THE MOST AFFECTED:

To center those on the frontlines of a crisis, we need to listen, support and build structures of accountability that can last beyond an emergency.

4. CARE:

When most basic needs are under threat and pressures rise, we need to practice self- and mutual care to be able to act.

5. BUILD POWER:

During moments of crisis, our organizations can grow much more rapidly than in normal times.

6. BUILD A “BIGGER WE”:

During moments of crisis, we can unite with unlikely allies, and we can lead broader sections of society than in normal times.

7. MAKE MEANING:

During moments of crisis, it is possible to change the narrative in a deep way.

8. GO BOLD:

During moments of crisis, it is more possible to advance bold structural reform.

9. EXTEND THE TIME HORIZON:

Act quickly, but also play the long game – a crisis of legitimacy for those currently in power may not be immediate.

Overview

This curriculum aims to develop the capacity of organizers and adult educators to organize communities in times of crisis online and offline and to take actions at national and transnational level. The overall learning aims of this curriculum are that participants develop the ability to:

- Understand crisis as a danger & opportunity.
- Recognize their own agency in relation to moments of crisis.
- Be proactive around crisis preparation for its own sake, and because it is a tool for building relationships and achieving our organizing and political goals.
- Be prepared to recognize the strategic decisions we are called to make in times of crisis.

To address these aims, we developed a modular curriculum with soft and digital competences adaptable for various contexts and translated in different languages.

The curriculum development process spanned the time between 2022 and 2023 and was done as a collaboration among the project partners. We formed a curriculum development team with representatives of each partner organization which met regularly over that period. The team, convened by the European Community Organizing Network (ECON), conducted a learning needs assessment with civil society organizations across Europe and members of ECON, analyzed the learning needs, researched existing learning resources on the topics, and developed the learning aims, objectives, outline, modules, case studies and learning activities. Parts of the curriculum were also developed in consultation with external partners. Sam Corbin, Tashy Endres, and Steve Hughes developed the overall concept and training flow and drew from the expertise and knowledge of the Movement Netlab, the Center for Transformative Organizing and the Grassroots Power Project.

In the following chapters we provide suggested learning content, curriculum flows, case studies, and learning activities.

Finally, the curriculum also includes a chapter on **Digital Organizing** and how to practice the strategic orientations to crisis using digital organizing strategies, tools and platforms to strengthen preparedness and response when organizing in crisis.

Building a container for learning about crisis

Crisis impact us – on many levels. At their worst, a crisis can diminish our livelihoods, take away loved ones, shake the ground of what we hold as true, crush our dreams for the future and traumatize us.

And crises often impact us in different ways depending on our positions in intersecting power relationships along lines of class, race, gender, (dis-)abilities etc. To make space for all of the ways that crisis affects us, training on this topic should start with rooting learning in the experiences of participants. Many of us have experienced crises first-hand and store those memories in our minds, bodies and nervous systems, as well as in our default reactions to challenging situations. When talking and reflecting on crises, some of these things might come up for participants. So it is crucial to take time to build a learning container and relationships with each other – and that this container is both trauma-informed as well as power-sensitive.

The facilitators must be trained to create such a space to hold the participants when facing related difficulties, and need to be able to recognize when additional support is needed outside of a training session. Co-creating such a trauma-informed, power-sensitive learning container is seeded in the first part of the training, but it is also a continuous focus and responsibility for the facilitators throughout the whole training and in the follow-up.

Pedagogical approach

The course will use a critical pedagogy to enable learners to examine power structures and systems of inequality when organizing in crisis and develop the consciousness and agency to organize for systemic change. The course will combine frameworks, tools, practices, case studies and learning activities in a participatory and experiential learning process. The learning methods used for this curriculum include scenarios of moments of crisis designed to spur reflection and develop strategic orientations to crisis. It also includes case studies from real organizing campaigns across Europe drawing from the experience of project partners; and additional learning activities that could be used to develop alternative training flows.

When training people on organizing in crisis, it is important to acknowledge that discussing crises can surface existing traumas in people. Some parts of this training can only be run responsibly by experienced facilitators who are trained in trauma-informed facilitation, and all of it requires a thorough understanding of interlocking systems of oppression that might play out in diverse ways in moments of crisis and in training situations.

In this context it is crucial to make clear to participants that all engagement is voluntary, to create an atmosphere of openness, care and to encourage self-care. It is key to facilitate the training in ways that avoid potentially triggering aspects and allow participants to decide, as much as possible, where they want to take the exercises.

Working with scenarios, instead of the immediate reality of the participants, can reduce the chances of, but not fully avoid the possibilities of triggers. That is why a very experienced team of facilitators and organizers is needed to co-create the learning container.

In each session we integrate simple exercises to stabilize the nervous system. In this way, participants build a tool-kit of practical supports to use in overwhelming situations which will aid them to respond strategically to crisis moments, rather than to react from a sense of overwhelm. We also encourage facilitators to include uplifting elements like songs and rituals that are suitable from the cultural context of the participants, because especially in times of crisis, it is important to lift the spirits and set familiar anchors of nourishment and hope.

Working with scenarios

You will find throughout this curriculum case studies of real European organizing campaigns undertaken in different kinds of crisis environments. These case studies are both specific to a particular regional context and generally helpful illustrative examples of key points in the curriculum. In some cases these case studies are woven into the main curriculum flow, but even when that is not the case, these case studies should be viewed as supplemental materials and can be shared with training participants.

The main learning flow outlined in the chapters of this booklet relies on a scenario-based game that should be built around a fictitious crisis scenario linked to the strategic orientations to crisis outlined here. We decided to work with a scenario-based and gamified group-learning format because it allows participants to make as many or few connections between the fictional story and their own experiences as is suitable for their learning. It also creates collective reference points and situations that can be dealt with throughout the training, thus building the agency of the training group. linked to the strategic orientations to crisis which offers participants experiential learning opportunities in relation to key frameworks and tools.

It is important to understand that scenarios that will work for this training need to be both attuned to the cultural specificities of the participants and encoded with the core organizing principles that are embedded in this training flow. Therefore, it is impossible to provide a “one-size-fits-all” scenario for this training format. Rather, these scenarios need to be created by experienced trainers who both understand the cultural context of the participants as well as the craft of organizing. In our experience, this needs to be done well in advance of the training, in consultation with leaders from the group. It is not a process that should be taken lightly or done ten minutes before

the training starts! ECON has developed a lot of experience in the do’s and don’ts of designing these gamified scenarios and is happy to assist groups who are interested to develop this material for their own training.

Learning aims

- By the end of the module, participants will be able to:
- Be introduced to the strategic orientations to crisis framework
- Get to know one another and develop a sense of trust.
- Be oriented to the course flow and to core concepts underlying the course including that of care in crisis
- Be introduced to the crisis scenario game that will be part of the whole course

Preparation and materials

- Written out agenda for whole training
- Cultural grounding piece (i.e. a song, ritual, guided meditation etc.) that brings people into the space.
- Flipcharts, post-its, markers

Learning flow

1. **Introduction:** Crises can be very unsettling times. In order for us to get settled into this space, and also to practice developing the grounded connection that we need to weather crises, we need to be intentional about building connection and community. Therefore, we are going to practice that right now.
2. **Get to know each other:** Participants are asked to introduce themselves with their name, pronouns, to describe a crisis that has affected your organizing or life, and their accessibility needs. Also the facilitators introduce themselves.
3. **Overview of the course:** Participants are presented with an overview of the overall course (Agenda, methodologies, game Overview).
4. **Framing:** Organizing this curriculum around nine “strategic orientations to crisis” is inspired by the framework Stepping into the Moment created by the Grassroots Power Project. We adapted it to include the strategic orientations, namely Care, Centering the Most Affected, and Digital Organizing. Another framework we will use in this course is that of Just Recovery vs. Disaster Capitalism. This is a framework from Movement Generation which shows that in a moment of crisis we need to build towards a recovery based on social and ecological justice rather than allowing the powers that be to profit from disasters, rooted in core principles: creating **root cause remedies**, practicing **revolutionary self-governance**, asserting **rights-based organizing**, demanding **reparations**, and advancing **ecological restoration for resilience**.
5. **Questions and closing**



CHAPTER 2

Preparing to Crisis

Some of the best preparation is already in good organizing.

Overview

This chapter focuses on learning about organizing in crises and developing the capacity to prepare for moments of crisis. When one has already been organizing in communities long before a moment of crisis, there are already established relationships and trust with community members. There are already groups of local leaders who regularly meet and act collectively, as well as alliances with other organizations and groups. There is existing infrastructure for activities and channels for communication. And there are shared experiences of engaging with government authorities to improve rights and services for the community. So preparing by doing good organizing work in communities provides a solid base and preparation for organizing those same communities when a crisis hits.

Learning aims

By the end of the modules, participants will be able to:

- Describe organizing and outline the stages of the organizing cycle
- Identify organizing practices we can adopt to “be prepared” in moments of crisis
- Practice “being prepared” in a crisis scenario game

Preparation and materials

- Flipcharts representing the following: Organizing Cycle
- Flipchart for harvesting debrief answers
- Written crisis scenario

Learning flow

1. **Introduction:** Introduce the aims of the sessions and that in order to understand what we meant by “Organizing” in “Crisis” we would like for the group to be on the same page on what is organizing. Ask participants to reflect individually on what is organizing in their context and share in plenary. Gather ideas from participants on a flipchart and link them to the presentation.

2. **Presentation on organizing:** Present a general definition of organizing with an example from the context.

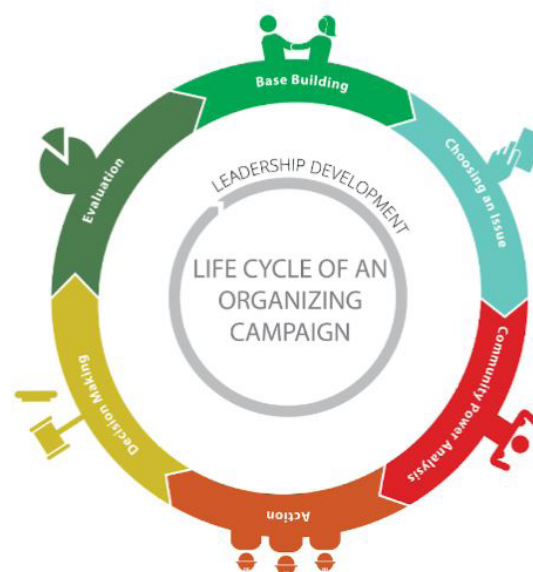
Strategic orientations

→ **BE PREPARED:**

We can only take advantage of crises in this way if we prepare ourselves ahead of time.



Give an overview of the different stages of a typical organizing process through the “Organizing Cycle”. Link it to the crisis by pointing out that the organizing cycle already takes big steps to prepare communities for crises. It builds trust, relationships, networks and infrastructure which are the basis for community agency to act quickly in crises.



The organizing cycle

Source: Center for Urban and Regional Affairs, University of Minnesota
<https://prezi.com/qwvqxvadaqpc/life-cycle-of-an-organizing-campaign/>

3. **Case study:** Share the case study from Romania (provided below) and allow participants a few minutes to read it together or in pairs. Then ask the group to identify what parts of the organizing cycle they see in the story.

4. **Warm-up game – Increasing the pressure:** Point out that in moments of crisis events can accelerate quickly, so being prepared for how that feels is part of effectively responding to crisis moments as an organizer. Use an experiential exercise that simulates a crisis dynamic and how it plays out in a group setting.

This may be achieved by adding time constraints or other factors that make the exercise more challenging and stressful.

Participants are asked to reflect on how they show up in moments of crisis and what this can tell them about preparing for crises to come.

5. **Summing up – Be prepared:** Participants reflect on the game and build a list of the things they could do to be prepared for such a pressure situation in the future. Link the brainstorm to the first strategic orientation to the crisis “Be prepared”. As organizers, we need to ask ourselves what will we do in the next moment of crisis? What about our work prepares us for these moments already? What will we have to do differently, or even more conscientiously, when a crisis strikes? The things we do to prepare for a crisis now will go a long way to determining how it plays out in our communities.

6. **Grounding exercise:** A trauma-informed guided exercise to help participants develop situational awareness.

7. **Scenario – Be prepared:** Participants are introduced to a role-play scenario tailored to their situation. Small groups of participants each play an organizing group in a fictional setting and are asked to make choices on how to respond to challenges. Using the takeaways from the debrief of the warm-up game (ie. communicate, know each other, have a plan, etc.), how could your group prepare for a crisis in this scenario? The small groups discuss their choices. The facilitators share the outcomes of their choices in the scenario and debrief key lessons. The best way to be prepared is to already be organizing in a community. Building trust in a crisis means showing up for people in ways that the immediate situation demands.

Case study from Romania

Good organizing makes communities prepared and responsive in times of crisis



Background

In 2022 when Russia invaded Ukraine, tens of thousands of refugees crossed the border from Ukraine to Romania in the city of Rădăuți. Rădăuți is a town of 23,822 inhabitants (Census 2011) in the northern part of Romania, 30 km from the Ukrainian border. In this moment of unexpected crisis, there was a surge of solidarity and several people, NGOs, and local authorities wanted to take action to support the refugees. But the efforts were totally unorganized. In this context a Romanian organization, Rădăuțiul Civic Association, was able to build on existing relationships and organizing capacity to coordinate a response to the crisis.

Process

The Rădăuțiul Civic Association was prepared to respond effectively to the crisis because it has been practicing community organizing with the communities in Rădăuți for a long time.

Since 2016, when the organization was formed to improve the living conditions in the city, it had been using community organizing to build relationships within the community. Knowing the issues faced by community members, facilitating community talks, cutting organizing issues, identifying solutions, and coordinating collective actions and campaigns, facilitating dialogues and communication channels with local authorities were all part of the organization's day-to-day work already. It had a group of volunteers and knew their skills and availability, a network of NGOs they collaborated with, and a practice of meeting regularly with the local groups and creating opportunities for community members to engage. It had built trust with the community and a track record of resolving local issues and winning campaigns.

Outcomes

- Organize 50 volunteers as first responders with a team of coordinators willing to coordinate logistics, fundraising, and support activities of the crisis response.
- Mobilize 250 individual donors and the community at the border to respond to the crisis and support the refugees.
- Collaborate with other NGOs to establish procedures that make supporting refugees more effective.
- Engage with local authorities on the issue by making their voice heard, confront them, collaborate with them, and hold them accountable.
- Engage the community to respond in solidarity with refugees.

Organizing lessons

- It's easier to organize in times of crisis if you already have the practice of organizing. People already know change is possible.
- It's easier to organize the community in times of crisis if the community already knows and trusts your intentions. Building trust and transparency is key to organizing in crisis.
- It's easier to make the authorities listen to your voice in times of crisis if you already made your voice loud. Authorities usually trust NGOs in moments of crisis.
- It's easier to coordinate volunteers during a crisis if you already have a volunteer group and if you know your community, their skills, and their interests. The right people, in the right place.
- This case shows the importance of organizing communities as a long-term process of building power before a crisis hits in order to be prepared and more effective when crises happen.

References

www.radautiulcivic.ro/category/rapoarte-de-activitate/

www.radautiulcivic.ro/category/domenii-de-activitate/social-educational/fond-solidaritate/





CHAPTER 3

Centering the most affected in crisis

A Just Recovery requires listening to the frontline. What you choose to do, is both a short-term and long-term organizing decision.

Overview

An organizer begins their work by asking “who are my people?” This chapter is about being clear who our people are in a crisis. But crisis situations are not always cut and dry, and the definition of “our people” can grow and it can change quickly in periods of great disruption. To succeed, an organizer must maintain strategic clarity while also being light on their feet. They must be willing to work with lots of people – because a crisis can affect communities indiscriminately, while maintaining a presence of mind about who is truly on the frontline and how they need to be positioned to play a leading role in the recovery.

Learning aims

By the end of the modules, participants will be able to:

- Begin to apply trauma-informed care methods that can be used in moments of crisis.
- Use frameworks that concretize the idea of identifying the “frontline” in a crisis.
- Apply the framework in terms of knowing “what to do” to respond effectively to the needs of frontline communities in moments of crisis.

Preparation and materials

- Written crisis scenario
- Flipchart for harvesting debrief answers
- Flipchart paper to draw the conceptual map of the Shocks, Slides and Shifts

Learning flow

1. **Welcome and introduction:** Participants check their inner weather and name accessibility needs, reflect on the course so far. Introduction to the idea of Just Recovery and that it requires listening to the frontline in a crisis. In this session we will focus on the activities you choose to do in a crisis as both long-term and short-term organizing decisions.
2. **Scenario – Crisis!** Participants are introduced to the crisis moment that will shape the rest of the scenario-based game.
3. **Grounding exercise:** A trauma-informed guided exercise. A quick exercise to help participants develop anchors in situations of overwhelm.

Strategic orientations

→ **BE NIMBLE:** We need to prepare our organizations to be nimble, or agile, so that we’re ready to change the way that we’re working when the crisis hits.

→ **CENTER THE MOST AFFECTED:** To center those on the frontlines of a crisis, we need to listen, support and build structures of accountability that can last beyond an emergency.

4. Scenario – Finding out who is immediately affected & what they need.

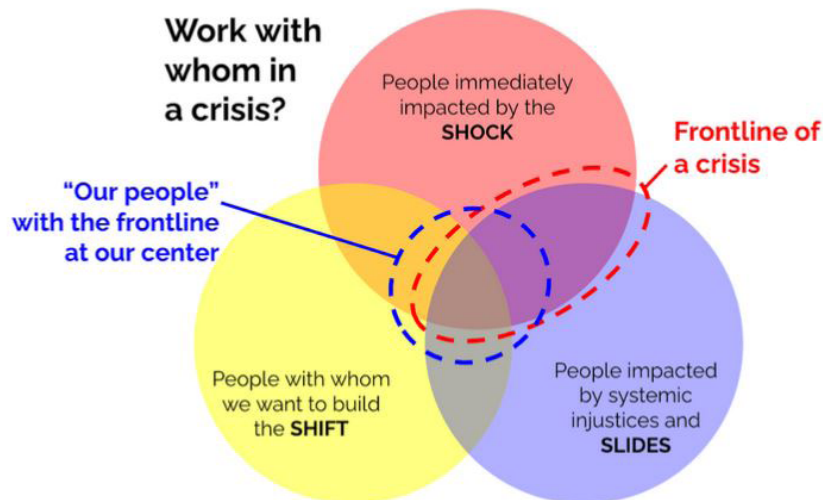
Participants are asked to reflect on core questions about the scenario:

- Who usually decides the response to crises? Who has that power? (Governments, insurance companies, experts, rich people, ethnic majorities, etc.)
- Do our politics require a different view? Why do we say “center the most affected”? Is it because we want to be politically correct? (No, rather: it is who we genuinely think have the solutions.)
- Where do we think power should lie?
- What could be the limits or obstacles in working with the most affected?

5. **Summing up – Centering the most affected:** The trainer sums up by saying that in moments of crisis people at the margins of society are disproportionately impacted and further marginalized. In times of crisis, the tendency to reproduce the existing social patterns that create this marginalization can become even stronger. This may play out on the broad level of society or in interpersonal dynamics. Imagine this in terms of how crisis moments have the potential to reinforce unequal distribution of resources when people switch into a “take care of our own” survival mindset. And think of it in terms of how people’s lived experience may cause them to personally assume a defensive crouch in a moment of crisis rather than taking an empowered stance. It is important to understand these macro and micro dynamics, and act accordingly when a crisis strikes.

Circles of Impact and Agency

Source: Sam Corbin and Tashy Endres and the Center for Transformative Organizing, referring to the Shocks, Slides and Shifts framework by Movement Generation



6. Framework – Understanding who is on the frontline of an issue: Participants are introduced to the circles of impact and agency, a Venn diagram that refers to the *Shocks, Slides and Shifts* concept. Participants are invited to see this as a conceptual map of the frontline of a crisis – the people for whom the “Shocks” and “Slides” overlap tend to be at the frontline of the crisis. By frontline it is meant who is hit “first and worst,” but also the people who don’t have the power and resources to dictate the terms of recovery based on social/structural factors. Participants are asked to reflect on who might have similar goals as we do? Who might be potentially part of the shift?

7. Case study: Share the case study from Hungary (provided below) and give participants an opportunity to read it alone or in pairs. Ask the group, why did the Civil College Foundation choose to prioritize organizing where they did? How did their organizing in the crisis of the pandemic reflect their desire to center the needs of this frontline community?

8. Scenario – Who is your frontline? In small groups, participants are asked to review the scenario, to reflect on the frameworks, and to choose two groups in the scenario they want to prioritize listening to / building with / working with. Group historian records their discussion. Referring back to the framework of *Shocks, Slides and Shifts*, participants are invited to consider the actions they would need to take to respond effectively in each category: (1) Meeting Immediate Needs: SHOCK, (2) Addressing Root Causes: SLIDE, and (3) Building Relationships: SHIFT.

9. Scenario – Being Nimble: Participants are introduced to the next orientation to crisis: “Being Nimble”. When we do the hard work day in and

day out of building organizations, we may have plans and it can be hard to rearrange them, cancel or change activities, shift our budget priorities, or set aside our long-term strategic plan to respond to a crisis. This is especially the case because organizers often pride themselves on not just “hopping on the activist fad” and shifting focus every time an emergency happens. Instead, most of the time organizers are focussed on doing the patient work of relationship building and waging long-term campaigns. Being nimble or being agile, means being ready to change direction based on emerging needs. In order to better imagine this competence, participants are given a page in a scheduling diary of the organization represented in the scenario and asked in small groups to reflect on what activities they would cancel and what they would add to respond effectively to the crisis moment. How would you change your plans to be close to affected communities in response to an emerging crisis? What alternative forms of organizing could you use in moments of crisis?

10. Sharing in plenary and summing up: Participants share how they would change their plans to be nimble/agile in crisis situations. The facilitators give them the outcome in their scenarios and the group historians record it. Conclude by saying that the things that we may do in “normal times” may not be the same as in moments of crisis. Crisis moments can demand that we change our approach and plans in order to show up for communities closest to the pain. If we are nimble and if we do meet the moment well, then crisis situations can become the foundation for powerful new forms of organizing that may have been unimaginable just a short time before.

Case study from Hungary

Building the power of the Hungarian Roma Organizing Network during the pandemic**Background**

In 2018 and 2019 Roma communities in Hungary faced multiple crises that impacted their rights and livelihoods. First, for a long time there had been hostile marches in Roma settlements by extremist right-wing groups and the general experience of systemic and institutional racism; and in 2020 the Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated existing problems in Roma communities such as access to food, livelihoods, education, and healthcare. Access to food was reduced because the price of food rose, because school canteens were closed (for many families the only available cooked food), and because food barrels were not accepted in the village center. Access to a livelihood was reduced because many Roma workers were laid off, especially from temporary jobs, and they did not have a financial reserve. Access to education was reduced because many families did not have the digital equipment, internet access, and digital skills to participate in digital education programmes. Access to medical supplies like masks, gloves and sanitisers was reduced and these items were often not available at the store or too expensive for Roma families. Social distancing was challenging as Roma families often lived in small flats or settlements with high Covid contamination risks. There was a need to provide immediate response to these crises.

Process

The Civil College Foundation (CKA) had already been organizing Roma communities in the years prior to the pandemic as one of the social groups that is mostly impacted by systemic racism and discrimination in Hungary and Europe. They had a team of

Roma organizers and leaders in different communities who they had been working with and had ongoing relationships and trust within those communities.

When the pandemic hit, CKA responded by engaging their Roma organizers to conduct an assessment of the effects of the pandemic on local Roma communities with a focus on disadvantaged settlements. They coordinated crisis response activities including delivering aid packages and vaccination registration. Based on the key issues emerging from the assessment in Roma communities, CKA organized several emergency response campaigns in 2020 and 2021 on access to food, livelihoods, education, healthcare, and Covid vaccination, combining community organizing with digital organizing.

One of the most successful campaigns was the “Vaccinate for Life” campaign where CKA played a key role in bringing together the national Roma municipality, Roma NGOs, activist groups, and prominent Roma media to promote vaccination registration. In the campaign, volunteers visited Roma settlements in an effort to overcome skepticism and to help with registration for vaccination. It included a digital organizing component with memes on social media, featuring Roma celebrities as well as health care professionals.

Throughout the campaigns, CKA coordinated the strengthening of cooperation among Roma organizers, Roma groups, Roma NGOs, pro-Roma organizations, Roma politicians, Roma media, national Roma municipality, and activist groups to respond to the crisis and curb institutional racism towards Roma people.

Outcomes

- 108 activists and volunteers were engaged in the campaign “Vaccinate for Life”, reaching and addressing more than 32,000 people in three weeks of action in 14 counties.
- Roma people, families and communities benefited from different forms of support during Covid-19. More than a thousand families in 12 disadvantaged local communities received aid packages as part of the campaign “One More Bite” in partnership with the digital organizing platform, aHang.
- 350 children in 20 settlements received IT tools and Internet access in order to access digital education as part of the education campaign - Window to the Desk.
- Citizens donated more than 21 million HUF for the education campaign and 20 million HUF for the “One more bite” campaign to distribute basic non-perishable food items and hygiene products to Roma communities.
- Segregated communities in more than 70 municipalities in Hungary formed a network around the provision of social assistance, contributed to create a problem map and started addressing the mapped problems in most municipalities.
- The media covered the campaign. Prominent Roma media covered the national campaign Vaccinate for Life to promote vaccination in Roma communities which brought considerable prestige to the collaboration between NGOs and Roma communities. Mainstream media published articles praising Roma communities who did their part to fight the Covid pandemic, and promoted a positive perception of Roma communities.

- The Hungarian government officially recognised CKA’s ability to mobilize Roma communities for vaccination in slums. People in these communities did not trust government institutions and the Hungarian health care system because of the discrimination they experienced.

Organizing lessons

- During the Covid-19 pandemic CKA decided to center Roma communities in their organizing during the crisis, as they were the most affected by both systemic racism in Hungary. They were already discriminated against in their access to food, livelihoods, education, and healthcare; and the Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated these issues. Centering them during the crisis contributed to strengthen the credibility of community organizers as present and effective in supporting frontline communities in moments of need.
- The response to the crisis included both meeting the immediate needs of those communities and building the collective power of Roma communities and actors by creating opportunities for building relationships with new people, volunteers, leaders and organizers who were motivated to take action; strengthening networks and coalitions among Roma organizations that could continue also after the crisis.
- The organizing campaigns during the crisis also addressed the root causes of racial injustice and discrimination towards Roma communities in Hungary. CKA formed coalitions that would connect issues related to Covid to the goal of curbing institutional racism towards Roma people. Focusing on improving equal access to education and healthcare for Roma communities, as well as influencing the narrative in mainstream media and perceptions in the public of Roma people.



Case study from Poland

Adjusting organizing plans to adapt to changing circumstances



Background

The climate crisis is an ongoing crisis with an increasing urgency for action. In Poland, the extraction and burning of coal is an important part of the Polish economy. Poland ranks 1st in the European Union (EU) for the production of hard coal, and 3rd for the production of lignite extraction, respectively¹, and it has the highest rate of energy produced by burning fossil fuel in Europe (74%). However, the coal industry has contracted considerably in the past years, due to EU policies aimed at phasing out coal and long-term global market pressures. In this context, the Common Thing Foundation (CTF), a women-led not-for-profit organization, was established in 2015 by experienced community organizers and activists to improve the quality of life in local communities. They have been organizing on climate justice in the coal region of Silesia and supporting climate movements like the Silesian Climate Movement (SCM), a network of approximately 30 active climate activists living in 18 different Silesian cities and operating at the regional level.

Since 2019, Common Thing Foundation has supported the Silesian Climate Movement (SCM) to plan and carry out an organizing climate campaign in Katowice to adopt a resolution of the Climate Emergency and achieve a zero-emission economy by 2050. The long-term goal of the campaign was a more adequate response of the city of Katowice to the climate crisis, the development of an urban energy and climate plan by 2030 covering issues such as zero CO₂ emissions in public buildings, the establishment of a citizens' panel for climate crisis and commitment to implement its provisions, and the introduction of urban CO₂ monitoring.

Process

As part of the campaign, the Silesian Climate Movement (SCM) worked to build a broad coalition of climate activists from Silesia and other cities in Poland. They engaged 30 district councilors in educational activities on the climate crisis through online and one-on-one meetings, met with the president's deputies to discuss the possibility of organizing citizens' panels to listen to citizen's concerns about the climate crisis. They also collected 535 signatures from citizens of Katowice as part of the citizens' legislative initiative.

Outcomes

- Cooperation between CTF and the Silesian Climate Movement
- Increased interest in what a city can do towards tackling the climate crisis and bigger pressure put on local politicians.
- Changed the mindset of climate activists from action-oriented to more strategic and campaign-oriented
- Building relationships with decision-makers in Katowice.
- Promoted local responses to climate threats
- The Silesian Climate Movement still exists even after the pandemic.

Organizing lessons

- Organizing campaigns in times of crisis requires being open and ready to change strategies, tactics and resource distribution to respond to changing circumstances. In this case they needed a few months to adjust to the pandemic situation.
- Citizen's campaigns are like living bodies – they respond to the times, people and circumstances. A combination of strategies is more effective.
- It is important to prioritize involving new people in every stage of the campaigning work, including specialists like lawyers, media.
- There is a need to focus on political education of local groups. They can only make decisions based on their political analysis and assumptions. For example, the climate activists of the SCM were reluctant to build relationships with local politicians and therefore missed opportunities to build power and influence decision-makers.
- Visibility in the public sphere is important for success and can help groups to push their agenda
- The initial plan of the campaign needed to be adjusted to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on campaign activities. For example:
 - As it was not possible to meet in person, meetings had to be moved online. Therefore the initial targets of numbers to engage needed to be adjusted.
 - The plan to collect 2000 signatures as part of the citizens' legislative initiative, needed to be adjusted to the reality of the pandemic.



¹ Bednorz, Jarosław. "SPOŁECZNO-EKOLOGICZNE SKUTKI EKSPLOATACJI WĘGLA KAMIENNEGO W POLSCE." *Górnictwo i Geologia*, 2011.



CHAPTER 4

Care in a crisis and beyond

Strong groups and strong relationships require intentional care practices that are built into your shared work.

Overview

This chapter explores care as a practice that must be applied in times of crisis both because they are moments of high stress, and because it is in these moments of increased intensity that negative social and power dynamics can become more prevalent. But care is something that needs to be practiced all the time, so this chapter also explores the kinds of care practices that organizers should use throughout the full “Movement Cycle.”

Learning aims

By the end of the modules, participants will be able to:

- Be resourced with care practices and understand their relevance in organizing in crisis.
- Apply these practices to the crisis scenario and different points of the “Movement Cycle.”

Preparation and materials

- Flipchart for harvesting answers
- Written crisis scenario
- A large image of the Movement Cycle
- Post-it notes

Learning flow

1. **Welcome and introduction:** Participants check their inner weather and name accessibility needs, reflect on the course so far. In this session we will reflect on care – for ourselves and others – as a practice that needs to be embedded in moments of crisis as well as the full Movement Cycle.
2. **Meditation:** Participants are led through a guided meditation exercise and then a small debrief from the exercise and on needs-orientation in collective and self-care.
3. **Activity – Create a collection of care-practices:** Participants are asked to reflect on the question “How did you or someone-else take care of you in a difficult moment?”
4. **Framework – Designing care into the work:** A lack of care can lead to burnout, which has a personal impact, but also an impact on organizations and movements. Care can take different forms.

Strategic orientations

→ CARE:

When most basic needs are under threat and pressures rise, we need to practice self- and mutual care to be able to act.



This is care that serves as an add-on or compensation (e.g. doing yoga after a stressful day). There is practical care in the process of working (e.g. asking for access needs, rotating certain tasks, stepping up in challenging moment). And there is care one can achieve through resting & not-doing something. (e.g. work less, take breaks, prioritize some things and not do others.) Care is an integral part of work that needs to be designed, organized and done. If it isn’t, then it is very often the same people who are either doing it or suffering from the lack of it (which is often gendered, racialized & class-related). So organizing care is an integral part of social justice work. And it is essential for making sure we all are able to do this work in the long run.

5. **Case study:** Share the case study from Slovakia (provided below) and have participants read it alone or in pairs. Then have them reflect on whether this scenario resembles their own experience? Did you respond similarly or differently than the people at the Center for Community Organizing to burnout?

6. **Scenario – The need for care:** In small groups, participants are asked to reflect on the scenario and design organizing processes that would build more care practices, cultures and structures into the crisis response.

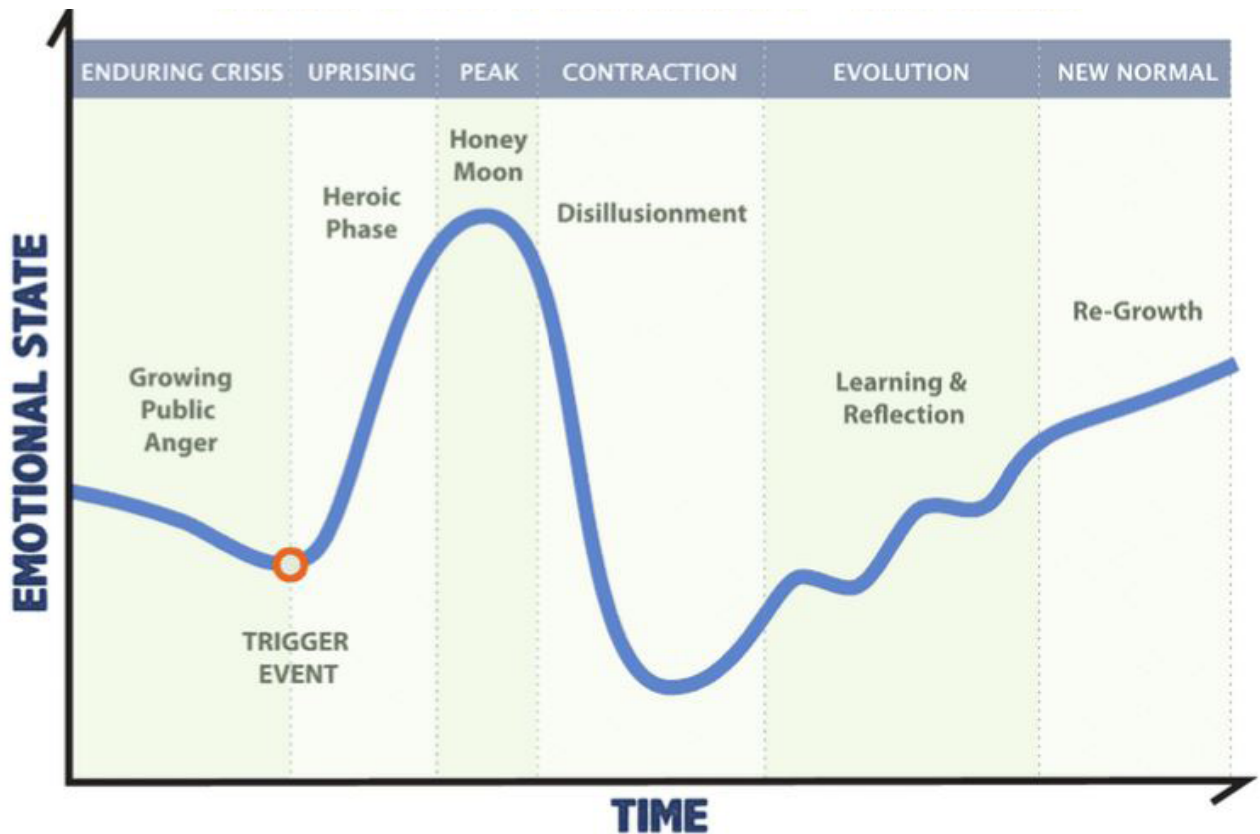
7. **Summing up – The need for care:** Participants are asked to reflect about the fact that a lack of care in our organizing can lead to burnout which is very harmful for our movement, for our organizations, for us personally as well as the people close to us. Operating in a “burnout culture” tends to reproduce the social dynamics that lead to marginalizing people in our communities in the first place. This is the case because it is usually people with multiple burdens and the least forms of external support or safety net who are most prone to burning out first. Even though crisis moments can be high-stress, not losing sight of the importance of care is a critical component to embodying equity and social justice even in times of great disruption.

8. Framework – Care in the movement cycle:

Participants are introduced to the Movement Cycle and its origin in crisis. The highs and lows are like a heartbeat, or breathing in and breathing out. It can be tempting to want to stay in the peak forever, but that is impossible. We can find our power in each moment by understanding the wave and riding it. What does this mean for care?

9. Activity – Brainstorming care practices for the whole movement cycle: Participants are asked to create and place post-it notes with different care-activities on an image of the Movement Cycle. They are then asked to look at the post-it notes from others and to reflect as a group on what they are seeing.

10. **Close**



The Movement Cycle

Source: <https://movementnetlab.org/movement-cycle/>

Case study from Slovakia

Developing a care and wellbeing strategy in crisis



Background

In 2020-2022, Slovakia, like many other countries, faced the Covid-19 pandemic which significantly impacted the psychological wellbeing of community organizers, local leaders, staff and volunteers due to extended periods of isolation and uncertainty. The impossibility of meeting in person, advancing campaign activities, and the necessity to move activities online impacted several community organizing efforts. These conditions weakened relationships within and between groups and communities, and created feelings of anxiety, separation, loneliness, and fragmentation. In this context the Center for Community Organising (CKO) experienced a case of burnout among their staff.

Process

Starting from a case of burnout, the Center for Community Organising (CKO) initiated a process of prioritizing care and wellbeing of their staff, volunteers and communities as crucial to their organizing work, and developed a care culture, structures, and practices. The key steps in the process were the following:

- Addressing cases of burnout
- Preventing burnout relapse
- Prioritizing care and wellbeing in the whole organization
- Developing a vision and long-term goal to promote care and wellbeing in a team retreat facilitated by a professional therapist.
- Developing and internal well-being strategy
- Monitoring and evaluation of wellbeing in the organization

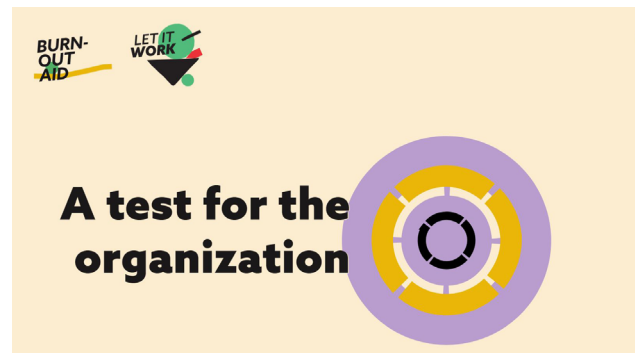
- Advocating for care and wellbeing with other organizations and donors

Outcomes

- The staff who experienced burnout came back to work more relaxed and motivated.
- The team in the organization was engaged in providing care and emotional support to the colleague who experienced burnout.
- CKO developed a vision, long-term goal, and strategy on how to embed care and wellbeing in the organization.
- Funders of CKO decided to fund care and wellbeing activities after CKO engaged them on the importance of supporting wellbeing.
- Other NGOs are inspired by CKO advocacy and education on care and well-being and have also developed metrics to implement some of the practices in their organizations.

Organizing lessons

- Effective community organizing stands and falls on people. Therefore, people's wellbeing and mental health must be prioritized.
- We must cultivate culture, structure and practices of care, and well-being individually and as groups.
- Success should be measured by people's wellbeing, satisfaction, and dignity, not only by campaign wins.





CHAPTER 5

Building power during crisis

Your choice of coalition partners, and what you are willing to compromise, must reflect your goals. Onboarding new people in a crisis may require a new, bigger, first step.

Overview

Organizers often talk about building “people power.” The thing that makes people powerful is when there are a lot of us with alignment on a common cause and in good relationship with each other. This chapter is about how crisis moments can turbo charge the process of people coming together for change. More than just an opportunity to grow the size of our organizations, these moments where everything is turned on its head are times when we can actually play a leading role in society – if we have a plan to make that possible.

Learning aims

By the end of the modules, participants will be able to:

- Think critically about the challenges and possibilities of building cooperation across difference in crisis moments, as well as the potential to turn those into longer-term alliances.

Strategic orientations

→ **BUILD POWER:** During moments of crisis, our organizations can grow much more rapidly than in normal times.

→ **BUILD A “BIGGER WE”:** During moments of crisis, we can unite with unlikely allies, and we can lead broader sections of society than in normal times.



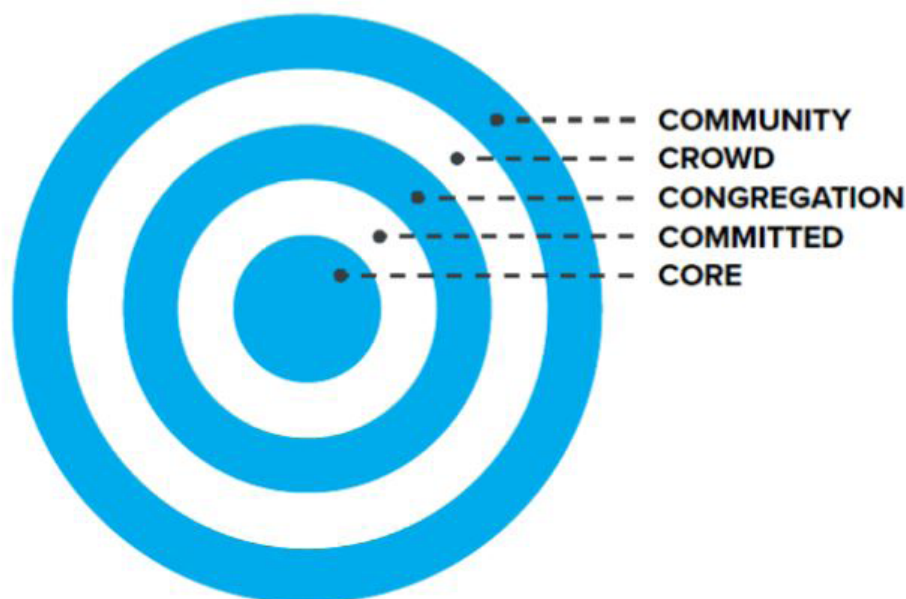
- Apply frameworks that help them link their organizing with the possibility of “leading society” in moments of crisis, and reflect on their organizing models to imagine what would have to change to make this possible.

Preparation and materials

- Written crisis scenario
- Flipcharts depicting the frameworks

Learning flow

- Welcome and settle:** Participants check their inner weather and name accessibility needs, reflect on the course so far.
- Scenario – Many groups, one goal?** Participants go back into the scenario exercise and are asked to reflect on some key questions. If this is an opportunity for building alliances and coalition, who do you want to align with? Around what shared purpose? How? How much togetherness is needed for temporary levels of cooperation? How can short term cooperation be turned into longer term alliances?



The “circles of commitment” model employed by the religious right movement in the United States

Source: <https://commonslibrary.org/circles-of-commitment/>

3. Framework – Building a bigger we: Participants are re-grounded in the goals of organizing and the organizing cycle. They are then introduced to the circles of commitment framework employed by the religious right in the United States. It is important to see what they are doing here; they are not just aiming to lead their most committed, or even just their church congregation – they are aiming to lead much wider circles in society.

The trainer summarizes the concept by saying the idea of building a “bigger we,” as compared to building a “bigger me,” is something that organizers are always looking to do. This often takes the form of building a coalition around a particular campaign, or even investing in long-term work to build a long-term alignment of forces. In this work, an organizer starts where people are at, builds trust, and tries to grow outward the circle of people who view themselves as part of the collective project. At the same time, an organizer works to consolidate a core of leaders – who may come from very different backgrounds – into a tightly-knit group who feel a deeper sense of shared purpose and mutual accountability. A crisis moment can create conditions that turbo-charge this organizing process. But beware: it can just as easily create conditions that pull groups and communities apart!

4. Case Study: Share the case study from the UK (provided below) and have participants read it alone or in pairs. Have participants reflect on what dynamics made forming such a large coalition possible? By the end of the campaign, who was the audience that the campaign was speaking to, and why was this possible?

5. Scenario – Building power: Working in small groups, participants are asked to work on the scenario exercise. There are questions to reflect on. How do you want to relate to these individuals; bring them closer to you ideologically? How do you want to unlock their time and talents for your projects? How can you bring them deeply into your group?

Small groups are asked to design two “absorption” methods to capture the new energy in the scenario. Participants are told that in crisis moments we may need to rethink our models. We may need a new, or bigger, first ring in our outreach models. We may need new ways to absorb spontaneous energy that emerges in times of crisis.

Participants are invited to reflect that building power in times of crisis is important because like so much in organizing, it all comes down to power. Who has power and who has the potential to exercise new power can be very fluid in moments of crisis. Whereas an organization usually counts their volunteers in the dozens, they may suddenly find themselves needing to manage thousands of people who want to help. There may be new resources, and with them new demands. The willingness of groups to work together in moments of crisis may open up new coalition opportunities that seemed impossible before the crisis struck. And finally, in moments of crisis, organizers may find themselves in the unaccustomed position of speaking to society as a whole, not just “preaching to the choir.” All of this represents the opportunity to build power in a moment of crisis, and we must be prepared to seize these opportunities.

6. Close

Case study from the United Kingdom

A moment of crisis allows organizers to build a “bigger we” behind the idea of a public good.



Background

The coronavirus lockdowns brought into sharp relief a unique aspect of wealth inequality: the direct correlation between poverty and access to the internet. In the UK, even as the government tried to get computing devices into the hands of school kids who lacked such technology in their homes, if their parents did not have a steady data plan, or had no plan at all, it did not do much good. Based on their relationships with organizations and leaders in some of England’s most economically disadvantaged communities, the network Community Organisers began hearing stories of children unable to do their online schooling, or of benefits seekers unable to reach public agencies.

The OperationWiFi alliance eventually grew to encompass over 100 local, regional and national organizations from across civil society, including charity and voluntary sector organizations, faith bodies, and public sector institutions.

This alliance represented some unlikely partners, and it was constructed around the notion that something like access to the internet should be a public good. As the campaign grew, the private internet providers started to get interested. O2 Virgin Media reached out to the campaign. Then Vodafone got involved. A cross-party alliance of Members of Parliament and other public figures also started to lift up the issue.

Outcomes

Negotiate with the large private internet providers to create a large databank for people who lacked access to the internet.

Begin shifting the public discourse in the UK from seeing the internet as a private luxury to being a necessary public good.

Organizing lessons

A moment of crisis made it possible to build a “bigger we” around the need for a public good.

Building a new brand and identity for the campaign – #OperationWiFi – gave people a sense of collective ownership of the campaign – it wasn’t about building power for one particular institution. Creating an open and transparent process allowed lots of people and organizations to feel involved.

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<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2020/jun/15/uk-children-reliable-broadband-coronavirus-lockdown-education>

<https://ceci.org.uk/operation-wifi-an-opportunity-for-housing-associations/>

<https://news.virginmediao2.co.uk/virgin-media-o2-launches-first-ever-national-databank-providing-free-mobile-data-to-tackle-data-poverty/>

The screenshot shows the 38Degrees website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'LATEST', 'CAMPAIGNS', 'ABOUT', 'DONATE', 'START A CAMPAIGN', and 'LOG IN'. The main content area features the petition title '#OperationWiFi – Free, open WiFi network connecting communities during Covid-19' and a progress bar showing 1,827 signatures out of 2,000. Below the title, it says 'Campaign created by Nick Gardham'. There is a photo of an elderly man at a computer. A 'Sign the petition' form is visible with input fields for 'First Name', 'Last Name', 'Email', and 'Postcode', and a 'Please confirm your age' checkbox.

Process

Ironically, the campaign started with a Tweet. Just as the first stay at home orders were being issued by the UK government, Community Organisers put out a call for a free WiFi network under the hashtag #OperationWiFi. The tweet reached 12,000 people, and even prompted prominent politicians to start weighing in. Then the message spread to 50,000 people. The debate was starting to shift from the internet being a luxury, to it being an essential public utility.

The localized responses to the crisis that were already popping up needed to go to scale, and do so fast. Community Organisers assembled and provided seed funding to a coalition around the issue.



CHAPTER 6

Building power during crisis

The window is short, but the impossible may be possible. Someone will control the narrative.

Overview

Crisis moments can shift the way people think about the world in a blink of an eye. The things that yesterday were considered “common sense” may fall apart. This chapter is about helping organizers think about what story they will tell in a crisis moment, and to imagine being bolder than they might choose to be in “normal times.” But the struggle over the story that is told about a crisis is not a one way street – our opponents are powerful and will try with all their might to have us believe their version of the truth. So how do we plan our narrative strategies, while also anticipating theirs?

Learning objectives

By the end of the modules, participants will be able to:

- Critically explore how, when facing crises, old narratives about themselves and the world can crumble – and that this holds both peril and opportunity.
- Develop a crisis-narrative.
- Apply a narrative in a crisis that can help make our actions and demands make sense and see how the stories we are primed to hear can become even more pronounced under pressure/emergency, including the stories told by our opposition.

Preparation and materials

- Paper and pen for journaling
- Flipchart paper for harvesting answers from group
- Written crisis scenario
- Flipchart depicting the framework

Learning flow

1. **Welcome and settle:** Participants check their inner weather and name accessibility needs, reflect on the course so far.
2. **Activity – Who or what explained the crisis?** Participants are asked to journal on the crisis that impacted them in some way. Who or what explained the crisis to you? That is, how did you learn what this crisis was and what it meant?

Participants are then asked to share one word or

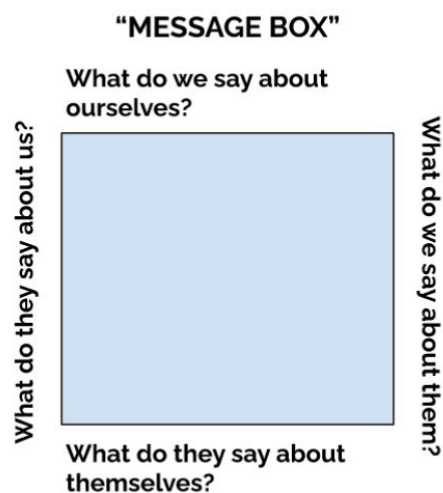
Strategic orientations

- **MAKE MEANING:** During moments of crisis, it is possible to change the narrative in a deep way.
- **GO BOLD:** During moments of crisis, it is more possible to advance bold structural reform.

one sentence their reflections. The trainer then sums up the exercise for participants by pointing out that there is always a narrative about a crisis. People and the media will be offering explanations of what the crisis is and why it happened, and these stories influence how people understand the situation, how they relate to it, and who or what they think can “solve” it.

3. **Summing up – Make meaning:** In a crisis, the old narratives may not work any more. Things that were once assumed as true can be exposed as untrue. We have the opportunity of offering alternative explanations for the world we live in. The idea of “who is in charge” and “who is watching out for us” can start to falter, and people need a way to make sense of it all. In moments of crisis, organizers must be prepared to use narrative strategies in a practice of collective sense-making. Debates that may have felt long settled will suddenly be reopened, and organizers must be ready to fight the “battle of big ideas” in addition to the struggle they are waging on the ground.

4. **Scenario – The message box (part 1):**



Participants are introduced to the message box tool. It gets us to focus on the four parts of a message:

- 1) What we say about ourselves, 2) What we say

about them, 3) What they say about themselves, and 4) What they say about us. The group is asked to briefly brainstorm how you might fill this out based on some of the actors in the scenario.

5. Scenario – The message box (part 2):

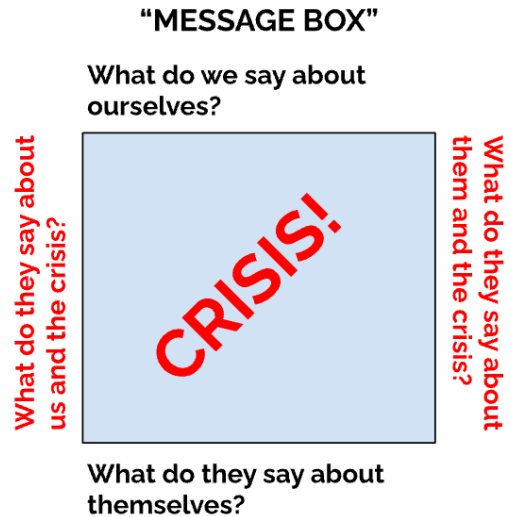
Participants are then broken into small groups and asked to fill out the message box based on the details of the scenario. Participants are instructed to start with the questions on the top and the bottom of the box. The trainer makes clear that this is about putting each side in the best possible light – it is about how both sides are describing THEMSELVES.



6. Scenario – The message box (part 3): Then, in plenary, the whole group is asked to consider what happens when the crisis in the scenario strikes. Suddenly our opposition is trying to make meaning of what is going on and they engage in an attack on us to do so. The trainer shows a new message box like the one below. The trainer reads the message that the opponents of the group in the scenario are using to attack the participants.



7. Scenario – The message box (part 4): Finally, the trainer shows the last version of the message box. The trainer instructs the groups that their job is to make their own meaning of the crisis. To do that, they need to think about what they say about their opposition. How is what they say making sense of the crisis in the minds of people in the city? How is it setting your group up to do more organizing and build power?



8. Grounding exercise: A shaking exercise to “shake off” the last exercise.

9. Summing up – Go bold: Organizers are often trained to identify “small, winnable demands.” In normal times there is an important logic to this; people may not believe change is possible and they need to see that they can win something small before they believe something bigger is possible. But in moments of crisis this logic may need to go out the window! During a crisis small solutions to big problems can seem, well, small. In times of great disruption people are suddenly open to much bolder solutions – and if we don’t have any on offer, someone else will. And we may not like what they are offering! So, as a strategic orientation to crisis, “going bold” is about being able to recalibrate – sometimes very quickly – the demands we put out into the world. Our ability to do so will increase our credibility with people in our communities and it will help us build power.

10. Close

Case study from Serbia

Organizing against air pollution during elections in Serbia

Background

In Serbia there is an ongoing crisis of air pollution. A large portion of power generation and heating comes from plants that run on coal. Serbia has significant deposits of coal, but most of it is low grade lignite. It is cheaper than coal, but when burned, it releases large amounts of pollutants into the air with severe effects on the health of the population, including on cardiovascular, respiratory and cerebrovascular diseases.

Between 2020 and 2021, the organization Serbia on the Move led a campaign titled “Sign, Breathe” to raise awareness of air pollution in Serbia and gather 30 000 signatures to propose a law to ban the sale of raw, low-quality lignite in Serbia. The campaign was done in partnership with Taraba, an organization using digital technologies to support community initiatives.



Process

The campaign started with zero budget and a team of 10 local leaders trained as organizers at the Leadership, Organizing and Action course at the Harvard School of Government who provided support and training to volunteers during the campaign.

They researched measures that would affect the degree of air pollution and formulate demands. They published an [online petition](#) to identify interest and gather support for the demand to propose a law to ban the sale of low quality lignite in Serbia. They organized local leaders and national networks forming a leadership structure using the organizing [snowflake model](#) when new volunteers were engaged in the campaign. They used one-to-one conversations to expand the structure, grow the number of campaign teams, and develop leadership. This allowed the team to submit letters to government institutions and to write the text of the people’s initiative in consultation with the community and organizing communities to build support for the people’s initiative.

They also used social networks as a channel to give visibility to the campaign and communicate with like minded citizens and potential volunteers, putting out an open call for volunteers and organizations to join the campaign. They organized trainings in community organizing for volunteers and partner organizations. Finally, after much work they presented the text and signatures of the people’s initiative to the National Assembly advocating to put the text of the initiative on the agenda of the National Assembly.

Outcomes

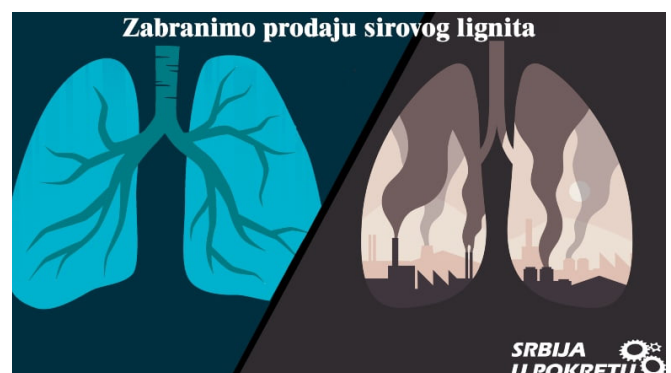
- Gathered over 26 000 signatures for an [online petition](#), mostly by using social networks.



- 200 volunteers and 10 organizations responded to the call join the campaign
- 100 volunteers were trained in community organizing
- Most of the organizations involved in the campaign decided to use the community organizing methodology in their organizations to a different degree.
- Leading Media outlets covered the issue and the campaign
- The Ministry of Energy called the campaign representatives to schedule a meeting with one of the State secretaries for energetics and develop a plan on how to collaboratively tackle the issue in the future.

Organizing lessons

- Despite succeeding in organizing volunteers and gathering signatures in support of the people’s initiative, the campaign needed to devote more attention to figuring out how to relate meaningfully to the local elections that were happening at the same time and the debates that citizens and candidates were having. The issue of air pollution was framed in a non-partisan way, to avoid being “too political” and it ended up being ignored in political debates, sidelined by media and among people. This prevented the campaign from staying relevant during elections and from building enough power to get the National Assembly to prioritize the issue in their agenda.
- Organizers should relate elections as “planned crises” that change conditions in the socio-political context and affect communities and citizens with whom we organize. Therefore, organizers need to plan and respond to elections in our contexts by “make meaning” and framing the issue in a way that is relevant to voters and candidates during elections, and in ways that build power to win our demands.



References

[All available materials on the site www.potpisiprodisi.rs can be used.](http://www.potpisiprodisi.rs)



CHAPTER 7

Extend the time horizon

The actions that worked in one phase, may not work in the next. The goals of one phase are probably different from goals in the next. Tailor your actions to the phase you're in.

Overview

Crises come and crises go. Whether national or even global in scope, or quite localized, crisis moments can open up immediate opportunities to change the world in profound ways. But historically, some of these changes don't happen until after – sometimes years after – the first shock of the crisis. This chapter is about preparing for the long haul. And part of preparing is expecting that there will be a long haul!

Learning aims

By the end of the module participants will be able to:

- Make decisions in moments of crisis while keeping in mind the long-term goals.

Strategic orientations

→ **EXTEND THE TIME HORIZON:**

Act quickly, but also play the long game – a crisis of legitimacy for those currently in power may not be immediate.



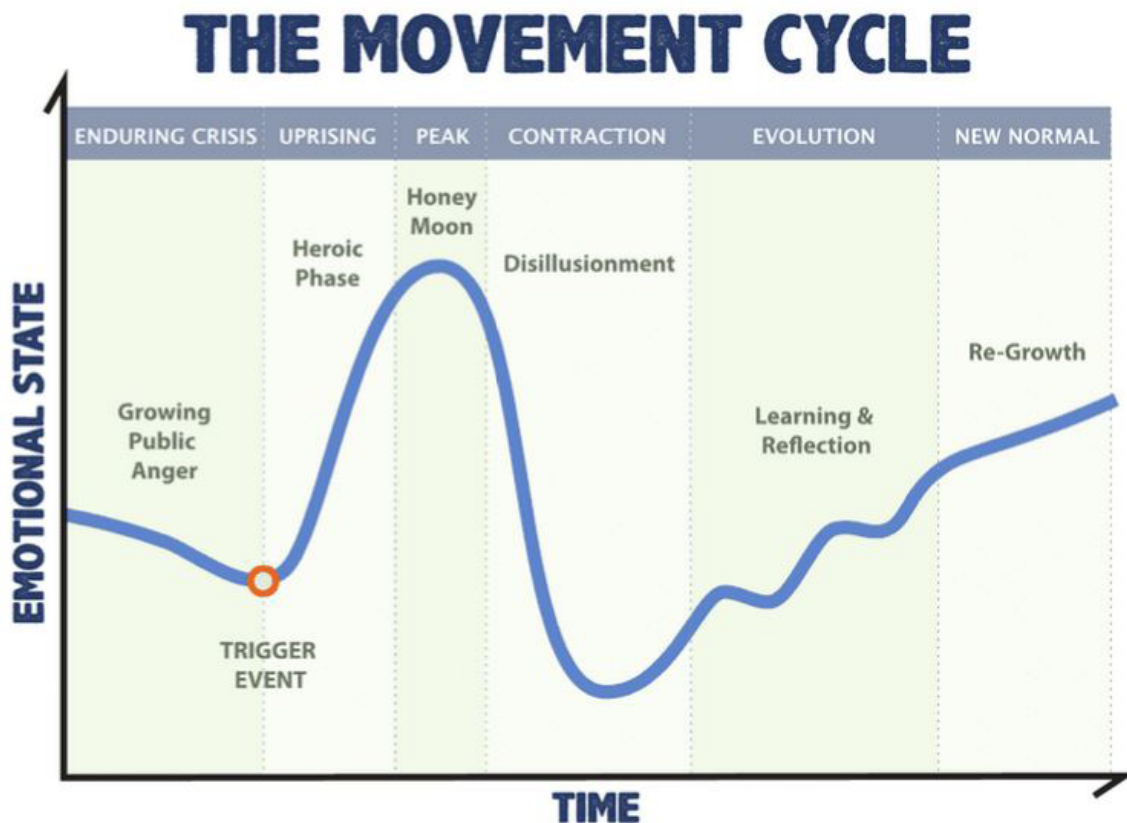
- Review the movement cycle framework and identify activities their organization will do to set themselves up for success as the next phase of the cycle begins.
- Plan for the contraction phase in the movement cycle.

Preparation and materials

- Written crisis scenario
- Movement cycle handout

Learning flow

1. **Welcome and introduction:** Participants check their inner weather and name accessibility needs. Reflect on the course so far.



The Movement Cycle

Source: <https://movementnetlab.org/movement-cycle/>

2. Framework – The Movement Cycle: Review again the Movement Cycle and its origin in crisis. The trainer points out that the peak of a crisis moment can open up unimaginable opportunities to advance organizing and movement goals.

Therefore, we often feel pressure to act “while the window is open.” At the same time, we must understand that crisis moments are part of a broader cycle, and when we recognize this it allows us to adjust our approach to ensure that the changes that we may have set in motion during the crisis will not disappear, even if they start to move at a different pace.

The role of building long-term organizing infrastructure is critical to ensuring that the energy behind these peak movement moments is not lost as the immediate urgency starts to dissipate. We can build power in each moment by understanding the wave and riding it. Ask participants to identify:

- What is most important / possible in each phase?
- How does what we do in one phase affect what we can do in the next?
- What role or function do you want to take responsibility for?
- What do you see as the power of investing in infrastructure for this wave and the next and next?

3. Scenario – Extending the time horizon:

Participants are asked to reflect on how they will

adjust their tactics in the scenario as the heat of the initial crisis moment begins to die down. They are instructed to choose two contraction activities and one infrastructure project that they believe will set them up well for the next phase.

4. Scenario narrative – Final stories of the crisis:

Small group historians read back their group’s story. In the large group, participants discuss what similarities, differences and other things they noticed. What things did you do differently from other groups? What things are you proud of? Let’s celebrate!

5. Grounding Exercise: Celebratory grounding exercise - dancing.

6. Framework: Review of all the strategic orientations to crisis: Reiterate all the orientations to crisis and other themes. Review what we did: Frameworks, Tools and Activities.

7. Evaluation and feedback

8. Close

Case study from Hungary

Organizing against electoral fraud during the 2022 elections in Hungary



Background

Since 2010 Hungary has been ruled by an authoritarian government led by Fidesz – Hungarian Civic Alliance – a right-wing populist and national-conservative political party, with Viktor Orbán as prime minister.

In previous races some parties and candidates regularly used means that undermined the fairness of elections, with unethical, often illegal, and fraudulent electoral practices. For example, some voters were required to vote for a particular party as a condition for getting or keeping a job or public work, receiving cash or food parcels, or patients of nursing homes were “guided” by nurses in the voting process. These practices affected primarily those with low income.

The Civil College Foundation has contributed to general voter mobilization in previous years, focusing on democratic and fair elections, preventing or exposing electoral malpractices, as well as raising the issues and interests of different communities and disadvantaged social groups to the public and to the candidates running for positions.

From these experiences, they have observed that the free will of voters is often violated.

In preparation of the April 3rd 2022 elections in Hungary, Civil College Foundation (Civil Kollégium Alapítvány – CKA), decided to form a coalition and coordinate a campaign titled “Clear Vote Campaign.” The goal of the campaign was to organize voters to prevent and avoid electoral malpractices in Hungary.

Process

Between May 2021 and November 2022, Civil College Foundation, organized a series of strategic actions to engage citizens, activists, communities organizations to prevent and avoid electoral malpractice. They organized open trainings and workshops between local groups, activists, active citizens, including forums in Roma communities, as well as closed meetings with leaders from civil society organizations. They also brought together 11 forums and debates to raise awareness and mobilize local communities and citizens in the campaign and to make a concrete street presence felt on election day to ensure that the elections were free and fair. After these public events they did interviews with participants, looking for local residents with whom they could collaborate on the campaign.

As the campaign progressed, CKA formed a coalition with a number of prominent pro-democracy organizations in order to oppose voter fraud during elections and raise this problem to the public. The coalition developed the objectives, campaign strategy, a framework for communication during the campaign, and a system for contributions of human and financial resources from each member to the campaign. They agreed on means of internal communication and coordination for the coalition, a framework for decision-making and the way in which we would liaise with external actors working on the issue and political actors.

The campaign also established a collaboration to support the coalition with training and trainers. They coordinated with other organizations that were not part of the coalition to recruit poll workers for a large election-day monitoring operation, and they ran a communication campaign through coordinated communication on their website, social media, and in the media.

Outcomes

- More than 300 people participated in online trainings between November 2021 and March 2022.
- Political party members participated in some of the open trainings as they were publicly advertised, but the coalition did not work directly with political parties.
- 300 activists volunteered to monitor election fraud activity on the streets and
- 22 000 citizens were mobilized in polling stations.
- The main national media outlets and news portals (ATV and RTL Klub) reported on the campaign.
- Several cases of electoral malpractice and fraud were documented and reported to the police including transporting of voters, illegal voter influence through gifts, buying of votes, harassment of activists.
- Most reported cases of electoral malpractice and fraud were not acted on in time by the police, or they were rejected by Election Commission, despite the fact that evidence was collected, in some cases, through photo or video documentation.



Organizing lessons

- This campaign exposed the fact that in Hungary electoral malpractices and fraud developed overtime and became deeply rooted in social relations, power system, and social norms. It was observed that electoral malpractices were not consciously perceived as “fraud” by many Hungarian citizens, even if they occurred in their immediate environment, therefore the mainstream social norms prevented citizens from seeing it as illegal behavior. Fraud was perpetrated primarily outside the polling station and before election day and they were particularly difficult to expose as they are not done in public spaces. Those who could report them often fear the possible consequences of reporting as they are in dependency relationships with the perpetrators. In addition, the legal framework and procedures in Hungary do not allow for effective action against electoral malpractice and fraud.
- Therefore, the issue could not be eradicated by focusing solely on election day and only on what happens publicly, but it requires a long-term process of educating citizens and challenging existing unjust power structures, social norms, and legal frameworks.
- It takes a decade or more to change crises that have developed and deepened overtime, like the crisis of democracy. Changing people’s perceptions on issues can take years and it requires investing in long-term processes of civic education of citizens.
- Extending the time horizon means developing a long-term agenda for systemic change and investing in long-term organizing processes.
- We need to be ready to stay committed to organizing for change in the long term, and patient in the face of challenges, failures, and slow pace of change processes.
- Systemic change also requires building new political powers that many people trust and that supports our agenda.

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CHAPTER 8

Digital Organizing in Crisis

Digital organizing can support each of the strategic orientations to crisis when meeting in person is challenging.

Overview

The Covid-19 pandemic has demonstrated the importance of finding new ways to continue organizing and supporting the frontline communities in crisis even when there are limitations to organizing in person. Digital organizing plays an important role in times of crisis both in situations where meeting in person is challenging, but also in non-crisis times to be able to organize and engage a wider range of people and communities across geographical locations. This chapter will focus on how to use digital organizing in each of the strategic responses to crises using digital tools to amplify building relationships, develop leadership, listen and tell stories, and build power during crises.

Learning aims

By the end of the module, participants will be able to:

- Leverage digital tools and strategies for preparing and organizing in crises effectively.
- Use digital tools to building relationships and leadership.
- Use media and social media to gather and tell stories.
- Use digital tools and platforms to build power during crises.

Preparation and materials

- Projector, screen, laptop, internet connection
- Internet connection and laptops/phones for participants to test digital tools described in the module

Learning flow

1. Introduction to digital organizing in crisis: Each of the strategic orientations to crises could be carried out using digital tools. Define digital organizing and its importance in crisis response. You could use a definition of Digital Organising developed by Tectonica and GQR in a report titled *“The State of Digital Organizing in Europe”* (2020) based on research with 33 leaders in the European digital organizing field.

Strategic orientations

→ DIGITAL ORGANIZING:

Digital organizing plays an important role in times when we need alternatives to meeting in person and across geographical locations.



According to their definition: “Digital Organising offers transformational development of activist leadership & agency, builds relationships, enables activism to scale and grows the pool of those who support a cause, is enabled by technology, is oriented to achieve social change” (Tectonica, 2020). In the report you could find a framework for digital organizing with key concepts, practices and examples. This module focuses on how digital organizing could be used in crisis situations in relation to each of the strategic orientations to crisis.

2. Be Prepared to organize online: A digital organizing strategy could be combined with in-person organizing processes to expand the base, coordinate across geographies and scale up organizing efforts before, during and after a crisis. Preparing for crises via digital organizing includes identifying and setting up digital spaces, platforms, tools to be used by your organizing team and communities. There are several digital organizing platforms and tools available, and they should be selected based on the needs and preferences of the people you work with. Some key elements to consider are the following

- Digital organizing infrastructure: Develop and set up your digital organizing infrastructure with different digital tools and platforms for communication, coordination, engagement and social media. Prioritizing platforms that could support ongoing engagement with groups, volunteers and communities (e.g. Zoom for online one-to-ones and group meetings, social media groups, newsletter, mass emails). Share the example of *Action Network and Action Builder* as tools for digital organizing campaigns.
- Digital collaboration and coordination spaces: Setting up digital collaboration spaces for your team and volunteers, and tools for remote teamwork and coordination. For example spaces on Slack, WhatsApp/Telegram/Signal groups.
- Digital resource Mobilization and Fundraising: Identify and set up digital platforms for fundraising and mobilizing resources. These could include crowdsourcing and crowdfunding platforms.

→ Managing contact lists and Digital security: Identify tools to collect, store and manage databases of contacts safely. This could be done through a CRM system (Customer Relationship Management, which could be used by organizers as a system to manage relationships with community members). Train your team on digital security and data management and set up secure systems and practices for securely managing digital communication, collecting, storing, handling sensitive data, ensuring data privacy and compliance with relevant regulations.

3. Be Nimble - use digital tools to change plans: In moments of crisis, the contextual conditions change suddenly, and there is a need to swiftly collect information, process it and use it to inform decisions and adjust plans. Digital organizing tools could be used to speed up processes of data collection, analysis, communication, coordination and decision-making to make our organizing more agile. For example, [Kobo Toolbox](#) is an open-source platform with tools for the collection, management, and visualization of data for challenging settings that could be used offline and on mobile devices to inform planning crisis responses and organizing. This could be used to quickly identify and support people at risk in times of crisis, and map resources.

4. Center the Most Affected through digital storytelling: Digital tools could be used to connect with affected communities and listen to their stories, identify their needs, challenges and hopes. [Social listening tools](#) can be used to listen to the stories of affected people online, identify the most common issues in online conversations, and develop campaigns and messaging around that. [Digital community mapping tools](#) could be used to gather information about the community, their issues, and the resources.

This can be done in zoom meetings with community members, gathering information on local authorities and organisations websites. This is particularly important in community responses to crises where different institutional and civil society stakeholders need to collaborate to provide response to crisis. Also, you can develop the leadership of people from affected communities by identifying people who could be trusted community voices and develop their capacity to tell, be spokespersons on the issue, stories and convey the message in a powerful way. Keep in mind that, when working with vulnerable groups, which sometimes are the most affected by a crisis, you might need to address issues such as limited access to technology or to the internet, as well as limited skills to use the technology.

5. Care and create spaces to process emotions

online: In moments of crisis – whether they are pandemics, natural disasters, war, political or economic shocks – people are impacted emotionally by losses of people, damage to things, loss of hope and more. Before we can build power and take action during crises, we must make space to acknowledge and facilitate collective processing of emotions. Digital tools could be used to hold and facilitate spaces for collective grief, so that communities feel that they are not alone in their grief, but they are united across differences, even if they may be physically isolated. One example of using digital tools for creating spaces of care at a time when people must be physically apart, is the event [#NamingtheLost](#), a 24 hour online vigil where those who had lost loved ones during Covid-19 could read their names to honor and mourn their lives. People could sign up for the online event on Facebook, receive a link for the facebook livestream and submit the name of loved ones to be read. There was a hashtag for Tweets and list of sample tweets for the event, and graphics for social media posts.

6. Build power by bridging online and offline strategies: Digital organizing could be used to build people's power online and offline. All the practices of in-person organizing could be done online, for example building relationships through one-to-one conversations online, facilitating group meetings on zoom, coordinating teams and campaigns online, forming and coordinating volunteer groups online. It may seem more difficult to build trust online, but it is possible. Digital tools can be used to connect communities to each other into networks and plan digital campaigns. In order to develop our capacity to build power through digital organizing, it is worth investing in training organizers in digital organizing and digital security where they can learn to use digital tools effectively and safely to communicate, coordinate and organize. For trainings and resources on digital organizing, you can visit [Social Movement Technologies](#).

7. Build a bigger "We" using digital media: We can use digital tools to build a bigger "We" by gathering and sharing stories of the communities and groups we organise with. Creating online spaces for creating and sharing the collective story of our movement. We can use storytelling to develop a story of our people and our movement connected by common challenges, hopes, and values. This helps us root our organizing in the stories of the communities we work with, build a bigger We and influence narratives. We can use digital communications to support the social media

of local campaigns in communities impacted by the crisis and link them to the social media page of a wider organizing campaign. Broadcasting reports from local campaigns on the situation in the field, organizing activities, turnout, messages, quotes from community members.

8. Go Bold – use digital analytics to inform your demands: In moments of crisis digital tools can be used to gather and share real stories of people and communities impacted by the crisis and link them to a crisis narrative connecting the systemic issues underlying the crisis and to bold demands for systemic change. Given the nature of the digital space enabling immediate communication and sharing of information, it could be used to engage people in sharing how the crisis is impacting them, and use online engagement to make the links between causes and impacts and engage people in demanding systemic solutions as part of the response to the crisis. Social media analytics could be used to analyse how people are discussing the issue online and inform the development of the crisis narrative, bold demands, and strategic messaging.

9. Make meaning – engage people in online discourse: Moments of crisis are times to interpret the new situation in ways that influence narratives and discourses in ways that open new possibilities for change. Digital organizing could be used to build power by influencing online narratives and discourses. We need to be intentional about the content we create and share online before, during and after crises. Developing digital content informed by ground-listening of the stories of the communities we work with, and linking that to narratives on the systemic causes of the problems, helps us advance progressive systemic solutions. But we should not stop at content posting, we need to engage in online discourse. Often conversations taking place in moments of crisis around online content can influence opinions more than the content itself. So we need to find ways to engage people in online discourse and discussions about the crisis and how it affected them as well as the change they want to see.

10. Extend the time horizon: As we saw in the “movement cycle” during moments of crisis there are peaks of people’s attention, mobilization and

motivation to take action on issues. In the digital space this sometimes means issues / content going “viral” and engaging masses of people online. But those moments come and go with the crisis, and people’s attention moves to other things. In order to extend the time horizon, we can use digital tools to connect with people when attention is high and people are mobilized, to expand our base and engage them for the long term. This could be done in different ways, including using mobilization events (offline and online) to connect with people, build relationships, gather contacts and commitment, and continue communicating / engaging /acting (e.g. a newsletter, a group on a digital platform, join a digital volunteer team). Plan activities for engaging interested people in the campaign through smaller organizing teams where they can build relationships, be trained, develop leadership, and become organizers etc. Having a digital infrastructure for ongoing engagement with communities (e.g. newsletter, zoom account, social media groups, Signal/Telegram/Whatsapp groups, or more elaborate CRM systems like Action Network) to manage contacts, and continue organizing over the long term can be crucial.

Case study from Central and Eastern Europe

Digital Organizing to strengthening anti-authoritarianism in Europe



Background

The rise of authoritarian governments is contributing to a crisis of democracy in Europe. In 2020 authoritarian governments in Poland and Hungary had threatened to veto the EU budget over the rule that EU funding should be tied to respecting “rule of law enforcement”. As these leaders tend to use the funding to strengthen their support, this law would have ensured that member states led by authoritarian leaders would not continue to receive EU funding.

Organisations in Hungary (aHang), Poland (Akcja Demokracja) and Romania (Declic) organized together across borders to demand EU funding be tied to respecting “rule of law enforcement”. They were supported by *OPEN network*, an international organisation that combines digital organizing with offline organizing to support democratic counterforces to growing authoritarianism and the fast-moving power of the far right.

Process

OPEN member organisations, in Hungary (aHang), Poland (Akcja Demokracja) and Romania (Declic) used an escalating series of high profile digital and offline organizing in an organizing campaign to show EU ministers the strong public support for rule of law conditionality in the EU budget. The key digital organizing actions included:

- Organized daily online meetings between the three organisations to coordinate the campaign
- Developed common appeal in support of the “funds for rule of law” mechanism to European leaders published in *POLITICO*, one of the most influential magazines on European affairs.
- Organized in-person protests and demonstrations

- Engaged 325,000 people in Hungary, Romania and Poland in online actions
- 2,536 citizens sent 27,728 messages to key MEPs within one day.
- Lit up landmark buildings in cities including Warsaw and Budapest with blue lights of hope on Dec 9th as requested by aHang and Akcja Demokracja activists.

Outcomes

The main outcomes of the campaign were that the European Parliament approved conditioning access to EU funds to the country’s rule of law enforcement. In a special resolution, the European Parliament voted to strengthen the meaning of the mechanism and called for it to apply without delay. A significant victory for democracy.

Organizing lessons

The key organizing lessons from this case are that:

- Digital organizing can be used for building relationships and coordinating organizing efforts across organizations in different countries.
- Digital organizing tools can be used to influence transnational targets like the EU
- Digital actions can be used to engage and organize a high number of people across borders

References

OPEN - Online Progressive Engagement Network:
www.the-open.net/case-studies



CHAPTER 9

Conclusion



As the Milton Friedman quote in the introduction to this curriculum indicated, crises create openings for change. Or as Arundhati Roy put it, they create “portals.” But this is only half of the equation. Friedman also talked about the “ideas laying around,” and he devoted his entire career to developing, popularizing, and then coercing acceptance of a set of ideas about how the world, our economy, and our governments should function. This school of thought became known as “neoliberalism.”

Through a recent series of crises, starting with the financial crisis in 2008, to the movement-generated crises of legitimacy brought about by the Indignados/ Occupy/Blockupy movement, to the global populist uprisings on both the left and right ends of the political spectrum, the neoliberal project developed by Milton Friedman and others has come into open question.

The question for us as organizers is: what ideas do WE have laying around?

The intensifying crises of climate breakdown, spreading war, deepening inequality, and persistent racism and xenophobia, all but ensure that we will be dealing with many more crisis moments to come. Part of being prepared for these coming disruptions means that we must take seriously the work of defining a new set of demands and collectively weave visions of a world we want to live in based on social and environmental justice

It will not be enough to recycle old ideas. Answering the populist moment with calls for a “return to civility” or a nostalgia for some platonic ideal of liberal democracy will be insufficient for people searching for what the rapidly changing world around them means. Meeting the moment of a deteriorating climate with techno-fantasy or weak calls for “green capitalism” will be seen as insufficient demands by the people we are trying to organize. These demands might lose in the “battle of big ideas” to people who are currently making bolder claims – and those claims are often very dangerous: they argue for greater authoritarianism, racial-regligious nationalism, closing borders, or hoarding resources.

So as we conclude this curriculum on HOW to orient to crisis in ways that are less reactive and more strategic, let us also remember that we must be preparing for WHAT new vision for the world-as-it-should-be we are going to advance as we enter through the next portal opened by a moment of crisis. This is a task bigger than this curriculum can fully address, but it is one that we must take up with the urgency that the times demand.



APPENDIX

Additional Learning Activities

The curriculum and materials laid out in the preceding chapters represents a training design that was developed and tested for a training on “Organizing in Crisis” organized by authors of this study. However, there are other complementary learning materials developed by the authors that are used in their work and could be used to expand and create variations of this curriculum. Here’s an overview of the additional learning activities that will be described in more details in the following pages:

- A. Introduction to strategic orientations to crisis
- B. Learning from a case of organizing in crisis
- C. Organizing with affected groups
- D. Creating a care and well-being strategy
- E. Building power through coalitions
- F. Public narratives during crisis
- G. Organizing with a long-term agenda

A. INTRODUCTION TO STRATEGIC ORIENTATIONS TO CRISIS

MODULE: Strategic orientations to crisis

LEARNING AIMS: By the end of the session, participants will be able to:

- See crises as opportunities to advance transformational change.
- Identify the 10 strategic orientations to crisis and be ready to step into crisis moments.
- Practice planning for moments of crisis in their context.

TIME: 3 hours

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS: 5 – 30

PREPARATION AND MATERIALS:

- Slide deck or flip charts with each strategic orientation to crisis
- Handout on “Preparing for the Crises to Come”

FRAMING:

Crises can be moments when our organizing plans are thrown out the window, groups fall apart, and communities become paralyzed with fear and anxiety. Or, they can be opportunities to create broad scale change. Historically, movements for social change have made huge gains and achieved wins in the face of crises. But these windows of opportunity are not open for organizers alone. We have seen dictators and authoritarians consolidate power during crises, using them to legitimize crackdowns and oppression.

ACTIVITIES:

1. **Introduction to crises as opportunities.** Crises open up opportunities that we can take advantage of – or not – and it’s up to us how ready we are to respond to them with agency, purpose, and strategy. Our readiness to step into moments of crisis depends on our preparation and our strategic orientations to crisis.

2. **Overview of strategic orientations to crisis:** Here are 10 strategic orientations that organizers and communities can have to prepare to respond to crises in our organizing work. Introduce the 10 strategic orientations to crisis using flip charts for powerpoint presentation.

- **BE PREPARED:** We can only take advantage of crises in this way if we prepare ourselves ahead of time.
- **BE NIMBLE:** We need to prepare our organizations to be nimble, or agile, so that we’re ready to change the way that we’re working when the crisis hits.

- **CENTER THE MOST AFFECTED:** To center those on the frontlines of a crisis, we need to listen, support and build structures of accountability that can last beyond an emergency.
- **CARE:** When most basic needs are under threat and pressures rise, we need to practice self- and mutual care to be able to act.
- **BUILD POWER:** During moments of crisis, our organizations can grow much more rapidly than in normal times.
- **BUILD A “BIGGER WE”:** During moments of crisis, we can unite with unlikely allies, and we can lead broader sections of society than in normal times.
- **MAKE MEANING:** During moments of crisis, it is possible to change the narrative in a deep way.
- **GO BOLD:** During moments of crisis, it is more possible to advance bold structural reform.
- **EXTEND THE TIME HORIZON:** Act quickly, but also play the long game – a crisis of legitimacy for those currently in power may not be immediate.

3. **Exercise on strategic orientations to crisis:** Discuss the following questions about the specific scenario assigned to your group. Click on the worksheet link for your small group.

- Crises open windows for change, but those windows don’t stay open forever. It is important to be able to respond quickly rather than moving slowly or limiting ourselves to plans that we developed before the crisis. How are you moving your people into action quickly?
- In moments of crisis, much larger numbers of people tend to become politically active. Without organization, many of these people do not stay engaged after the immediate moment passes. How is your organization creating spaces to absorb new people who are newly engaged?
- In moments of crisis, it is more possible to advance bold demands for structural reform than it is in normal times. In fact, bold demands often seem to make more sense than incremental reforms in moments of crisis. What are the bold demands you are advancing?
- In moments of crisis, people need to be able to make meaning out of their changing reality. What’s the narrative you are telling about this crisis? How are you using this moment to advance a deeper analysis?
- We are only able to move effectively in moments of crisis when we have prepared our organizations in advance. What preparation have you done to get your organization ready for this moment?

4. **Sharing in plenary and closing:** Participants share in plenary the responses to the exercise and there is a discussion on the different points.

SOURCE:

Adapted by Steve Hughes and Tashy Endres, together with ECON, Grassroots Power Project, and the Center for Transformative Organizing. Based on materials written by GPP *Stepping into the Moment: The Coronavirus Crisis as an Opening for Transformative Change* (2020).

B. LEARNING FROM A CASE OF ORGANIZING IN CRISIS

MODULE: Strategic orientations to crisis

LEARNING AIMS:

- By the end of the session participants will be able to:
- Analyze a real case of organizing in times of crisis.
- Identify the strategic orientations to crisis that were practiced in the case.
- Identify practices and tools that were used by the organizers in the case.
- Apply the lessons learned from the case to their own context.

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS: 6-16

TIME: 90 mins

PREPARATION AND MATERIALS: Select a case study or develop your own of organizing in crisis, ideally from the country/context where you are delivering the training (example of case study to use Hungarian Roma Organizing Network during the Covid-19 pandemic LINK). Print the case study, prepare flipchart, large post-its and markers.

FRAMING: Link this session to a previous one where you've introduced the strategic orientations to crisis. Explain that in order to better understand how the strategic orientations to crisis could be applied to a real situation of crisis, we will analyze a concrete case study of organizing in crisis and draw lessons that could be useful in our contexts. Explain why you have selected a specific case and how it could be relevant to participants.

ACTIVITIES:

1. **Introduction:** Introduce the objectives of the session and link it to the strategic orientations to crisis. Explain that in this session we will use the strategic orientations framework to analyze a case organizing in times of crisis. If relevant, give an introduction to the case study, what happened in the crisis, where and when it happened, which organizations are we focusing on, which groups did they organize with. Explain that participants will be asked to work in groups, read the case and analyze and respond to some questions about the case.
2. **Analyze case study:** Form groups of 3-4 participants. Give them a handout with the case study and the questions, ask them to read it and discuss how they practiced the strategic orientations to crisis in the case and respond to the following questions on post-its. What practices / tools were used by the organizers in each of the strategic orientations below:
3. **Be prepared for the crisis**
 - Be nimble/agile and adjust plans to respond during crisis (analyze the effects of the crisis and the capacity of the organization to respond)
 - Center the most affected during the crisis
 - Care for the people responding and impacted by the crisis
 - Build power, mobilize people and move them to action
 - Build a bigger "We" and maximize opportunities for cooperation during the crisis
 - Go bold and advance big demands during the crisis
 - Make meaning and influence narratives during the crisis
 - Extend the time horizon and plan how to engage the new people that were mobilized also after the crisis
 - Use digital tools to organize and mobilize people and resources

4. **Share findings in plenary:** Prepare 5 flipcharts, each is divided in 2 parts. In each part there is a strategic orientation to crisis. Use the flipcharts to harvest the responses and post-its from the group work. Move question by question focusing on one flipchart at the time. Each group shares the findings and inspiration from the exercise and places their post-it on the flipchart.

Always start with a different group answering each question, then others add information to the same question. Cluster similar ideas/post-its, circle them and write keywords with markers in a visible way to remember the key ideas. After the sharing, ask if there are questions or reflections on what has been shared.

5. **Applying learnings to our contexts and closing:** Invite participants to reflect individually for 10 minutes on how what they've learned from the case and the discussion could be applicable to the organizing work they are doing in their context. What ideas would they like to apply to be more prepared and strategically oriented to respond to crises? They should write it down in their own notebook and the facilitator can ask a few people to share in plenary, but not all. Close the session

SOURCE: Developed by Monika Balint from Civil College Foundation and Marina Tota from ECON for the "Organizing in Crisis curriculum".

C. ORGANIZING WITH AFFECTED GROUPS

MODULE: CENTER THE MOST AFFECTED

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: By the end of the session, participants will be able to:

- Identify who are the most affected groups in movements of crisis
- Map the obstacles and motivators that affect the participation of affected groups
- Articulate ideas on how to overcome obstacles and leverage motivators to participation.
- Design inclusive organizing processes that engage affected groups by identifying and addressing their specific obstacles and motivators to participation.

TIME: 3 hours

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS: 5 – 20

PREPARATION AND MATERIALS: Crisis scenario prepared by the trainer in advance, based on their own experience, flipchart & markers for group work. It is assumed that the participants already have (some) experience with community organizing, so the module builds on that previous experience, guiding them to focus on the most vulnerable groups. It was also assumed that the trainer has some practical experience in working with vulnerable groups and can provide useful examples.

FRAMING: This module gives the participants a perspective on organizing with groups experiencing vulnerabilities. It could be useful in crises or in “normal” times. For many people in more vulnerable communities, crisis is an everyday experience. And for some who live at the margins of society, looking from the outside in, an expression applies: “your normal is contributing to my crisis.” Therefore, organizers must understand deeply the structural dynamics of the crisis, particularly as they apply to issues of access, and they must adapt their organizing practice to meet every group where they are at.

ACTIVITIES:

1. Introduction and setting the context. Often crises hit those already most impacted by structural inequality. Share examples to highlight this point, e.g. Impact of Covid19 measures on victims of domestic violence/unable to leave the house in case of domestic abuse; impact of lockdown on the homeless population (i.e. not having shelter makes it difficult to follow the lockdown measures). Ask participants to share other examples from their experience. Sum up by highlighting the importance of organizing in ways that center the most affected by structural inequality.

2. Groupwork mapping the most affected groups: Groups discuss a crisis scenario and map the most affected groups and how those groups are affected. Groups share in plenary their maps and present their rationale. Other participants are invited to ask questions or comment after each presentation, and the trainer provides relevant feedback. The trainer sums up the key learning points of the exercise.

3. Brainstorm on obstacles and motivators to participation: There are a variety of obstacles and motivators for participation that an organizer will meet when organizing with any kind of group. In the case of working with vulnerable groups, the organizer needs to consider the specific obstacles and motivators for participation for that group, and find ways to design inclusive organizing processes. Ask participants to reflect individually on people who are affected by crises and systemic injustice (e.g., it could be people of color, communities living in poverty, frontline communities in a climate disaster) and write on post-its based on their own experience what they think are:

- (1) Common obstacles for participation for affected people in moments of crisis?
- (2) Common motivators for participation for affected people in moments of crisis?

Gather the various obstacles and motivators on a flipchart, add possible missing ideas and summarize what was shared.

4. Types of obstacles and motivators to participation:

Providing an input on different types of obstacles and motivators to participation. Obstacles include: (1) Obstacles to access participation that could be overcome with some planning and investment (e.g., if access to participation is limited by language barriers, it could be addressed by providing translation, access barriers for people with disabilities by adapting spaces and materials and offering support people; economic barriers could be overcome by subsidizing travel or offering food at meetings; lack of childcare, it could be overcome by offering childcare services), (2) Capacity obstacles that could be overcome with training and capacity development (e.g. lack of digital skills to join online meetings), (3) Systemic obstacles like experiencing discrimination, oppression in social spaces, and their impact on people’s psychological state, self-esteem, and feelings of safety in participating. This is harder to address and could be addressed by including anti-oppression practices in organizing spaces and organizing to challenge and change systems of oppression. Ask participants to move the post-its of the obstacles they have listed in the categories referring to “types of obstacles”. Motivators may vary depending on the group you are organizing with; some might be more prominent than others.

5. Identifying obstacles and motivators of the affected groups:

Ask participants - How do you find out the obstacles and motivators of affected groups? Gather a few ideas and emphasize that organizers can identify the obstacles and motivators of the affected groups in one-to-one conversations with community members as part of the organizing process by asking “What would stop you from participating in this initiative/campaign?” and “What would motivate you to participate in this initiative/ campaign?”. Share an example.

6. Group work on designing organizing processes:

As organizers we can center the most affected in times of crisis by designing organizing processes that enable affected groups to overcome obstacles and leverage motivators to participation. In groups, based on the previous exercise of mapping the most affected groups and types of obstacles and motivators, participants will select an affected group/community that they would like to organize:

- Identify the possible specific obstacles and motivators to participation for this group. “If you were a [name of impacted group], what would stop you or motivate you to participate in a campaign?”
- Design organizing practices, culture and structures that would address these obstacles and motivators and make participation more inclusive.

7. Sharing in plenary (20): Sharing in plenary. Each group shares in plenary which affected group they decided to focus on, what are the obstacles and motivators to participation of this group and how they would adjust the design of the organizing process to make it more inclusive. After each presentation, gather some questions and feedback. Emphasize that in this exercise if the participants do not come from impacted groups, it is just hypothetical and to know the actual obstacles and motivators of impacted groups, it is important to engage in conversations with them directly.

8. **Conclusion (15):** Conclude with a collective reflection on how organizing principles, practices, cultures and structures may need to be adapted to meet the needs of affected groups and be more accessible and inclusive. These adjustments could include adjusting expectations, changing/extending the timeline of the organizing process to make more space for building trust and relationships as well as to set up a safe environment, adapting organizing tools and approaches to increase access and participation, planning additional resources to cover costs of overcoming obstacles to participation, practicing higher levels of emotional intelligence and empathy as organizers, and putting in place measure to take care of the well-being of organizers so that they can better cope with the emotional toil of engaging with affected groups. Provide examples if needed.

SOURCE: Developed by Oana Preda and Anda Serban based on learning materials developed by the Resource Center for Public Participation in Romania for the "Organizing in Crisis curriculum".

D. CREATING A CARE AND WELL-BEING STRATEGY

MODULE: Care

LEARNING AIMS: By the end of the session participants will be able to:

- Assess needs of self-care and organizational care in times of crisis and beyond.
- Map care and well-being practices that could be used in their organizations and groups.
- Take first steps to draft a well-being strategy for / with your organization and community.

TIME: 3 hours

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS: 3 - 20

PREPARATION AND MATERIALS: Internet connection, flipchart, post-its, computer. Participants need mobile phones and internet connection.

FRAMING: In this session we will be talking about a challenging topic of care and well-being, because as organizers we need to be able to identify and respond to needs for care in ourselves, our groups and organizations especially in times of crisis. Speaking of stress and burnout can be very challenging for people who have or are experiencing it. Therefore, we will start with grounding ourselves in an experience of well-being that could support us stabilize before and during the session as we look into challenging topics. We would like to clarify that your participation in this session is voluntary, all exercises are invitations, take care of yourself by seeing how much you feel supportive to engage in them, when is good to stop! And let us know if things come up that you need support with.

ACTIVITIES:

1. **Grounding:** Close your eyes and take three deep breaths. Think of a moment in which you felt good, both physically, emotionally and mentally. When you felt cared for and your wellbeing was high. Imagine this moment, the place, the time, who you were with. How did it feel? What contributed to your well-being? Stay in this feeling for a moment. When you open your eyes and we start the session, which will be on sensitive issues of care and well-being, know that you can return to that feeling.
2. **Introduction to care and well-being:** Introduce the topic and how it relates to organizing in crises. Invite participants for a minute to reflect individually on what's the first thing that comes to mind when they think about care and well-being. What ideas and questions are associated with it? Why is it important to them as organizers? Gather a few ideas and reflections on why this topic is important.
3. **Online self-assessment:** Introduce the activity explaining that the first thing to do to identify care needs is to assess our well-being. And for that we could use an anonymous online self-assessment tool. Invite participants to connect with their phones to the link and complete the self-assessment individually. (possible links: burnout-aid.eu/en, or sensa.health)
4. **Conversation in small groups:** In small groups discuss the results of the test, reflect on the insights you've learned about your well-being, what areas you're doing better and which ones may need improvements. Anything new or unexpected that you've learned from the test?
5. **Presentation and questions:** Present a theoretical input on care, wellbeing, and burnout in organizing / activism. Drawing on e.g.: <https://commonslibrary.org/impacts-of-activism-on-health-and-wellbeing/>, <https://activisthandbook.org/wellbeing/introduction>
6. **Your story vs the organizational story:** Share your story as a trainer of a moment when you felt down or experienced burnout, how it impacted you, as well as how your organization responded and what you would have needed for your well-being. Ask participants to

work individually and reflect on their story and that of their organization:

- Your personal story: When did you feel down? Have you experienced any burn out in the past? How did it impact you?
- Your organizational story: How did your organization respond to your personal experience? What would you have needed from your organization to improve your well-being? Participants share their stories in small groups.

7. **Mapping care and well-being practices:** In the same groups, based on the lessons learned from the stories, identify examples of good practices, write them down on post-its and cluster them on a flipchart. In plenary, each group shares well-being practices, gets questions and feedback from others and clusters them in a map of care and well-being practices. Here the facilitator prompts a deeper reflection on what care and well-being practices could be adopted to deal with burnout in the group/community they are organizing in.

8. **Creating your care and well-being strategy:** Individually participants review the care and well-being practices that have been shared and reflect on which ones might apply to themselves, their organization, and the group/community they organize. On a flipchart, they create a list of 5 most important practices they would like to implement in their organizations and groups for care and well-being, and write down a plan on how to achieve them.

9. **Conclusion and takeaways:** Conclude the session by asking participants to reflect individually and write down on post-its one takeaway from the session and share it on a flipchart. Before ending the session, ask participants to place their flipcharts with care and well-being strategies on walls around the room, and have 10 mins to walk around and look at the different strategies as a gallery walk. Use this time to get inspired from each other's strategies!

SOURCE: Developed by Maros Chmelik for the "Organizing in Crisis curriculum," based on materials on care from The Commons Library on "10 Great Resources on Activist Wellbeing" and an article written by Helen Cox on "Impacts of activism on health and wellbeing."

E. BUILDING POWER THROUGH COALITIONS

MODULE: Build a bigger “We”

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: By the end of the session participants will be able to:

- Explain why coalition building is an effective way to build power in the long run.
- Identify the pros and cons of building coalitions.
- Outline key aspects to consider and prepare when building coalitions.
- Recognise that building coalitions needs trust and that takes time and energy.

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS (MIN/MAX): 4 - 15

TIME: 2.5 hours

PREPARATION AND MATERIALS: Print case study of coalition building (e.g. case from Hungary), flipchart, post-its and markers, 2 envelopes for each group, one with “fuel” cards (one for each group member), one with 2 “protein” cards, and stepping stones.

FRAMING: In times of crisis often we need to collaborate with others actors and form a “bigger We” in order to build the collective power we need to overcome the challenges and face powerful opponents. For this purpose, building coalitions with multiple and different actors could be a valuable strategy. Coalitions bring in more people, organizations, different experiences, knowledge, resources and views. But they have downsides as well. Forming and maintaining a coalition takes time and resources. We need to be able to work together with others, and not only take, but also to give to the coalition. If everyone takes without giving, it will lead to fragile and malfunctioning coalitions. In this session we will explore how coalition building helps create a bigger we, their pros, cons and how to make them work.

ACTIVITIES:

1. **Introduction to coalitions:** Introducing the topic of coalition building helps create a bigger “We” and how this is connected to organizing in a crisis.
2. **A case of coalition building:** Use a story of a coalition from your own experience or by sharing the case study of the Clear Voting Campaign from Hungary. Ask the participants about the main points in the process shared in the story – what went well and what should have been done differently?
3. **Pros and Cons of coalitions:** Ask the participants to collect their thoughts based on their experiences and what they have just discussed, what are the main pros and cons of being part of a coalition. Put these on the two slides of a flipchart paper and generate a common discussion. How can you be prepared for the cons? How can you handle them? Why are the pros so important? How can you make that stronger? What do you mean?
4. **Game on coalition building:** In order to experience some of the dynamics that may appear in coalition building processes, we will do a competitive game in teams. Each team will need to move from the starting point to the goal point using A4 sheets of paper as “stepping stones” without touching the floor. The team that is able to reach the other side collectively faster wins. The game will have two rounds.

Round 1. Get to the goal – the mechanical way: Each group needs to get to the goal by only stepping on the stepstones. If there are n people in the group there are n stepstones between the starting and the goal positions. They will also receive a “gas tank” as an envelope. Inside the envelope there are n “fuel” cards. For each step they take, they have to give back one fuel card to the facilitator. If everyone tries to move they will not get to the goal. If everyone gives their fuel card to one person, this one person can get to the goal, but the team will

break up and s/he has to leave everyone else behind.

Round 2. Get to the goal – by strengthening the muscles:

This round has the same rules as the previous round, but in addition, inside the envelope there are also one or two “protein” cards. For each step they have to give their protein card to a teammate. It will take more time to get to the goal than in the previous scenario, but 1) the whole team can get there, 2) it needs a lot of interaction with each other, 3) they can only step forward if they share their resources.

5. **Debriefing:** After the game, ask participants to sit in a circle for the debriefing. First ask how they feel about the exercise. Were they able to achieve the goal? Why yes/not? Ask them to reflect what they have just experienced, what are the main pros and cons of the different scenarios. How did they handle them? Why are the pros so important? How can you make that stronger? What were the main lessons learned from this game about coalition building? How does this relate to their experience with coalitions? From this exercise, we experienced group dynamics that could be similar to those that take place in coalition building processes. It only works if we are able to go in the same direction, think together, decide together, speak together, act together and win together. Everyone needs to invest the time and energy in the collective effort.

6. **Summary of lessons learned.** Summarize the main lessons learned from the session and the game. What are the pros of building up a coalition? (Bigger power, bigger outreach, more people, knowledge, experiences, views, support, experts.) Why is it hard? (It takes time, energy, resources – especially at the beginning, there can be conflicts of interest, different levels of dedication, identity conflicts, some groups don’t want to take responsibility, some people will try to dominate). How can you handle these problems? (Be prepared. Make an agreement first, define the goals, responsibilities. Make sure that everyone knows what they are going to give and take, create mutual accountability).

7. **Conclusion and takeaways:** As organizers, we need to learn to facilitate coalition building processes where there is an agreement on shared goals, responsibilities, a balance of giving and taking, and mutual commitment and accountability among coalition members. It may take time and resources to build coalitions, but they get better and become more effective in the long run. Practicing civic life is not like a machine that uses up the resources, it is much more like a muscle, using it makes it stronger. Like Michael J. Sandel says: “Altruism, generosity, solidarity and civic spirit are not like commodities that are depleted with use. They are more like muscles that develop and grow stronger with exercise.” (by Michael J. Sandel, *What Money Can’t Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets*).

SOURCE: Developed by Bendeguz Tikasz and Monika Balint based on materials and experience of the Civil College Foundation on coalitions for the “Organizing in Crisis curriculum”.

F. PUBLIC NARRATIVES DURING CRISIS

MODULE: Make meaning

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: By the end of the session participants will be able to:

- Identify the role of narrative strategies in making meaning of crises
- Develop narratives to make meaning in times of crisis
- Develop public narratives linking the crisis to story of self and story of us

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS: 10-20

TIME: 90-120 mins

PREPARATION AND MATERIALS: Projector, flipchart, post-its, and copies of case-study.

FRAMING: In times of crisis there are always narratives explaining the crisis (what happened, why, how to resolve it) and what it means for people. In moments of crisis, the old narratives may not work any more (what is true/false, who is in charge, what are the solutions) and there is a space for alternative narratives to emerge. Organizers must be prepared to use narrative strategies in a practice of collective sense-making to influence public narratives in moments of crisis.

ACTIVITIES:

1. **Introduction to Public Narrative:** Introduce Public Narrative as a framework by Marshall Ganz “Story of Self, Us, and Now” . Use slides and presentations to illustrate the framework. Highlight how this framework could be used to connect people’s lived experiences to the collective challenges (crisis), and move people to action.

2. **Modeling and debriefing:** The facilitator models using this framework to develop public narratives by sharing a “story of us and now” of a community that experienced a crisis. After the story participants are asked to reflect on the key elements of the framework: What was the collective challenge? What was the collective choice? What was the collective outcome? What were the values that the story evokes? What is the call to action? Engage the participants to share their reflections and insights.

3. **Group exercise:** Form small groups and assign each group a crisis scenario and how the dominant narratives are framing it. Ask groups to develop a public narrative that makes sense of the crisis and proposes an alternative narrative to the dominant one.

4. **Sharing and feedback:** In turns, a representative of each group presents the public narrative and receives feedback from facilitators and other participants.

5. **Debrief and takeaways:** Debrief the process in plenary asking participants how they feel about developing and presenting narratives, what worked, what could be improved and lessons learned. Harvest the key learnings and share links to more resources and examples on public narrative.

SOURCE: Originally adapted by Nikola Djordjevic from Serbia on the Move from the works of M.Ganz and Leading Change Network. for the “Organizing in Crisis curriculum”.

Leading Change Network (2022). Guide to Public Narrative. Resources: https://leadingchangenetwork.org/resource_center/guide-to-public-narrative-resources

G. ORGANIZING WITH A LONG-TERM AGENDA

MODULE: Extend the time horizon

LEARNING AIMS: By the end of the session participants will be able to:

- Understanding the relationships and connections between local themes/activities and global issues
- Increase awareness of strategic planning activities
- Develop campaign plans on the topics in which they operate and combine them with a broader global perspective.

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS: 6-16

TIME: 120 mins

PREPARATION AND MATERIALS: a flipchart and flipchart paper, markers, post-its, printed map of Europe, printed copy of campaign template – one for each working group, A4 paper, presentation with tools and campaign tactics (picture and short description of each technique/tool)

FRAMING: When you think of a campaign, you should see it as something bigger, namely as part of a long-term plan – a strategy of your group that will help you bring about lasting social and systemic change. In organizing, it is important not only to improve the quality of life of a given community or solve current issues important from their point of view, but above all to build the visibility and strength of residents in the public space.

ACTIVITIES:

1. **Introduction:** Participants work in smaller groups and think about what topics they deal with in their organizations/groups/communities. Then what are the trends/crises in the world and write it on post-it notes for 10 minutes. Questions for small groups asked by trainer: (1) What topics do you deal with in your organizations/groups/communities that you support? What are the trends/crises that you observe in the world? Each topic is put on a separate post-it.
2. **Sharing in plenary:** Each group presents their work and places post-its on a large contour map of Europe or the world that hangs on the wall. During the presentation of groups, the trainer combines topics and crises to show bigger problems and trends.
3. **Group work on the impact of crises:** In the same group, they choose or draw a single local theme and watch how different world crises affect them. A diagnosis of this topic is made, and participants see that crises are interconnected and affect each other.
4. **Introduction to the Long-Term Agenda:** Introduce the idea of Long Term Agenda (by Grassroots Policy Project) and prompts them to imagine the larger “structural change” they are organizing toward. When you think of a campaign, you should see it as something bigger, namely as part of a long-term plan – a strategy – of your group that will help you bring about lasting social change rooted in the system. The image of the Long Term Agenda (in handout) illustrates the stages of the organizing process with different milestones, and it helps us plan campaigns and actions that could help us reach the milestones. When you present the image of the Long Term Agenda, start from:
 - **OUR CURRENT ACTIVITIES:** What are we fighting for now?
 - **THE LONG-TERM STRATEGY:** What system changes will radically improve our situation? What needs to change to solve the root of our problem? What should happen so that the problem does not arise in other communities?
 - **MILESTONE:** What is the next mountain that we should aim for? What other successes are we able to achieve that will bring us closer to the change we want to make?
 - **MILESTONE ON THE WAY:** What actions or steps can we take that will lead to a breakthrough in our campaign?
 Review the elements in the arrow Build strength → build alliances → fight for big system changes

In the campaign work, we strive to get out of the current fight and move towards further successes. Our aim is to achieve an important victories, and to do so with sufficient strength that we can introduce structural changes on a large scale. What we do in organizing, however, is to change the order of thinking about introducing social change. We look at what our group is doing and then analyze what larger whole it is a part of, how this problem is rooted in the system, what is the structural source of it. In the next step we think about what are the milestones leading to the achievement of systemic change, and in the next step what smaller campaign victories will lead us to this.

5. **Exercise:** Develop a long-term agenda for your campaign: In groups or individually participants use the template for the Long-Term Agenda to develop a plan for their campaign. Afterwards, participants share in plenary.

6. **Exercise:** Campaign planning: How do we move from planning our long term agenda to planning our first campaign? Introduce a campaign planning tool (in handout), campaign strategies and tactics, so that they have a base before they start working on the template. In the same groups, participants are asked to reflect on what to do to change the current reality and influence the given crisis with their actions. They continue to work on the same issue and develop their campaign plans using the template provided (in handout).

7. **Sharing in plenary and closing:** Each group presents their campaign plans. After each presentation there are questions and feedback to improve the plans. The facilitator concludes with a summary and emphasizes why it is important to have a long-term agenda in order to be able to adjust plans in moments of crisis, without getting distracted from the long-term goal.

SOURCE: Adapted by Iwona Nowak and Dagmara Kubik from the Common Thing Foundation for the “Organizing in Crisis curriculum” based on materials and experience of the Grassroot Power Project and Rafał Górski from Institute of Public Affairs.

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