Folkes, Louise ORCID logoORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7857-6953 (2019) Community organising and Citizens UK: can tangible social change be achieved through institution-based apolitical politics? In: Contemporary Left-Wing Activism. Routledge Studies in Radical History and Politics, 2 . Routledge, Abingdon, pp. 28-46. ISBN 9780815363965

Community Organising and Citizens UK: Can Tangible Social Change be Achieved through Institution-based Apolitical Politics?[1]

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Introduction

Political and economic changes, in both the UK and USA, have engendered a rising interest in broad-based community organising - a method used by local people to achieve social change (Bunyan 2010; Tapia 2013; Christens and Speer 2015; Holgate 2015). Broad-based community organising aims to build long-lasting relationships between local people from a variety of differing backgrounds and institutions so that they can work together on common issues that are affecting their everyday lives (Voss and Williams 2009; Bunyan 2010). The goal is to re-engage people in their communities, enabling them to take responsibility for issues that are affecting them and ultimately achieve social change and social justice (Tapia 2013; Christens and Speer 2015). Consequently, broad-based community organising has become a site of sociological interest.

This chapter draws from a research project that explored the broad-based community organising group, Citizens UK. It documents the history of Citizen's UK before focusing on a particular local Citizens UK alliance. The chapter examines members of Citizens UK's experiences of being a part of the organisation, and their appraisals of the model of organising. It also draws upon my reflexive account of being a member of Citizens UK and attending various meetings, actions, and training events. The key areas that will be explored to understand whether this form of organising can achieve tangible social change are: engagement and membership; and ideology, politics, and adaptability.

Citizens UK's Background

Organising the Alinsky way

After successfully organising the 'Back of the Yards' neighbourhood in Chicago, an area that was severely hit by The Great Depression in the 1930s, Saul Alinsky became one of the fore founders for what became known as 'broad-based community organising' (Bunyan 2010; Wills 2012; Beck and Purcell 2013; Tapia 2013). Using an alliance built up of trade unions and the Catholic Church, Alinsky formed the Back of the Yards Neighbourhood Council at the end of the 1930s to provide welfare services to community members and to promote union membership. Following the success in Chicago, Alinsky formed a national community organising network- the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF)- in 1940, to achieve social change in local communities (Alinsky 1969; Alinsky 1971; Beck and Purcell 2013; Tapia 2013). The IAF is now the largest community organising network with affiliates in many cities across the United States, Canada, Australia, Germany, and the UK (Beck and Purcell 2013; Tapia 2013).

Alinsky (1971) maintained that there is potential to achieve change within the democratic system through the active participation of people. For Alinsky, it is necessary for community organisations to work with power holders in an effective manner, rather than working against them, as other organisations have attempted (see Hickel 2012; Pickerill and Krinsky 2012; Uitermark and Nicholls 2012; Kreiss and Tufekci 2013). Working *with* power holders in this way has been described as pragmatic and creative (Beck and Purcell 2013).

It is important to note that Alinsky's first work was written in the USA in the 1940s in the post-depression and post-war era; a very different landscape to the social, political, and cultural context of contemporary Britain. The UK has experienced forty years of neoliberal policy; alongside the failure of community development policy to truly empower communities; and the continual decline of traditional civic institutions (Bunyan 2010; Wills 2012; Tapia 2013). Therefore, it is important to consider the extent to which an Alinsky style of community organising can translate into the UK context and achieve social change, through the organisation Citizens UK.

Who are Citizens UK?
Citizens UK is a community organising charity with local alliances across the UK whose aim is to create a power alliance built up of civic society institutions that is strong enough to fight for social justice and change in local communities (Bunyan

2010; Wills 2012; Beck and Purcell 2013; Citizens UK 2015d; 2015e). Describing themselves as the 'home of community organising in the UK' (Citizens UK 2014b, p.10), Citizens UK is the largest community organising network in the UK and is an affiliate of Alinsky's international community organising network, the IAF (Citizens UK 2014b; 2015b). The organisation came to London in the late 1990s following the now executive director, Neil Jameson's, experience of community organising training in the USA (Citizens UK 2013c; 2014b). Citizens UK describe themselves as a leadership development organisation, and *not* a campaigning group, which is important to consider when assessing how this model works and what kinds of social change can be enabled.

A major achievement for Citizens UK was its 2001 work on the Living Wage, which originated in the East London alliance of the organisation, The East London Citizens Organisation, more commonly known as TELCO (Wills et al 2009; Citizens UK 2013c; 2015a; 2015b). Many large organisations have become accredited Living Wage employers, raising the wages of thousands of employees. This led to the creation of a sister charitable organisation, The Living Wage Foundation. As well as its large national campaigns, Citizens UK also focuses on smaller scale, community-based issues through its local alliances across the UK, which will be explored in this chapter.

Research Methodology

Working with a local alliance of Citizens UK, this research adopted a qualitative, interpretivist design based on qualitative interviewing (Kvale 1996; Mason 2002; Marshall and Rossman 2006; Rubin and Rubin 2012). This approach was adopted to understand members' experiences of working to Citizens UK's model of community organising. The research was concerned with assessing whether Citizens UK's model can successfully manage issues of membership and ideology to achieve tangible, and sustainable, social change and social justice.

I have been involved with Citizens UK for around three years and have attended local planning meetings and actions. I also completed the intensive six-day leadership training, as well as attending nationwide strategic meetings. I have seen from the inside how the organisation works in a multitude of settings and how this careful 'front stage' management is negotiated to achieve social change (Goffman 1959). As a

member of Citizens UK, access to participants was easily negotiated by working with the local alliance's lead organiser as my main gatekeeper. Eight members took part in the research and all participants were white and educated to degree level[2]; participants with religious affiliation were overrepresented[3]; and the age range was 18-65. Such a small sample can in no way be representative of the views of all members of Citizens UK, however there were consistent themes that came up across interviews and through my own personal reflections.

Engagement and Membership

This section explores the membership model of Citizens UK, and the levels of engagement with the organisation, in relation to its aim of achieving tangible social change.

The institutional membership model
One of the key features of Citizens UK is that members are civil society institutions, not individuals (Bunyan 2010; Wills 2012; Beck and Purcell 2013; Tapia 2013). Civil society institutions involved in Citizens UK include faith groups, trade unions, schools, universities and other community groups, with over 300 institutions in membership across all alliances (Citizens UK 2014a; 2015e). Institutions provide large groups of people, the 'people power', adding to the power of the organisation. It is vital that the membership of Citizens UK is as diverse as possible to be representative of the local community (Citizens UK 2013a; 2013b). This aligns with Alinsky's (1969) model of the 'People's Organization'. The institutions own Citizens UK as they pay membership dues[4], which helps the organisation to remain independent from state funding and centralises power with its members. Dues are the organisation's main source of economic capital (Jamoul and Wills 2008; Citizens UK 2013c; 2014a; 2015g).

Strengths of the institutional membership model

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[2] With the exception of Dawn who just about to start her degree at a highly prestigious university.
[3] Five out of eight participants openly identified as Christian
[4] Membership dues are paid by institutions in order to become members of Citizens UK. The amount paid varies due to the size and financial capability of the institution.

Bringing together groups who would not otherwise interact with each other in public life to work on common issues is considered highly powerful (Putnam 2000; Wills 2009; Citizens UK 2013c); and participants praised Citizens UK's ability to bring together a range of people from a variety of backgrounds. For the Reverend of an Anglican Church, Diane, this enabled her to work alongside other parishes and people from other faiths. Similarly, Stephen, a community worker in a disadvantaged community, discussed how Citizens UK manages to bring different people together to realise their common concerns and to form a common purpose.

Arguably, this enables people to look beyond their differences and no longer see different groups as 'other' to them (Baskerville and Stears 2010; Bunyan 2010; Wills 2012; Beck and Purcell 2013); increasing the community's social capital, encouraging stronger bridging social capital across diverse groups, and building relationships between different institutional members (Putnam 2000; Beck and Purcell 2013; Citizens UK 2013c; Tapia 2013). These relationships are essential for building an alliance that is committed to working together for social change (Tapia 2013; Wills 2016); with sociality being key to understanding and working with communities (Studdert 2016; Wills 2016).

Participants also understood the importance of having an institution-based membership model. Dawn, a student from a local sixth form college, mentioned how powerful it feels to have the people-power of yours and others' institutions behind you. Both Dawn and Jamie (a new part-time community organiser) understood that power in numbers is important when working to achieve social change, which is why Citizens UK as an organisation focuses specifically on institutional membership. There are, however, weaknesses to this approach, which will be explored next.

Weaknesses of the institutional membership model
Despite the strengths of having diversity and people-power, several weaknesses were noted, which were common across participants' accounts. Participants contended that having an institutional approach to membership can be quite difficult and old-fashioned, as membership of traditional civil society institutions has declined in recent times (Putnam 2000; Wills 2012; Tapia 2013). Some participants were concerned about what this would mean for the future of the organisation, in terms of its

membership numbers and its funding. Citizens UK aims to strengthen institutions and civil society (Citizens UK 2010; 2015d), however, this may be difficult to achieve if people are unlikely to commit or belong to an institution. As Dawn (sixth form student) commented:

> "It's got a real force behind it and it's clearly working because it's still growing and…I just think they're possibly missing out on a few people who could really help because they're not part of some other group."

One of the biggest concerns for participants was that the people who would benefit the most from the actions the organisation runs are the people who are likely to be excluded from becoming a member, due to their lack of institutional ties. This exclusivity was highlighted by both Wills (2012) and Cox (2016) as a potential weakness of this style of organising. Arguably, those without institutional ties are in the most need of organisation, civic engagement, and representation, particularly those in marginalised communities. This correlates with recent work around re-imagining community, in which both Studdert (2016) and Wills (2016) argue that community should not only be thought of as these traditional formats which are seen as 'lost' or 'lacking'; and it is important to look broader and tap into sociality that occurs on a day-to-day basis to engage communities in more novel ways.

Building on the concerns about the exclusivity of the institutional membership approach, Stephen (community worker) was concerned that Citizens UK is missing representatives from key working-class communities. This is a problem for the organisation as its charitable objective is to return politics to the everyday person and to help them participate in public life, especially those from typically disadvantaged communities (Citizens UK 2010; 2015d). Participants were conscious of the importance of those who have experienced social injustice being the forerunners in the actions. Alexander (part-time community organiser), commented on this issue:

> *My strong belief is that we should be helping some of the people who feel least involved in public life in the UK, some of the poorest and most marginalised people and it's for them, it shouldn't be on their behalf, it should be with them and by them to bring about the change, and that's why finding ways for them to engage is really important so that their involvement is not that they bring a really powerful testimony in a public assembly but that they are also part of institutions and part of all the discussions around change on the issue.*

Being a member could provide the opportunity for these communities to become powerful in an alliance, and to make changes to their locality and their everyday lives. Yet it seems that this model for achieving social change is only an option for those already partially organised and engaged with an institution. Either there must be a way to engage a wider range of people with local institutions, or Citizens UK may have to consider alternative membership models to produce meaningful, long-lasting social change.

Overrepresentation of Faith-based Groups

It is widely recognised that Citizens UK alliances draw most of their membership from faith-based groups; and Alexander (part-time community organiser) commented that "faith groups are some of the strongest and most vibrant institutions that we have". Arguably, this is an artefact of the US origins of this model being focused on faith-based institutions; and the convergence of Citizens UK's and faith groups' core aims (Alinsky 1969; Jamoul and Wills 2008; Squire 2009). Citizens UK prides itself in its promotion of successful interfaith and interchurch work allowing groups to work together who may not have done so before; and 52% of its institutions are faith-based (Citizens UK 2013c).

Warren (2009) and Wills et al (2009) propose that this prevalence is because of the large faith-based social and political capital resources there are in the UK. Holding similar fundamental values as Citizens UK, faith-based groups can utilise their 'people power' to help reach the organisation's aims and achieve social change (Jamoul and Wills 2008). Despite the importance of faith-based institutions in terms of the capitals they bring to Citizens UK, it is important to consider the impact that such an overrepresentation has on the organisation and its aims of achieving social change.

Religious 'ethos' of Citizens UK

Although the majority of participants identified as Christian, there was a particularly important issue raised about the religious 'image' and 'ethos' limiting membership diversity. The concern was that unless the organisation broadens its appeal, it will deter people who are not religiously affiliated from getting involved; appearing exclusive despite the inclusive nature of the organisation. Many participants noted that there needs to be a way to involve other communities, organisations, and groups so

that Citizens UK can be representative of society as claimed in its literature (Citizens UK 2013a; 2015e).

An example that came up in both the interviews and the literature was the impact of the religious 'ethos' on the involvement of trade unions with Citizens UK. The large faith-based involvement has made it difficult for some trade unions to engage with the organisation (Wills et al 2009; Holgate 2015). Seen as largely secular organisations, trade unions have been cautious to affiliate themselves with Citizens UK as it can be seen as a highly religiously motivated organisation with different goals and ways of working that may be incompatible with union procedure (Wills et al 2009; Holgate 2015). This may become problematic when working on employment-focused issues, such as the living wage and employment rights, limiting the potential of the organisation.

Location and content of events

A further issue that arose was concerning the use of religious buildings and religious groups for events. Some participants pointed out how many of the events that Citizens UK have hosted have taken place in religious buildings alongside a number of religious performances. Although recognised that this may be purely for logistical reasons, as churches and other religious buildings offer the space needed and are unlikely to charge for the use of the building, participants were concerned about how the location may put off potential members from attending. For example, Adam (third sector action-researcher) spoke about why he wanted an upcoming event to take place on neutral ground:

> *For the pre-launch assembly in December I've been saying…that it needs to be more secular and we're looking at a secular place… and I think that's really important that that takes away some of that 'oh it's in a church again'. I know it's not organised as a church event and it's not sold as that, but as soon as you go into that territory a lot then it's easy for people to think this is really another churchy thing.*

Similarly, Dawn (sixth-form student) recalled her struggle to get people to come along to a pre-election event as her friends considered Citizens UK as having a religious 'ethos' based on the event's schedule.

There was recognition across the participants that for Citizens UK to be able to reach out and broaden its membership beyond faith groups, events may need to take place in more neutral locations. These findings suggest some tension and contradiction in terms of the diversity of Citizen's UK's membership; and arguably the social capital of the organisation needs to expand so that it is representative of the communities it is working with to achieve broad-reaching social change (Bourdieu 1984; Putnam 2000).

Difficulties Engaging with the Model

Power and habitus positioning

When thinking about levels of belonging and comfortability in differing social situations, it can be useful to employ Bourdieu's concept of habitus. Habitus refers to the norms, values and dispositions which are instilled in us via our social environment, typically the family and education (Burke et al. 2016). Habitus is therefore 'a socialised subjectivity' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p.126) and can influence our response in social situations, depending on whether we feel our habitus 'matches' the current situation and we are therefore comfortable, or if we feel out of our depth. This is pertinent when considering the engagement of disadvantaged communities with Citizens UK.

Citizens UK work with politicians, businesses, and other influential stakeholders in society. As negotiating and working with these groups is not a natural occurrence for many members, it is often encouraged that local leaders of institutions attend the Citizens UK six-day training course (Citizens UK 2013a; 2015f). It is important that people learn how 'to do' politics, and for Citizens UK this means learning the art of public action, public assemblies, and how to negotiate with people in power (Citizens UK 2013a; 2013b; 2014b). The training, from my personal reflections, has a very corporate feel, with lead organisers from around the country attending and running the course, all of whom are in smart attire. In fact, it is rare to see any lead organisers not wearing smart clothes at any Citizens UK event. Although it is easy to see why this presentation of self may be required when working with key powerholders in society, at training and informal events it can appear off-putting as it engenders a sense of formality and power (Goffman 1959). This is further exacerbated by the high education level and social class of most organisers.

Similarly, some people, particularly those from disadvantaged communities, may not feel comfortable speaking or negotiating in meeting situations, which is an issue both Stephen and Adam highlighted. This could work to limit the organisation's aim of getting those from traditionally more disadvantaged communities engaged in public life and leading campaigns if people lack the confidence to speak in actions. To use Bourdieusian terms, when your habitus is in disconnect with the social field you find yourself in, it can be difficult to negotiate the situation and feel as though you belong (Bourdieu 1984). This may lead people away from engaging with this model of organising for social change if they feel as though it is something 'not for them'.

Accessibility of the six-day training

A further apprehension amongst participants was the availability of the six-day training course to members. Besides the practical logistics of not being able to attend a six-day residential training course (although it has recently been introduced on a modular basis), the biggest worry for Stephen (a community worker) was that the theory behind this style of organising is not necessarily simple to grasp. The political theories about power and the Alinsky approach to organising may prove difficult concepts and ideologies to grapple with (Alinsky 1969; 1971; Citizens UK 2013c; 2014b).

The feedback I gained from attending the training was that it can be difficult to access for people who struggle to engage with text and/or academic environments. This may mean that not everybody will be able to gain an understanding into the way the organisation works. It was suggested that perhaps Citizens UK needs a new approach to explain the philosophy behind how the organisation works on a more informal and basic level so that it does not alienate potential or current members. If it is difficult for people to understand the model of community organising being used, it undermines the principle of getting politics back to the people in order for it to be authentic.

Concluding Comments on Engagement and Membership

This section has highlighted several areas of concern around Citizens UK's membership model. The model of membership may need to be adapted as we continue through an ever-changing political landscape, and novel ways of

engagement may need to be introduced to combat weak institutional presence in communities. Citizens UK also needs to be actively reflexive of its high faith-based membership, and manage its appeal to broader audiences of people who may not be aligned to a faith group.

There is also a large social class element that needs to be considered: if members are made to feel uncomfortable when working to this model of organising, or if people are excluded from this model of organising altogether because of their lack of institutional ties, this is a serious outreach problem for Citizens UK. For the organisation to be more inclusive and broad in its membership, as is claimed in their literature, these issues need to be addressed to achieve social change that will improve the lives of those who are most marginalised.

Ideology, Politics, and Adaptability

This section will explore the challenges of two core ideological themes: remaining apolitical and image management of Citizens UK. These issues are core to the organisation and need to be managed carefully when working for social change as they can affect the scope of change Citizens UK seeks to achieve.

Importance of Remaining Politically Independent

At the 'ideological' heart of Citizens UK, it is recognised that to be able to negotiate and work with a vast array of power holders from various political positions, Citizens UK must remain independently funded and non-party political (Warren 2009; Baskerville and Stears 2010; Bunyan 2010; Wills 2012; Beck and Purcell 2013). What Citizens UK aims to do is look beyond political affiliation and go back to the basics: what is it that is affecting your life and how can we realistically do something about it? (Citizens UK 2013b). Diversity is central to Citizens UK and they claim to be made up of members from a variety of political backgrounds, and campaign on issues from both the right and left wing perspectives (Citizens UK 2013b).

Across participants there was recognition that it is important for Citizens UK to remain independent and non-party political in their work to be able to work with a range of

power holders with different values and beliefs. Several participants also discussed how this was the strength of the model of organising that Citizens UK work with, as it manages to bring together people with different views to work on issues that affect the local community, thus strengthening bridging social capital (Putnam 2000). This has allowed the organisation to see many local successes by working with a range of different power holders, although this has not been without difficulties.

It appears, however, that Citizens UK is a great compromise for both those members from the left and the right politically as it allows them to work for gradual social change in a controlled manner. Participants were appreciative of how Citizens UK allows them to engage in social change via clearly identifiable campaigns with broad support. Even though participants from all political viewpoints identified a struggle with keeping their political opinions separate from the work they do with Citizens UK, the overall feeling was that it was worth attempting to keep these views separate in order to see the end result.

Left-leaning inclinations

Despite acknowledging how important it is for Citizens UK to remain independent, participants highlighted a contradiction at the heart of this model. They recognised that this style of working for social change will always appeal to a certain type of person, typically those with left-wing political inclinations. Participants positioned Citizens UK as being "soft left", "centre left", and a "left-wing organisation", which is in direct conflict with the philosophy of conservatism. The large majority of participants identified as having left-wing political views, which contradicts Citizens UK's claim that their members are from a variety of political backgrounds (Citizens UK 2013b). Similarly, participants noted that most of Citizens UK's campaigns fall on the political left, which questions Citizens UK's statement that they work on issues from both the right and the left of the political spectrum (Citizens UK 2013b). Not all participants agreed with labelling Citizens UK as left-wing, however, for example Dawn (sixth-form student) commented:

> *I know Citizens has been accused of being particularly left-wing because they speak about the common good and getting normal people to do these things but really that's not particularly left-wing, well it shouldn't be, that's just politics. But*

> *the particularly right-wing people [power holders] were kind of brought round by the right-wing people within Citizens so I quite liked that.*

There seems to be some tensions highlighted by the participants here about whether the organisation comes from a certain ideological background, and how practically feasible it is for Citizens UK to remain non-partisan, particularly when there is not the broad range of political backgrounds represented as is claimed. These accounts also bring into question the organisation's aims of looking beyond political affiliation to get back to basics and return politics back to the people in everyday forms (Citizens UK 2010; 2014b). Participants suggested that Citizens UK has not successfully managed to look beyond certain political affiliations or views in terms of their membership and aims, thus still leaving much of the engagement at the level of party politics rather than everyday concerns. This could work to alienate those who do not engage with politics and the political spectrum, limiting the membership and scope for social change.

Political imbalance pre-election in London 2015

The main event that stood out for participants where the organisation failed to remain apolitical was the accountability assembly held in London in 2015. Held three days before the general election, Citizens UK used this assembly as a fantastic opportunity to have all three main party leaders in a room of three thousand members, to try to get them to commit to working with the organisation over the course of the next parliament (Citizens UK 2015b; 2015c). The main purpose of this was to build working relationships with the leaders of all the main political parties, hence proving the organisation's willingness to work with various power holders from a range of political standpoints, or at least those most likely to come to power (Citizens UK 2015b; 2015c). Many participants I spoke with who attended the assembly could not help but point out how much better received by the audience Ed Miliband (then leader of the Labour Party) was than either Nick Clegg (then Liberal Democrat leader) or Sajid Javid (Conservative Party representative). It was even suggested that the reason for David Cameron's last minute absence from the assembly was simply because he knew that it was unlikely that he could persuade many of the people present to vote for the Conservative Party in the election. Participants were worried about whether the organisation's reputation amongst politicians would be affected following the more obvious support for the Labour Party over the Conservative Party at the assembly in London. This is a difficult issue for the organisation to manage and something which

will need to be explored in order for the organisation to be able to work with politicians from a variety of backgrounds on an equal footing, and for the organisation to be taken seriously as a power broker representing a diverse civil society (Citizens UK 2013b; 2015b; 2015c).

Elizabeth (a member of the Catholic Church), who identified herself as "the acceptable right-wing element" of her local Citizens alliance, was deeply concerned about the way the events in London unravelled. From her perspective, Citizens UK failed to come across as an apolitical organisation, which may affect how much of a successful working relationship they can now gain with the Conservative Party who are in government:

> …at the end of the day the Conservatives won, and we didn't do ourselves any favours by proving what they all suspect that we are just a left-wing pressure group.

There seems to be a disconnect between what Citizens UK aims to be politically and what it achieves in practice, and this tension was noted by participants who had participated in the events in the lead up to the 2015 election. Participants' accounts suggest that Citizens UK needs a better way to manage the organisation's overall image, so that it appeals to a broader spectrum of political beliefs. This would help the organisation to keep its independent and apolitical stance. However, whether ideology or party politics can ever be separate from community organising is debatable, as illustrated by the participants' concerns.

Image Management, Consistency, and Adaptability

An interesting facet to Citizens UK is its 'front stage' management (Goffman 1959). Many of their actions and campaigns are highly controlled, kept to time, and scripted. This provides a method for Citizens UK to carefully manage their image and work with an established format to ensure that they gain what they want from an interaction. This is akin to Goffman's (1959) dramaturgy model, which suggests that the 'front stage' performance is how people (or in this instance, an organisation) present themselves consistently and appropriately in the given context. Citizens UK describe actions as having a dramatic element, and the methods of achieving their aims as pragmatic (Citizens UK 2013b). This careful control and scripting is an important aspect of

Citizens UK's image management, and impacts upon the success of their campaigns and their ability to achieve tangible social change. It could be argued that the organisation's adaptability and spontaneity is thwarted in order to work tightly to the Alinsky model of organising.

The language of organising

To be able to negotiate and work with power holders, Citizens UK places significant importance on training its members in their Alinsky inspired techniques (Alinsky 1969; 1971). This training has the purpose of getting members to explore the philosophy behind this style of organising, explaining how concepts such as power, self-interest, and conflict are used in very specific ways (Citizens UK 2013c). The purpose of this is to provide a common language for all leaders when building local alliances, and to ensure that the power is in the hands of the ordinary person when seeking to challenge power holders, although the accessibility of this training has been questioned in this chapter.

Language use is of interest here as Citizens UK describe themselves as a leadership development organisation and *not* a campaigning organisation. Here the distinction is made between 'campaigns' and 'actions', as 'actions' are the heart of community organising and are needed continually to keep the organisation alive. 'Campaigns', however, are seen as one-off events that do not bring the potential for development of leaders and relationships, or for tangible social change. The key to the actions Citizens UK run is that they must be 'winnable'. This brings up an array of questions concerning the scope of social change that this model of organising can achieve, limiting its actions to those that are 'winnable' in the current political climate.

Inability to question the model

Despite participants being complimentary of the ideology and methods that Citizens UK adhere to, participants discussed how formulaic and almost cult-like the organisation can be. It was understood that the methods used by Citizens UK in actions need to be controlled to maintain the image of the organisation but there was a sense of frustration as this control limits members' abilities to question the methods being used. Even when methods have been questioned before, participants told me

how the organisation has been reluctant to take these suggestions on board, as Stephen recounted:

> *...but there is this feeling that there's this whole package that you have to buy or you don't buy and it's like, and it's almost like when you go on the six-day training they're trying to sell it to you. And although they say they want an argument, if you start picking on it, saying actually no I don't agree with that or I don't like that aspect of it or, you feel like they see their job as persuading you and you have to buy the whole package, and I was never gunna do that, that's just not me*.

Since speaking with Stephen for this research, I have myself attended the six-day training and heard similar accounts from other trainees. People commented on the limited scope for flexibility and adaptability. Although the training invites you to have an argument and discussion about the methods being taught, when disagreements arose there was a reluctance by Citizens UK staff to engage with them. This rigidity seems counter-productive, and could cause discontent amongst members who may feel as though their grievances, or ideas, are not being listened to by the organisation.

Keeping to script

Scripting is used by Citizens UK to ensure events flow well and that the organisation and its aims come across effectively (Citizens UK 2013b). Participants understood why scripting is used by the organisation and agreed that it is a method of carefully controlling events. However, many struggled with this method and wished there could be more spontaneity. As many Citizens UK events rely on powerful personal testimony to make the actions seem more real, many participants worried that the scripting element of events may make it seem less genuine and too staged. Diane, an Anglican Church leader, was cautious of the prescriptiveness of methods used by Citizens UK. Although she saw it as useful to have a guideline to work with, she argued that in practice this will not always work as tactics should be tailored to who you are working with and what you are trying to achieve. The adaptability of the model is limited, which works to carefully manage the 'presentation of self' of the organisation (Goffman 1959), at the cost of members' frustrations. Whether Citizens UK will feel as though it can deviate from the standard template to let organic interactions occur is something that the organisation should consider in terms of going forward to ensure that all members feel they can express themselves in actions, thus feeling more connected to the model and the social change it can achieve.

Concluding Comments on Ideology, Politics, and Adaptability

This section has focused on the challenges of two core ideological themes: remaining apolitical and image management of Citizens UK. It is important to note that despite these difficulties raised by participants, there was high praise for the pragmatic, relationship-seeking methods used by the organisation. The jovial nature of many actions was seen as an alternative and refreshing way of 'doing' politics, and 'the best of what we have got' to achieve tangible successes.

However, with an emphasis placed on actions being 'winnable', Citizens UK limits the social change that it can achieve, as it works within the narrow parameters of what is acceptable in the current political regime and does not push or question these political and economic boundaries. Citizens UK accepts the current status quo that power lies with big business and Westminster, despite its rhetoric around building a strong civil society. To this end, Citizens UK struggle to question the large structural mechanisms that entrench and reproduce inequalities today. The scope of the social change Citizens UK can achieve is thus limited and bounded by its Alinsky (1971) inspired belief that there is potential to achieve social change within the democratic system without questioning the mechanisms that produce injustices in the first place. The rigidity and prescriptive nature of the organisation also means that the methods used will not keep pace with and reflect an evolving political and technological landscape.

Additionally, the interview data suggests that negotiating an independent political stance can be a struggle, especially when individuals involved hold strong political views. Claiming to be apolitical yet only working with the three main political parties in the UK also means the organisation entrenches and only works within the small parameters of established party politics. Citizens UK's defence would be that they are only working with those likely to come to power, but it seems by shutting down communication with other political parties and organisations that Citizens UK does have an ideological and political affiliation. It is limiting the organisation's remit by not having a broader discussion about inequalities experienced today, although Citizens UK would argue that its actions need to be 'winnable' and therefore it cannot get caught up in such large-scale ideas.

It is also important to remember that this involvement with political parties may alienate those who have little faith in the political system, and those who do not engage with it at all. Perhaps the organisation needs to look beyond the established modus operandi to be able to widen its scope and appeal.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored many issues that face Citizens UK and its future, including membership and engagement; and ideology, politics, and adaptability. This form of community organising has seen both national and local successes, and participants were dedicated to this model, positioning it as, 'the best of what we have got'. Arguably, Citizens UK offers an effective model of community organising for those who are already partially organised and engaged in an institution. However, its difficulties lie in how it reaches some of the most vulnerable people who fall outside of this remit. It is these people who should be both the actors and the beneficiaries of such an attempt to achieve long-lasting social change and social justice.

The idea that political ideology can be swept aside seems to be contradictory when some of the main powerholders Citizens UK works with are political party leaders and MPs. The organisation appears to engage considerably within the realms of party politics, which impacts upon the scope of the organisation's membership and its achievements. This, alongside concerns about engagement, including institutional membership, the complex model, overrepresentation of faith-based groups, and methods used to negotiate with powerbrokers, remains problematic. The model can appear exclusive, and as something 'not for the likes of me' to many people. When attending actions and meetings, you cannot help but feel as though the room is filled with middle-class community members. From observations and from participants' accounts it seems the breadth and diversity of the organisation's membership and scope needs to be considerably extended to achieve meaningful social change.

And finally, this chapter raises one important question which has been bubbling under the surface throughout - what exactly do we mean by social change? This is difficult to answer, and as Citizens UK demonstrates, it is achievable on varying scales. As

important as small scale community successes are, it is important to have mechanisms in place to question and explore wider societal issues. The scope of change that Citizens UK can achieve is mirrored to them through the boundaries of the political system. Perhaps it is too utopian and idealistic to consider change beyond this, but some of the most ingrained social inequalities need to be tackled from the root cause and not just by alleviating some of the consequences (Adamson 2016). This chapter has demonstrated that any organisation or social movement that works for social change needs to carefully consider and balance the scope of its ideology and membership to be successful. The findings of this study suggest that as yet, the scope of the ideology and membership of Citizens UK does not quite reach far enough.

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